

For Immediate Release

METLIFE FOUNDATION TEAMS UP WITH ASIA SOCIETY HONG KONG CENTER TO TACKLE SOCIAL MOBILITY FOR YOUTH IN ASIA

(Hong Kong, April 25, 2017) MetLife Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the global insurer, MetLife, and Asia Society Hong Kong Center (ASHK) will hold the third iteration of the MetLife Foundation - Asia Society Economic Inclusion Series (the Series) on April 27, 2017, which seeks to address issues relating to social mobility for youth in Asian developing countries.

Following the success of the first two talks of the Series held last year, this panel discussion themed “Social Mobility for Youth: Escaping Poverty in Developing Asia” will explore actions that can be taken to help Asia’s youth escape poverty; how to create opportunities for these young people to flourish; and the reforms that are necessary to ensure that more young people in Asia achieve upward social mobility.

Over the course of the past decades, the Asia-Pacific region has experienced tremendous growth, but many young people remain economically excluded, and this group accounts for almost half of the jobless even though only 20% of the region’s labor force is aged between 15 and 24.

“The commitment of governments, the private sector and civil society is critical in addressing social immobility among youth in developing Asia,” remarked Dennis White, President and Chief Executive Officer of MetLife Foundation. “The MetLife Foundation - Asia Society Economic Inclusion series allows us to explore important topics in depth, and examine the many ways we can help to build a better future in our local communities.”

Marginalized youngsters from low-income families in Asia’s developing countries, in particular, face numerous barriers to secure gainful employment, achieve upward social mobility and escape a life of poverty. Among them, financial constraints and limited access to training hinder this group from going to school and acquiring the necessary technical and vocational skills. As a result, many end up working as unskilled or low-paid labor and remain mired in a systemic cycle of poverty, diminishing any prospect of scaling the social ladder.

“Once again, we are privileged to partner with MetLife Foundation and bring notable speakers in to discuss economic inclusion for youth,” said S. Alice Mong, ASHK’s Executive Director. “As a regional intellectual hub, we are committed to providing a platform for dialogue and collaboration.”

With MetLife Foundation’s long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement, and Asia Society’s mission to educate, the Series provides a non-partisan, high-level platform for discussion, convening select groups of experts in thought-provoking and informative dialogue, and well-informed debate, to inspire action in this critical area.

Four Asia-based experts, **A.B.M. Azad**, Project Director, Skills and Training Enhancement Project of the Government of Bangladesh; **Santosh Bhuvad**, Youth Career Initiative's Partnerships Manager, Asia Pacific; **Pham Thi Thanh Tam**, Executive Director of REACH; and **Jiadi Yu**, Principal Investment Officer, Healthcare & Education Asia at the International Finance Corporation, will share their insights on the role governments, the private sector and civil society can play in addressing social immobility among youth in Asian developing countries. The discussion will be moderated by **Yuen Chan**, Senior Lecturer, School of Journalism and Communication at The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Speakers at "Social Mobility for Youth: Escaping Poverty in Developing Asia"



A.B.M. Azad, Project Director, Skills and Training Enhancement Project, Government of Bangladesh

Mr. Azad is joint secretary of the Government of Bangladesh and Project Director of the World Bank-funded Skills and Training Enhancement Project (STEP), a youth-oriented initiative launched by the Government of Bangladesh in 2009, which helps students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds enroll in market-oriented vocational training courses, and acquire new skills that can lead to better jobs. 96,000 diploma-level students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds have received stipends to access and continue vocational training for improved employability, and nearly 77,000 youths have received free six-month vocational training in 38 trades, including in the electrical, automotive and garment sectors. Mr. Azad began his civil service career by joining the Deputy Commissioner's office of Dinagpur as assistant commissioner and magistrate in 1991. He completed his Bachelor of Commerce as well as Master of Commerce degrees from the Department of Management at the University of Dhaka.



Santosh Bhuvad, Partnerships Manager, Asia Pacific, Youth Career Initiative (YCI)

Mr. Bhuvad was instrumental in setting up YCI in India in 2012, and is their Mumbai-based Partnerships Manager for the Asia-Pacific region. YCI is committed to combating global youth unemployment, providing students with transferable life and work skills that make them employable and empowering them to make career choices and positive life decisions. It offers a 24-week education program in partnership with the global hotel industry. Previously with the Kherwadi Social Welfare Association, Mr. Bhuvad contributed to the conceptualization and implementation of a program providing employment to marginalized youth in India. He holds a Master of Commerce degree from Mumbai University and an MBA from Sikkim Manipal University.



Jiadi Yu, Principal Investment Officer, Healthcare & Education Asia, International Finance Corporation (IFC)

Ms. Yu leads IFC's investments in healthcare and education across Asia. IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, is the world's largest multilateral investor in private healthcare and education and works to increase access to high-quality health and education. Since 2009, Ms. Yu has supported the sustainable development and widespread delivery of private healthcare and education within the region. Prior to IFC, Ms. Yu worked for the World Bank in Washington, D.C. and the Shanghai Asset and Equity Exchange. She graduated from Renmin University of China and holds a Master in Public Policy from Harvard University.



Pham Thi Thanh Tam, Executive Director, REACH

Ms. Tam is Executive Director of REACH, a Vietnam-based not-for-profit organization specializing in vocational training and employment, whose mission is to empower disadvantaged young people across Vietnam. She previously worked on the Livelihood Advancement Business School project at Plan International in Hanoi as Project Manager and Business to Youth Officer. Prior to her involvement in international development, Ms. Tam worked in the private sector. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in International Trade from Hanoi Foreign Trade University and Master of Arts degree in the Economics of Development from the National Economics University in Hanoi.



Yuen Chan, Senior Lecturer, School of Journalism and Communication, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Ms. Chan is Senior Lecturer at the School of Journalism and Communication, and Assistant Dean (Communication) of the Faculty of Social Science at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Prior to teaching, she worked for more than a decade as a journalist, columnist, anchor and presenter for English print, television and radio news in Hong Kong. Ms. Chan left Hong Kong in 2003 to become a correspondent based first in Shanghai and then Beijing. She has produced stories for the BBC World Service, CBC, Radio National Australia, KQED and CNN International, among others. She obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in human sciences from the University of Sussex. (Moderator)

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About MetLife Foundation

MetLife Foundation was created in 1976 to continue MetLife's long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. Since its founding through the end of 2013, MetLife Foundation has provided more than US\$700 million in grants and US\$70 million in program-related investments to organizations addressing issues that have a positive impact in their communities. Today the Foundation is dedicated to advancing financial inclusion, committing US\$200 million over the next five years to help build a secure future for individuals and communities around the world. For more information, please visit www.metlife.com/metlife-foundation/index.html.

About Asia Society Hong Kong Center

Asia Society Hong Kong Center is a leading non-governmental organization and intellectual hub that fosters cross-cultural understanding and promotes dialogue and better understanding of Asia. The

MetLife Foundation

Center provides insight, generates ideas, and promotes collaboration to address present challenges and create a brighter shared future across the fields of arts and culture, business and policy, and education.



Hong Kong Center
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About Asia Society

Founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller III in New York, and with a worldwide network of 12 centers, Asia Society is a key educational institution dedicated to promoting mutual understanding and strengthening partnerships among peoples, leaders, and institutions of Asia and the United States in a global context.