

Historic Youth TechCamp Fiji A Success

Over eighty Pacific youth made history, writing Internet policy and building software applications for mobile phones as part of the first-ever Youth TechCamp in Suva, Fiji.

The U.S. Department of State sponsored Youth TechCamp comprised of two Modules including 2-day training in ICT and Internet Governance Policy and a 5-day Mobile App Development workshop.

Participants travelled from as far away as the Republic of Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Australia and New Zealand to engage in the event. The Internet Policy Training was facilitated by Pasifika NEXUS and the Mobile App Development Training was facilitated by US-based non-profit organization BrightPath Foundation. Over 80 Pacific youth created five new mobile apps in small groups comprised of content teams, developers and designers.

Director of Pasifika NEXUS, Ms Sala Tamanikaiwaimaro, the local organizer for the seven-day event, described the experience as extraordinary.

“The support of the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Embassy in Suva along with expert facilitators from BrightPath Foundation and Pasifika NEXUS made for a truly rewarding experience for everyone involved. This initiative has opened a whole new world of opportunities for the youth of Fiji and the Pacific and we hope they go on to inspire many others to progress in technology and impact their communities and beyond.”

Alzima Bano, a Psychology Major and Youth Advocate at the University of the South Pacific described the Youth TechCamp as “life changing”.

Another participant, Elena Randerath, a nurse with the Ministry of Health of Fiji said, “The excitement, enthusiasm and energy of learning how to build apps to meet our local needs and context was immensely rewarding”.

Regional Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Suva, Joseph Crook, said the workshop exceeded his expectations. He shared that he was impressed with how the youths used the workshop to create new ways of looking at things and using new technologies to help the communities around them.

Executive Director of BrightPath Foundation, Bevil Wooding, said Youth TechCamp Fiji was inspiring. “While a main objective was to give participants sound understanding of Internet governance and local content development, our real focus was to expose the talent, creativity and promise that we all know exists in the minds, hands and most importantly the hearts of our people. Thanks to the participants and the hard-working support teams, those values were on display right from the start.”

Participants developed five mobile apps from initial concept to software coding and launch. The mobile apps, Ika Fiji, Fiji Road Signs, What’s On Sale?, Food for Thot and Cure Fiji, were designed to address specific local needs. The apps were launched at the end of the workshop and are now freely available on Android devices via the global Google Play store.

Participant Mavis Tom of Solomon Telekom said “I feel privileged to have been a part of the Youth TechCamp. I’ve have learnt so much and have made many new friends.”

Ms. Kata Duaibe of UN Women was an observer and mentor at the event. Ms Duaibe said, “I am very impressed with the high levels of camaraderie and collaboration achieved during this event. In particular, I am pleased to see the participation of so many girls and women at the Youth TechCamp.”

BrightPath Executive Director, Mr. Wooding, summed up the event well, saying, “The young people who we have had the pleasure of spending the week with in Fiji are truly creative, diligent and passionate. I have no doubt they will go on to do great things for the Pacific. From what we have seen, they are well on the path to a bright future.”

The Youth TechCamp Fiji was supported by the U.S. Department of State, in collaboration with Pasifika NEXUS, a Fiji-based Internet Governance think-tank and BrightPath Foundation, a U.S. based non-profit organization focused on building capacity through values-based technology training.

Youth TechCamp Fiji can be followed online on Facebook and on Twitter using hashtag #TechCamp #BrightPathOrg #PasifikaNEXUS.

For more information and media inquiries about the Youth TechCamp, contact workshops@brightpathfoundation.org or visit www.brightpathfoundation.org and www.pasifikanexus.nu or contact Asenaca on +679 354-4828

