



From the Desk *of the*
Commanding Officer
The Bahamas Military and Maritime Academy

Newsletter 10

October 29th 2025 | DISTRIBUTION FULL

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF CARE AND SUPPORT

“Care and Support for All”



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Commanding Officer, Bahamas Military and Maritime Academy
(BMMA)

THE FOUNDATION OF HUMAN DIGNITY

Today, as we observe the International Day of Care and Support under the 2025 theme "Care and Support for All: Addressing all rights-holders, including those providing and receiving care and support," we stand at a transformative moment in recognizing care as the invisible foundation that sustains our families, communities, and nation (UN Women, 2025). The United Nations General Assembly's proclamation of this day through Resolution A/RES/77/317 represents more than symbolic recognition; it acknowledges that without care work, societies would simply stop functioning (United Nations, 2023). From the meals prepared in Bahamian homes before dawn, to the grandparents raising grandchildren while parents work, to the nurses tending patients through the night, care work keeps our world running.



This observance carries profound significance as we confront the reality that globally, women spend over 2.5 times more hours than men on unpaid care work, a disparity that limits opportunities and perpetuates inequality (UN Women, 2025). For The Bahamas, where extended family networks have traditionally provided the safety net for our most vulnerable citizens, this day calls us to recognize, value, and transform how we approach care. The International Labour Organization emphasizes that care work is not charity but a fundamental human right, essential for human dignity and social justice (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2024). Gilbert F. Hounbo, Director-General of the ILO, articulates this truth: "Without these care workers not only would our societies and economies suffer but our fundamental humanity would be diminished" (ILO, 2023, as cited in United Nations, 2023).

The 2025 theme challenges us to move beyond viewing care as women's work or a private family matter, instead recognizing it as a

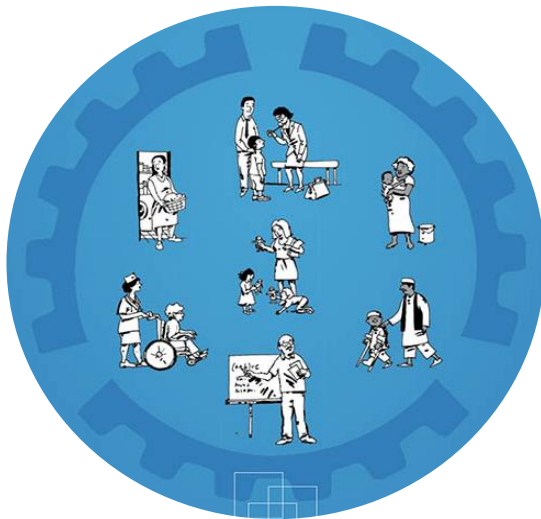


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collective responsibility requiring investment, innovation, and institutional support. Care work encompasses not only the direct provision of services to children, elderly persons, and those with disabilities, but also the vast network of domestic labor that enables participation in the formal economy (UN Women, 2025). This includes the Bahamian mother preparing breakfast before her shift at the hotel, the daughter caring for aging parents while managing her business, and the community volunteer checking on elderly neighbors after church. Each act of care, whether paid or unpaid, visible or invisible, contributes to the fabric that holds our society together.



NATIONAL LEADERSHIP: PRIME MINISTER DAVIS'S VISION FOR A CARING BAHAMAS

Transforming Social Services Infrastructure

Prime Minister Philip Davis has



demonstrated exceptional commitment to strengthening care systems through substantial investments in social infrastructure and support programs. On June 20, 2025, the Prime Minister commissioned the newly renovated Department of Social Services headquarters, a state-of-the-art facility representing a paradigm shift in how The Bahamas delivers care to its most vulnerable citizens (ZNS Bahamas, 2025).

In his commissioning address, Prime Minister Davis articulated a fundamental principle: "When I think about what it means to lead this country, it comes down to one thing: how we treat people, especially those who can't give us anything in return. No Bahamian should ever feel ashamed to ask for help" (Davis, 2025, as cited in ZNS Bahamas, 2025).

The modernized facility features expanded private interview rooms for sensitive consultations, accessible entrances and elevators to better serve seniors and persons with disabilities, a modern filing system that reduces wait times, and a dedicated hurricane command



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center for coordinating disaster relief (ZNS Bahamas, 2025). These improvements represent more than physical infrastructure; they embody respect for human dignity and recognition that those seeking assistance deserve professional, efficient, and compassionate service. Charlamae Fernander, Director of the Department of Social Services, emphasized that the upgraded facility streamlines operations while restoring dignity for Bahamians seeking assistance, transforming what was once a cramped, inadequate space into a center of excellence for social support (ZNS Bahamas, 2025).

