



Participants at the Youth Climate Ambassador Conference at FNU Nasinu. Photo Credit: Mary Vamarasi/Project Survival Pacific

Youths urged to participate in climate crisis dialogue

Youths have been encouraged to be part of the climate crisis solution by raising their concerns as well as being innovative and creative thinkers to help in the fight against the global calamity.

Speaking at the 2019 Youth Climate Ambassador Conference Guest Speaker, Coordinator Programme Management at Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF), Afsrin Ali reiterated the importance of youths to be actively involved in the discussions surrounding climate crisis as the effects would greatly impact them and future generations.

As part of its Youth Climate Ambassador Program, Project Survival Pacific organized this one-day conference hosted at the Fiji National University's (FNU) Nasinu Campus yesterday for youth to come together and decide how they could become more proactive in addressing Fiji's climate change and other sustainable development challenges.

According to Ali such conferences provide youths with an opportunity to voice their concerns, which can be further amplified at the international stage.

"We should be mindful of this – climate change is not your doing. You are inheriting a problem, but the solution lies within you," said Ali.

"It is in your hands whether you can do something for this planet. Whenever we have any crisis or somebody attacks you then you have two options, that is, whether to fight or flight – whether to fight back or to run away, but where are you going to run away to? Therefore, you do not have any other options, but to be vocal."

Ali emphasised on the need for families to openly talk about climate crisis during family gatherings.

"Issues such as climate change is too depressing. When we watch videos related to this issue we tend to think I'm just an individual and what can I do to help. We get thoughts like – it's me against the world."

"An individual can make a difference – if your voices are not reaching globally then make noise. When we were young we were told not to make noise, not to be loud but it is time to be loud now and be heard as the future is yours," Ali added.

The objective of the conference was to enable participants to have discussions on the underlying factors that have combined to contribute

to the climate crisis, possible mitigating solutions and working towards resolving the problem.

Also speaking at the forum, the founder and Board Chair of Project Survival Pacific, Krishneil Narayan shared that as leaders of tomorrow, young people need to collectively voice their concerns.

"Youths are the partners and leaders of today. Each one of you are like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle. When you come together as one, our voices are stronger and we can work towards a sustainable future of Fiji, the Pacific region and beyond," said Narayan.

Participants also discussed oceans, health, adaptation, mitigation, food and agricultural security, gender and other thematic areas related to the climate change nexus.

The conference also provided a platform to discuss and plan in areas that youths view important for climate action, which serves as a basis for youth-focused activities in 2020.

"The participants were introduced to a talanoa format of discussions where they were able to not only share their ideas openly but also recommended activities that we will work with the participants to action post the conference," Narayan added.

Isha Verma, a participant of the conference, shared that she found the sessions most engaging with a unique approach.

"I have never been to any conference like this which provided young people to share their views so openly and be heard. I felt so comfortable to share my concerns in the talanoa setting. I thank the organisers for providing us with such platform," she said.

Project Survival Pacific (PSP) is a youth-led movement on sustainable development that works to safeguard the survival of the Pacific island people from the impacts of climate change through sustainable development within the Pacific islands region. Since its inception in 2008, PSP has worked to provide youth with a platform to have a voice and bring creative solutions to solve the world's development challenges. The aim has been to bridge the divide that existed between young people and national/regional/global decision-makers through the notion of genuine and durable partnerships.

This year's Youth Climate Ambassador Conference organised by Project Survival Pacific was kindly supported by Fiji National University, Pacific Islands Development Forum and The Climate Reality Project.