

Future Leaders of the Pacific

Title

In early February, Te Ipukarea Society (TIS - BirdLife in the Cook Islands) Communications and Membership Coordinator, Luana Bosanquet-Heays attended the Future Leaders of the Pacific Conference - Trends, Issues and Opportunities for a Collective Regional Action. The conference in Pago Pago, American Samoa from 4-7 February consisted of youths from 16 nations around the Pacific and was a collaboration between the East-West Centre (Hawaii) and the US Embassy in Wellington, NZ.

The youths were joined by a number of speakers and 'resource people' including His Highness Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi (Head of State, Samoa), U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand and Samoa David Huebner, the Premier of Niue Toke Talangi, Dr Sitiveni Halapua (Member of Parliament, Kingdom of Tonga) and senior representatives from the East West Centre including Dr Allen Clark, Dr Victoria Keener, Scott Kroeker and Dr Jerry Finin. The purpose of the conference was to create a platform for youths to discuss issues affecting their home nations and the region as a whole such as climate change, women's empowerment, seabed mining, non-communicable diseases and expanding the democratic space and brainstorming solutions for them. “

A hot topic was fisheries, with many youths expressing their concern for the 'quick buck approach', lack of transparency and dwindling fish stocks.” Says Luana. “It was agreed, a more collaborative, region-wide approach needs to be adopted when it comes to exploiting the resources we share such as migratory fish stocks- what we do here in the Cooks, can affect the economic viability of fisheries for our friends in Tonga”. The US Embassy of NZ and Samoa will be funding two youths from the conference to the Pacific Island Leaders Forum in the Republic of the Marshall Islands in September 2013. To find out more, take a look at the [new TIS website](#).