Comprehensive Healthcare Reform

The Davis administration's commitment to care extends through groundbreaking healthcare legislation that addresses longstanding gaps in our care systems. The 2025 Health Bills Compendium, including the Health Promotion and Wellness Bill, the National Health Insurance Bill, the Dental Professions Bill, and the Pharmacy Bill, represents comprehensive reform aimed at ensuring every Bahamian has access to quality healthcare (Office of the Prime Minister, 2025a). Prime Minister Davis emphasized that these reforms move The Bahamas from reactive to proactive healthcare, establishing measurable targets for preventive care and community wellness programs (Government of The Bahamas, 2025).

The National Health Insurance Bill 2025, which repeals and replaces the 2016 Act, introduces revolutionary coverage ensuring that regardless of insurer, every Bahamian receives consistent, quality primary care through the

Standard Health Benefit (Government of The Bahamas, 2025). This universal approach to healthcare recognizes that access to medical care is not a privilege but a fundamental right, essential for human dignity and social participation. The Prime Minister's personal commitment to healthcare reform stems from lived experience; as he shared during the budget debate, his own brother died from renal failure, giving him intimate understanding of families' struggles when care systems fail (Office of the Prime Minister, 2025b).

Investing in Care Workers and Social Support

The 2025/2026 National Budget demonstrates unprecedented commitment to strengthening care systems through targeted investments in both paid and unpaid care work. Minister of Social Services Myles K. LaRoda announced increases across multiple care programs: the Subsistence/Support of Persons Contract Item increased from \$582,765 to \$1,582,765, representing a million-dollar investment in direct assistance; the Foster Care Programme increased to \$698,350 for stipend payments to Child Care Assistants monitoring foster children; and Grants to Charitable Organizations increased to \$986,300, with the Persis Rodgers Home for the Aged receiving a 100% increase and Abilities Unlimited receiving a 300% increase (Government of The Bahamas, 2025).

These investments recognize that over 40,000 Bahamians received direct social assistance last year through food, rent, utilities, burial support, and school uniforms, representing



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not acts of charity but acts of fairness ensuring no one is abandoned during hard times (Office of the Prime Minister, 2025b). The administration has also prioritized supporting caregivers, those unpaid heroes including neighbors checking on the sick and elderly, through expanded home care services and caregiver support programs. As Prime Minister Davis stated in his budget address: "These were not acts of charity. They were acts of fairness, ensuring that no one is abandoned simply because they've hit a hard time" (Office of the Prime Minister, 2025b).

REGIONAL SOLIDARITY: CARIBBEAN LEADERSHIP IN CARE TRANSFORMATION

The Tlatelolco Commitment: A Regional Revolution

The Caribbean region has emerged as a global leader in recognizing care as a human right and economic imperative. At the XVI Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean held in Mexico City in August 2025, member states approved the groundbreaking Tlatelolco Commitment, establishing a Decade of Action (2025-2035) to achieve substantive gender equality and build a care society (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC], 2025). This commitment recognizes that the care society proposal from Latin America and the Caribbean represents a new paradigm for sustainable development, equality, and peace that prioritizes the

sustainability of life and care of people and planet (United Nations in the Caribbean, 2025).

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued Advisory Opinion 31 in 2025, recognizing care as a stand-alone human right in three dimensions: receiving care, providing care, and exercising self-care (United Nations in the Caribbean, 2025). This landmark ruling means States must respect, protect, and guarantee the right to care with maximum available resources and without backsliding, placing care alongside health and education as a claimable right before national courts and the Inter-American system (ECLAC, 2025). The implications for The Bahamas are profound, requiring alignment of budgets, tax reforms, and social policies with principles of progressivity, non-regression, and substantive equality.

CARICOM's Gender Equality and Care Economy Framework

The Caribbean Community has developed comprehensive frameworks addressing the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work on women and its impact on economic participation. Research presented by the Caribbean Development Bank reveals critical disparities: more men than women participate in the regional labor force, but this measurement excludes the vital unpaid care work supporting families (Caribbean Development Bank, 2024). Dr. Halima DeShong of the University of the West Indies emphasizes: "If we treat the labour market only as the public paid labour market, then we're missing the unpaid care labour that underwrites



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economies" (Caribbean Development Bank, 2024).

