CodeBus Africa to run student coding workshops

Education and technology organisations from Finland and South Africa have collaborated as part of the CodeBus Africa project which will run creative coding workshops for local students in Johannesburg, Tshwane, Kimberley, and Cape Town in May.

CodeBus Africa is a 100-day tour connecting Finnish and African innovators as part of Finland's official 100th-anniversary celebrations. The CodeBus Africa journey, which has been running since February of this year, will span ten countries in total – Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.

The South African tour of CodeBus Africa will be organised by Finland's Aalto University and local tech startup accelerator mLab, with the support of the Embassy of Finland in Pretoria. The project, which is sponsored by the Finnish global telecom leader Nokia, will place special emphasis on involving girls who remain underrepresented among the users and creators of technology.

Creative coding workshops in township communities

With its focus on the youth, this activity will consist of creative coding workshops, most of which will be run in township communities. Learners will pair up to produce their own song with the open-source programming platform Sonic Pi – a tried-and-true curriculum developed by a Finnish technology education company and project partner Mehackit.

The aim of the project is to boost grassroots level teaching of computer programming and to contribute to long-term efforts to promote quality education, youth empowerment and employment. The South African tour will end with a celebration in Khayelitsha where the music developed by the young African coders will be showcased.

Commented Kari Alanko, ambassador of Finland in South Africa: "The CodeBus is an especially suitable way for us to celebrate Finland 100 in South Africa where we have for many years supported innovation through our development cooperation. This is why the partnerships with Aalto University and mLab, also supported by Finland, make perfect sense."

"Shaping the future of technology"

Says Deon Geyser, head of sub-region southern Africa at Nokia, who is a partner of the initiative: "We are proud of every opportunity to show our capacity in shaping the future of technology, which transforms the human experience," "The CodeBus initiative is an occasion to witness leading African and Finnish innovators joining forces, empowering Africa's youth, allowing them to explore and experience innovation transforming their lives."

"The philosophy of CodeBus from the start has been to work with local partners such as tech and innovation hubs, community-based organisations and employees in each country. As such, the project is training 50 new coding instructors from Finland and Africa," he says.

"The coding instructors come from Aalto University and the local partners in Africa. We hope that by doing so, those trained locally will continue to replicate the training workshops in other cities, communities, and schools, and also inspire young people across the continent to develop a passion for learning ICT skills in a fun and enjoyable way," says Geyser.

The CodeBus Africa tour will be documented on the project website, as well as on social media on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.