SEPROD FOUNDATION CELEBRATES 5 YEARS OF PROMOTING STEAM ACTIVTIES IN JAMAICA

Last November, at the Jamaica Labour Party's 76th annual conference, Prime Minister Andrew Holness announced that the Government of Jamaica will be constructing 6 schools to focus specifically on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) within the next 3 to 6 years. The Seprod Foundation has been working in the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) space since 2014, and has been instrumental in setting the stage for Jamaica's readiness for Centers of Excellence in STEM. The Seprod Foundation along with partner organizations such as the Musson Foundation, Halls of Learning and Jamaican Girls Coding have carried out a number of initiatives that have fueled interest among students and teachers alike in coding and robotics.

In 2014, Jamaican Girls Coding, a partnership with the Coalition of Service Industries, donated 30 tablets and executed 2 coding camps for 70 girls. This was the foundation upon which Jamaican Girls Coding carried out further coding camps and workshops with experts from MIT. The Halls of Learning Outreach, initially introduced in 2004, has grown and evolved year on year, from providing scholarships to a one day open event exposing students from all socioeconomic backgrounds to coding and robotics activities in a fun and interactive way. The Seprod Foundation began collaborating with Halls of Learning on Outreach Day in 2015 and has continued to support this summer initiative each year. Seprod Foundation's years of partnership with Halls of Learning also features uniquely engaging workshops such as the Toy Inventor's workshop with Andres Garza, a designer from Spinmaster, that guided 70 children on making interactive toys in 2016, and the Game Design workshop led by John Balash from the Entertainment Technology Center at Carnegie Mellon University that taught 32 children game design in 2017.

Two global movements aimed at introducing students to computer science, Scratch Day and the Hour of Code, have been hallmark programmes of the Seprod Foundation since 2016, featuring coding galleries and coding workshops geared toward primary school students and teachers. These workshops have impacted approximately 2650 students and approximately 225 teachers, and encouraged countless teachers and schools to integrate coding into their lessons on an ongoing basis. Some schools have even started their own robotics and coding clubs to create a space for students to practice their coding skills.

With an increasing number of children being exposed to coding and robotics and an increasing interest to continue these activities in schools, in March 2018, our partners, Halls of Learning, signed an agreement with the World Robot Olympiad (WRO) Association to become the official national organizer and launch WRO in Jamaica, with the Seprod Foundation as the presenting sponsor. For the first time, Jamaican students at the primary and secondary school level were provided with the opportunity to enter and compete in a robotics competition, with the winners being given the opportunity to travel to the international competition and represent Jamaica on the world's stage. Our winning teams have represented Jamaica in Thailand in 2018 and in Hungary in 2019, and have made us incredibly proud.

The fact that 22 schools registered teams in Jamaica's first robotics competition was encouraging and demonstrates that Jamaica is growing in the digital learning space, and receptive to the ecosystem for robotics and technology that the competition provides. After having the same number of schools compete in the 2019 competition, Halls of Learning and the Seprod Foundation will be pushing for

increased registration for this year's staging slated for April 2020. The theme for 2020's competition will be *Climate Squad* where each team will act as the Climate Squad tasked with addressing problems related to the climate crisis.

SEPROD FOUNDATION

The Seprod Foundation's mandate is focused on strengthening families and communities. The Seprod Foundation does this through a focus on early childhood educational interventions, integrating technology into all learning opportunities, and empowering individuals through awarding scholarships and grants. Furthermore, the Seprod Foundation strengthens communities by investing in infrastructural developments that will uplift community members whether it is recreational areas, health centers, community centers or schools.