CARICOM's approach to care recognizes its intersectional nature, acknowledging that factors like economic exclusion make individuals more vulnerable to violence, with unpaid women caregivers who depend on household members for income facing heightened vulnerability (United Nations Development Programme, 2024). The regional strategy emphasizes that achieving a care society requires comprehensive approaches considering care of individuals, society, and planet, placing recognition, redistribution, and reduction of unpaid care work at the center to ensure the right to care and advance gender equality.

Economic Transformation Through Care Investment

The International Labour Organization estimates that investment in universal child and long-term care services could generate up to 30 million jobs in Latin America and the Caribbean by 2035 (ILO, 2024). In the region, care work represents one-third of female employment, with sectors like domestic work employing 15 million workers, 76% of them in informal employment (ILO, 2024). These statistics underscore the economic potential of formalizing and investing in care work, transforming it from invisible labor into a driver of sustainable development.

UN Women Caribbean Deputy Representative Isiuwa Iyahan presented groundbreaking research showing that the gender gap in unpaid care work remains one of the most

glaring manifestations of inequality between women and men (UN Women Caribbean, 2024). The research emphasizes the need for the "5Rs of Decent Care Work": Recognize, Reduce, Redistribute unpaid care work, and Represent and Remunerate paid care work fairly. This framework provides actionable strategies for transforming care from a burden disproportionately borne by women into a shared social responsibility supported by adequate resources and recognition.

RBDF: DEFENDERS AND CAREGIVERS OF OUR NATION

Humanitarian Excellence in Action

The Royal Bahamas Defence Force embodies the dual mandate of defending sovereignty while providing compassionate care to citizens in their most vulnerable moments. Under The Defence Act, the RBDF maintains responsibility to provide assistance in times of disaster, a role that transforms our marines into caregivers when communities face crisis (Royal Bahamas Defence Force, 2024). This humanitarian mission has been demonstrated repeatedly, from Hurricane Dorian response to ongoing disaster relief operations across the Family Islands, where Defence Force personnel assume duties as emergency rescue personnel, search and rescue operators, and community support coordinators.

During Hurricane Joaquin's devastating impact on the southern Bahamas, RBDF Marines deployed to Acklins, Long Island, San Salvador,



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Crooked Island, and Rum Cay, not merely as military personnel but as neighbors helping neighbors rebuild their lives (RBDF, 2024).



The Force's Disaster Relief Containerized Equipment, functioning as a Mobile Base Camp, represents sophisticated humanitarian capability acquired under the Sandy Bottom Project, enabling rapid deployment of care and support to isolated communities when they need it most. Defence Force Aircraft transported medical supplies and personnel to affected islands, with Registered Nurse Felecia Turnquest from the Department of Public Health delivering critical care alongside RBDF support, demonstrating seamless integration of military logistics with healthcare delivery.

Community Care and Youth Development

Beyond crisis response, the RBDF demonstrates sustained commitment to community care through programs like the Rangers initiative, operating in fifty schools across The Bahamas with over 1,200 students actively involved (Royal Bahamas Defence Force, 2024). This 23-year program develops young leaders endowed with character, discipline, and

sense of national duty, serving as a certifying branch of the Governor General Youth Award Programme. The Commando Squadron regularly engages in community service, including assistance at the Bahamas Children Emergency Hostel, where Marines assembled and painted benches, maintained grounds, and mentored young men through the Ministry of Education's Success Ultimately Reassures Everyone (S.U.R.E.) Programme (RBDF, 2021).

The National Youth Guard program, with five successful cohorts completing training, represents innovative integration of care principles into military preparation. Over 160 cadets have gained job-ready skills in disaster preparedness and community service, with over 85% of graduates securing meaningful employment (Government of The Bahamas, 2025). These young people form a capable cadre of national first-responders, prepared to provide care and support during emergencies while embodying the principle that strength includes compassion and service includes care.

International Humanitarian Missions

The RBDF's commitment to care extends beyond national borders through participation in regional humanitarian missions. The deployment of 150 Defence Force officers to Haiti under the Multinational Security Support Mission demonstrates capacity to provide stabilizing presence while respecting human dignity (The Nassau Guardian, 2025). Operating under non-combatant rules of engagement, RBDF personnel focus on humanitarian support, maritime security, and protection of vulnerable populations,



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recognizing that true security encompasses human security and that military strength must be balanced with humanitarian compassion.

