



Youth Co:Lab Fiji

The Hunt for SDG-based Inclusive Innovative Solutions

29th - 31st January 2019

Venue: Laucala Campus, University of the South Pacific

What is Youth Co:Lab

Co-created in 2017 by UNDP and the Citi Foundation, Youth Co:Lab aims to establish a common agenda for countries in the Asia-Pacific region to empower and invest in youth, so they can accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through leadership, social innovation and entrepreneurship. By developing young people's 21st century skills, and by catalyzing and sustaining youth-led startups and social enterprises across the region, Youth Co:Lab is positioning young people front and center in order to solve the region's most pressing challenges. In addition to supporting youth entrepreneurship, Youth Co:Lab also works closely with multiple stakeholders, including governments, civil society and the private sector, to strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem and to promote policies that will support and enable young people to take the lead in finding and developing new solutions for social and environmental problems in their communities.

Context

Young people today are thought to be the most flexible and creative generation in history. They have the best knowledge of challenges our society faces and are prepared to act in innovative ways. Youth has the potential to impact and sustain the world in ways that they want to see it in the future. However, they are the group that remains marginalized and often excluded from decision-making, economy, politics and development processes.

300 out of the 700 million young unemployed people worldwide are found in the Asia-Pacific Region. In the Pacific, young people are considerably more likely to be unemployed than their adult counterparts, and young women are particularly disadvantaged [1]. In Fiji, there are 17,000 labor force entrants per year, while only 600 new jobs (in the formal economy) are created [1]. Skills mismatches and lack of training are among the main reasons for youth unemployment. Most Pacific countries are characterized by shortages in technical and vocational, managerial and professional skills as well as entrepreneurial and general workplace skills [1]. This situation negatively affects the employability and the chance to create successful businesses that in turn would engage more people.

UNDP and the University of the South Pacific (USP) have partnered with the goal to foster innovations and entrepreneurship in the Pacific and to empower youth to lead these processes. A UNDP-USP Innovation Hub will launch in January and will feature an inclusive co-working space with the focus on youth, social innovations as well as gender- and disability-related projects. Members of the Hub will receive guidance and support from innovation and business experts, networking and capacity building opportunities. Youth Co:Lab is integrated into the innovation agenda of UNDP and USP.

Youth Co:Lab in Fiji

County-level Youth Co:Lab Fiji will have the theme ***The Hunt for SDG-based Inclusive Innovative Solutions***. It will be a three-day event consisting of two main tracks:

1. National Dialogue where youth participants, together with the Government, private sector, non-government organisations and academia will communicate and collaborate to determine challenges, priorities and solutions for the innovation eco-system in Fiji;
2. Youth empowerment and Innovation Challenge: capacity building workshops and entrepreneurship-related trainings that will lead to a contest for the best SDG-based start-up.

Youth Co:Lab Fiji is co-organized by UNDP and USP. Winners of the Innovation Challenge will receive a UNDP-USP Innovation Hub membership as well as a funded opportunity to participate in the international Youth Co:Lab Summit in Viet Nam. All youth participants will have the chance to network and receive support from UNDP and other partners.

Youth Co:Lab Fiji is implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, International Labor Organization, Pacific Disability Forum, Young Entrepreneurship Scheme (MITT) and Women Entrepreneurs and Business Council. There are plans to expand the Youth Co:Lab events to other areas around Fiji later in the years.

Objectives

- To foster the dialogue between youth, government, private sector, academia and other stakeholders to identify priority issues and actions for development of the innovation and entrepreneurial eco-system;
- To inspire and empower young leaders, innovators and entrepreneurs to design and implement their ideas and business models;
- To accelerate the implementation of SDGs in Fiji through collaboration and support for social innovations.

Participation

We invite young Fijian entrepreneurs and innovators aged 18-35 years based in Suva (or expected to be in Suva during the event) to take part in the first Youth Co:Lab Fiji. **The deadline to submit your interests is on the 20th of January 2019.** Successful applicants should be at least in the early stages of implementing their business or innovation ideas. Priority will be given to proposals from young

women leaders, people living with disabilities between the ages of 18-35 years and youth working on projects in sustainable development and social innovations.

We especially welcome USP students and alumni. If not an individual applicant, note that maximum of 2 people per team will be able to join the on-site trainings. Proposals will be shortlisted based on the following criteria:

1. Quality of proposal
2. Commercial viability of the proposal
3. SDG impact
4. Scalability
5. Creativity

[Click here to submit your APPLICATION](#)

The shortlisted teams will be invited to a three-day event at USP and should be available to participate in Youth Co:Lab Fiji between the 29-31 January 2019. The first Youth Co:Lab in Fiji will feature 12 selected teams.

[DOWNLOAD FLYER \(375KB\)](#)

For more information, please contact

Evgeniya Kleshcheva
UNDP-USP Innovation Hub
Email: evgeniya.klescheva@undp.org

Fiona Lakepa
Youth Co:Lab Fiji
Email: fiona.lakepa@undp.org

Footnote

[1] 'A Study on the Future of Work in the Pacific' (2017), page 7.

URL: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms_553880.pdf