

# **My Experience at APRICOT 2024 as a Fellow**

## **Learning from the Cyberwar Defense Workshop**

The APRICOT 2024 conference was a remarkable journey for me, filled with invaluable learning experiences, particularly from the "**Cyberwar Defense - Prepare your Organization to be Resilient under Persistent Threats**" workshop. This session was an eye-opener, emphasizing the crucial need for resilience in the face of persistent threats from state actors, criminals, and other malicious entities targeting ISPs, Telcos, Cloud, and Service Providers. It starkly reminded us that these actors are not waiting for a cyberwar to begin; they are infiltrating networks today, planting malware, and preparing for disruptive operations.

The workshop equipped us with the knowledge to identify these threat actors in our networks, understand their motives, and develop strategies to eliminate their presence. We learned about the importance of malware and Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) resiliency architectures, which are essential for large organizations to prevent threat actors from infiltrating their infrastructure. The discussions on Incident Response Plans, Playbooks, and Exercises were particularly enlightening. These tools are critical for preparing unexpected incidents, enabling us to respond swiftly and effectively to mitigate threats.

Moreover, the workshop underscored the significance of Essential Security Habits in maintaining a secure network. It highlighted that without continuous monitoring, maintenance, and patrolling, even the most fortified defenses could be rendered useless. This segment of the workshop instilled in me the daily, weekly, and monthly security habits necessary to detect and counteract threat actors before they could activate their threats. I extend my sincere gratitude to Mr. Roland Dobbins and Mr. Barry Greene for their invaluable contributions and insights during the APRICOT 2024 conference, which have significantly enriched my understanding of cyberwar defense and resilience strategies.

## **Soft Skills Development Session**

Apart from the technical knowledge, APRICOT 2024 also focused on soft skills development, which was another highlight of the event. The sessions on "Learning Presentation Skills," including crafting compelling content, designing effective slides, and engaging the audience, were immensely beneficial. These sessions helped me overcome nervousness, understand the importance of body language and voice, and practice public speaking through live demonstrations. The leadership workshop also played a crucial role in my development, teaching me about community leadership, leadership styles, and building trust and influence. Participating in group discussions and scenario-based incident management role-playing enhanced my understanding of leadership in real-world scenarios. I would like to thank the session facilitators including Mr. Terry Sweetser, Mr. Aftab Siddiqui, Mrs. Sarah Lake, and Mr. William Stockbridge for this opportunity to given us as a fellows.

## **Networking and Membership**

One of the most significant outcomes of the conference was the expansion of my professional network. The opportunity to interact with industry experts and peers was invaluable. Their insights and experiences added depth to the learning experience. Moreover, securing membership with the Internet Society was a pivotal moment for me, opening doors to a wealth of resources and a community of professionals committed to ensuring the internet remains open, globally connected, and secure.

One notable aspect was my participation in several sessions like the "APRICOT 2024 Newcomers Social," where I had the chance to connect with fellow participants and get acclimated to the event. Engaging in sessions organized by entities like the APNIC Foundation and "Let's Encrypt: Automate all the things!" broadened my horizons, introducing me to new perspectives and advancements in the field. The diverse range of topics covered during these sessions allowed me to explore different areas within the broader scope of internet technology.

One particularly rewarding experience was the opportunity to meet with APNIC staff. This interaction provided a platform for me to present the progress of our grant project, Bug Zero, and receive valuable input from the experts. Their insights and suggestions have proven instrumental in enhancing the effectiveness of our project, emphasizing the collaborative and supportive nature of the APRICOT community.

### **Post-Conference Actions: Contributing Back to the Community**

Reflecting on the impactful experience at APRICOT 2024, I was inspired to take immediate action and give back to the community that has enriched my knowledge and skills. Here are some initiatives I have undertaken:

#### **1. Collaboration with Internet Society for Student Awareness Sessions:**

I have initiated discussions with the Internet Society to explore the possibility of organizing awareness sessions for Sri Lankan university students. The goal is to introduce students to the Internet Society and its significance, fostering a deeper understanding of internet-related issues in Sri Lanka.

#### **2. Bug Zero Blog Series:**

Starting from April 2024, I have planned and working on a new blog series on the Bug Zero Medium platform (<https://blog.bugzero.io/>). The series will share insights and lessons learned from APRICOT 2024, providing a platform for knowledge dissemination.

#### **3. IPv6 Deployment Video Series on Bug Zero YouTube Channel:**

Recognizing the importance of IPv6 deployment, I have advised my team to create a new video series dedicated to this topic. These videos will be published on the Bug Zero YouTube channel, offering practical insights and guidance on IPv6 implementation.

### **Overall Impressions**

Reflecting on my experience at APRICOT 2024, I am filled with gratitude and enthusiasm. The knowledge and skills I acquired, particularly from the "Cyberwar Defense" workshop and the soft skills sessions, are directly applicable to my day-to-day job. They have empowered me to contribute more effectively to my organization's cybersecurity resilience and to enhance my personal development in leadership and public speaking. The conference not only enriched my technical and soft skills but also enhanced my professional network. It was a comprehensive learning experience, blending technical expertise with essential soft skills and networking opportunities. The positive atmosphere, combined with the wealth of knowledge shared, made APRICOT 2024 an unforgettable experience. I leave the conference with valuable insights, skills, and connections that will undoubtedly aid in my personal and professional growth.

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