BMMA: EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CARE LEADERS

As the Bahamas Military and Maritime Academy (BMMA) progresses toward full operational status, our institutional architecture reflects deep commitment to integrating care principles across all disciplines, preparing graduates who understand that leadership includes caregiving and that strength encompasses compassion.

**School of Health and Human Performance:
Excellence in Care Education**

This school stands at the forefront of care education, preparing professionals who will strengthen national health and wellness systems while advancing the science of human care. Programs in health informatics will train specialists to leverage technology for improving healthcare access, particularly for Family Island communities where distance creates barriers to care. Exercise science and health promotion curricula will produce graduates capable of designing community wellness programs that prevent disease and promote healthy aging, reducing the burden on acute care systems while improving quality of life.

The school will address critical shortages in specialized care fields, including geriatric care for our aging population and mental health practitioners addressing psychological wellness.

Students will study emerging fields like telemedicine, enabling remote care delivery to isolated communities, and health data analytics, improving resource allocation and care outcomes. The integration of traditional Bahamian healing practices with modern medical science will ensure culturally appropriate care that respects our heritage while embracing innovation.

Maritime health specializations will address unique challenges of seafaring populations, from dive medicine supporting our fishing and tourism industries to occupational health protecting maritime workers. The school will collaborate with regional institutions including the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) to address shared health challenges while contributing Bahamian innovations to regional care solutions.

**School of Social Sciences and Humanities:
Understanding Human Care Needs**

This school will prepare professionals who understand the social, cultural, and psychological dimensions of care, recognizing that effective care requires not just technical skills but deep understanding of human needs and community dynamics. Programs in social work will train practitioners to support vulnerable families, addressing root causes of social challenges while providing immediate assistance. Psychology and counseling curricula will produce mental health professionals equipped to address trauma, support caregivers experiencing burnout, and strengthen community resilience.



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Cultural studies programs will explore how Bahamian traditions of mutual aid and extended family support can be preserved and strengthened in modern contexts. Students will examine how urbanization and economic pressures affect traditional care networks, developing strategies to maintain community cohesion while adapting to social change. Research on gender and care will address the disproportionate burden on women, developing policies and programs that promote equitable distribution of care responsibilities.

The school will emphasize participatory research methodologies that involve care recipients and providers in identifying needs and developing solutions. This approach ensures that care systems reflect community priorities rather than imposing external models, strengthening local ownership and sustainability of care initiatives.

School of Business and Information Technology: Innovation in Care Systems

The digital transformation of care systems demands professionals who can leverage technology to improve efficiency, accessibility, and quality of care services. This school will prepare graduates to design and implement digital health platforms connecting patients with providers, develop apps supporting family caregivers with resources and training, create data systems tracking care needs and outcomes, and establish cyber-security protocols protecting sensitive health information.

Business programs will address the economics of care, training professionals to

develop sustainable financing models for care services, manage care facilities efficiently while maintaining quality, create social enterprises addressing care gaps, and design insurance products covering long-term care needs. Students will study international best practices in care system financing while developing solutions appropriate for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) with limited resources but strong community networks.

The school will emphasize ethical considerations in care technology, ensuring that digital solutions enhance rather than replace human connection. Students will learn to balance efficiency with empathy, recognizing that while technology can improve care delivery, the human element remains irreplaceable in providing comfort, dignity, and emotional support.

School of Engineering and Applied Sciences: Infrastructure for Care

Modern care systems require sophisticated infrastructure, from accessible buildings to medical equipment to communication systems enabling coordinated care delivery. This school will prepare engineers and technologists to design healthcare facilities resilient to hurricanes and climate change, develop renewable energy systems ensuring reliable power for medical equipment, create water and sanitation systems supporting public health, and engineer assistive technologies enhancing independence for persons with disabilities.

The focus on universal design will ensure that all infrastructure considers the needs of



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elderly persons, individuals with disabilities, children, and caregivers. Students will learn to integrate accessibility from conception rather than retrofitting, creating environments that support dignity and independence for all users. Coastal engineering programs will address the unique challenges of providing care infrastructure in low-lying island communities vulnerable to sea-level rise and storm surge.

Security and Sustainability Research Institute (SSRI): Advancing Care Knowledge

The SSRI will conduct cutting-edge research advancing understanding of care systems, social protection, and human security. Research priorities will include the economics of care in Small Island Developing States, examining how limited resources can be optimally allocated to maximize care coverage and quality. Climate change and care systems research will investigate how environmental changes affect care needs and delivery, developing adaptation strategies for health and social services.

Studies on the silver economy will explore how digital solutions can support aging in place while maintaining human connection and dignity. Research on care and national development will quantify the economic returns from care investment, demonstrating that expenditure on care systems represents investment in human capital and economic productivity. The Institute will examine informal care networks, documenting traditional Bahamian care practices and identifying ways to support and strengthen community-based care. Collaborative research with regional and international partners will

position BMMA as a thought leader in care innovation for island states. The Institute will host annual conferences bringing together researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to share knowledge and develop collaborative solutions to care challenges. Student involvement in research projects will ensure that the next generation of care leaders combines practical experience with theoretical understanding.

CALL TO ACTION: BUILDING A CARING SOCIETY

On this International Day of Care and Support, I call upon all members of the RBDF community, to embrace our collective responsibility for building a society where care is valued, supported, and shared equitably.

- **Recognize Care Work:** Acknowledge the vital contributions of all who provide care, whether paid or unpaid, visible or invisible. Honor the nurse working double shifts and the father caring for a child with disabilities. Their work sustains our families, communities, and nation.
- **Support Care Providers:** Advocate for decent wages and working conditions for paid care workers. Support family members providing unpaid care through respite services, training, and financial assistance. Recognize that caregiver burnout affects care quality, making support for providers essential for those receiving care.



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- **Share Care Responsibilities:** Challenge traditional gender roles that place care burden disproportionately on women. Men must step forward as equal partners in providing care for children, elderly parents, and community members. Organizations must implement family-friendly policies enabling all employees to balance work with care responsibilities.
- **Invest in Care Systems:** Support public and private investment in care infrastructure, from childcare centers to elder care facilities to disability support services. Recognize that care expenditure represents investment in human development and economic productivity, generating returns through improved health, education, and workforce participation.
- **Innovate Care Solutions:** Embrace technology and innovation that improves care access and quality while maintaining human dignity and connection. Support research developing new care models appropriate for our island context, leveraging our strong community networks while addressing modern challenges.

CARE AS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR FUTURE

The International Day of Care and Support 2025 arrives at a pivotal moment for The Bahamas, as we confront aging populations,

climate vulnerabilities, and evolving family structures that challenge traditional care systems. Yet we also possess unique strengths: resilient communities that have always cared for their vulnerable members, a government demonstrating unprecedented commitment to strengthening care infrastructure, and educational institutions like BMMA preparing the next generation of care leaders.

Care is not merely a service sector or social issue; it is the foundation upon which all other human activities rest. Without care, children cannot develop, workers cannot be productive, elderly persons cannot age with dignity, and communities cannot thrive. The theme "Care and Support for All" reminds us that we all need care at various life stages and that providing care is not burden but privilege, connecting us to our shared humanity.

The transformation from viewing care as private family responsibility to recognizing it as collective social investment requires fundamental shifts in how we value work, distribute resources, and organize society. The Bahamas can lead this transformation, demonstrating that small island states can pioneer innovative care models that strengthen both social cohesion and economic resilience.

As members of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force, we understand that true security encompasses human security and that protecting our nation includes caring for our people. Through BMMA, we will prepare professionals who integrate care principles across all disciplines, recognizing that engineers must design for



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accessibility, business leaders must value care work, health professionals must address social determinants, and military personnel must balance strength with compassion.

The investments announced by Prime Minister Davis, the regional commitments through the Tlatelolco Commitment, and the global recognition through this International Day create unprecedented momentum for transformation. We must seize this moment, building care systems that reflect our values of family, community, and mutual support while embracing innovation that improves care quality and accessibility.

Together, we can build a Bahamas where no one faces care needs alone, where those providing care receive recognition and support, and where care work drives economic opportunity rather than perpetuating inequality. This vision requires effort from all sectors, generations, and genders, recognizing that in caring for others, we ultimately care for ourselves and our collective future.

The ocean that surrounds our islands has taught us that we rise and fall together, that individual strength comes from collective support, and that survival requires cooperation. These lessons apply equally to care, reminding us that our humanity is measured not by individual achievement but by how we support our most vulnerable members. On this International Day of Care and Support, let us commit to building a caring society that honors our past, serves our present, and secures our future.

Sincerely,

Origin Deleveaux, Jr.,
President, Bahamas/Commanding Officer -
Bahamas Military and Maritime Academy
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