



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

Newsletter 11

NOVEMBER 20th 2025 | DISTRIBUTION FULL

WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY 2025



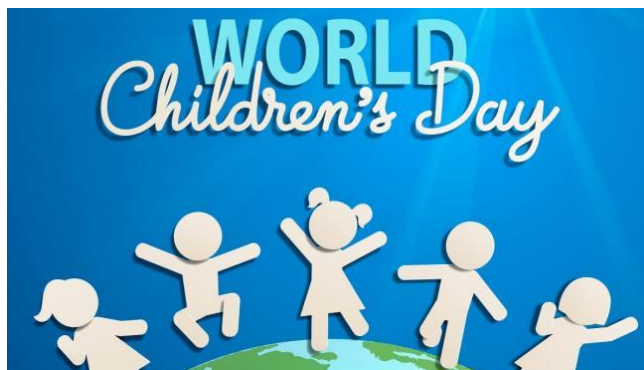
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(BMMA)

**INVESTING IN OUR CHILDREN:
BUILDING THE FUTURE OF THE
BAHAMAS**

Today, as we observe World Children's Day 2025, we celebrate and reaffirm our commitment to the rights, dignity, and potential of every child in The Commonwealth of The Bahamas. This year's dual themes, "My Day, My Rights" from UNICEF and "Investing in our children is investing in our future", converge to remind us that children are not merely tomorrow's leaders but today's rights-holders whose voices must be heard, whose rights must be protected, and whose dreams must be nurtured (UNICEF, 2025a; Vedantu, 2025).

The 2025 theme "My Day, My Rights" emphasizes children's lived experiences and their right to participate in decision-making processes appropriate to their age and maturity (UNICEF,

2025b). This participatory approach transforms how we engage with children, not as beneficiaries of adult benevolence but as partners in creating their own futures. When we truly listen to children, we discover that they possess unique insights into problems affecting them and innovative solutions that adults might overlook. The theme challenges institutions, communities, and families to create spaces where children can safely express their opinions, share their concerns, and contribute to shaping the world they will inherit.



The complementary theme "Investing in our children is investing in our future" underscores the economic and social imperative of prioritizing children in national development planning (Vedantu, 2025). Research consistently demonstrates that investments in early childhood development, education, health, and protection yield substantial returns, not only in individual outcomes but in national prosperity, stability, and progress. Countries that prioritize child welfare consistently outperform those that neglect their youngest citizens, as today's children become tomorrow's workforce, leaders, and innovators



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who will drive economic growth and social advancement (SDG Resources, 2025).

For The Bahamas, investing in children means more than providing education and healthcare, it means building a nation where every child in our commonwealth can dream without limits. It means ensuring that the young girl in Rock Sound, Eleuthera, has the same opportunities as her counterpart in Lyford Cay. It means recognizing that the boy selling guineps and water on the sidewalk to help his family possesses talents that, when nurtured, could revolutionize our economy. Every child hawking conch shells to tourists, every young person helping their grandparents in the fish market, every student walking miles to school in Andros, these are not just children surviving but potential leaders, innovators, and nation-builders waiting for us to unlock their possibilities.

BAHAMIAN CONTEXT: OUR CHILDREN, OUR HERITAGE, OUR HOPE

Traditional Family Structures and Community Support

The Bahamas possesses unique cultural traditions of child-rearing that predate formal children's rights frameworks but embody many of their principles. Extended family networks where grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins share child-rearing responsibilities create support systems that protect children during family challenges. When a parent faces unemployment, illness, or personal difficulties, this extended family system ensures children maintain stability, continuity of care, and emotional security. The

grandmother raising her daughter's children while that daughter seeks employment opportunities abroad, the uncle mentoring his nephew after the boy's father passed away, the older sister who assumes parenting responsibilities for younger siblings, these family arrangements demonstrate Bahamian resilience and collective responsibility for children's wellbeing.

The Bahamian tradition of community oversight, where neighbors feel empowered to correct misbehaving children and celebrate their achievements, creates informal protection systems supplementing formal child welfare mechanisms. This "it takes a village" approach means children grow up knowing multiple adults care about their wellbeing, providing support during difficulties and accountability during moments of poor judgment. Church communities play particularly vital roles, providing youth programs, mentorship, educational support, and emergency assistance to families struggling to meet children's basic needs. Sunday schools, youth choirs, vacation Bible schools, and church-sponsored educational initiatives offer children safe spaces for development while reinforcing values of service, integrity, and community responsibility.

Family Island communities demonstrate particularly strong child protection through communal care arrangements where everyone knows every child and their circumstances. When a child shows signs of distress, teachers, shopkeepers, mailboat captains, and community elders notice and intervene, ensuring vulnerable children receive support before situations become crises. This community vigilance creates safety



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nets especially important in settlements where formal social services may be limited and where children's wellbeing depends on community members' willingness to look after their own. The practice of "minding" children, where families informally foster children whose parents face temporary difficulties, provides flexible, culturally appropriate responses to family challenges while maintaining children's connections to their communities and schools.

CHALLENGES FACING BAHAMIAN CHILDREN

Despite strong cultural traditions supporting children, Bahamian children face significant challenges requiring urgent attention and sustained intervention. Poverty affects too many families, with children experiencing food insecurity, inadequate housing, and barriers to educational success stemming from economic disadvantage. The child who cannot afford school supplies, who wears torn shoes to class, who misses school to help parents earn income, who goes hungry because there is insufficient food at home, these realities exist across our nation, from urban Nassau to remote Family Island settlements. Economic hardship creates cascading effects on children's development, health, educational achievement, and future opportunities, requiring comprehensive social protection systems that address root causes rather than merely managing symptoms.

The breakdown of traditional family structures in some communities, driven by urbanization, migration, teenage pregnancy, incarceration,

substance abuse, and other pressures, leaves some children without adequate adult supervision and support. Single-parent households, particularly mother-headed households facing both child-rearing and breadwinning responsibilities, often struggle to provide children with everything they need despite tremendous effort and sacrifice. The mother working two jobs to support her children but rarely present for homework help or emotional support, the father paying child support but excluded from meaningful parenting involvement, the child shuttled between parents who cannot cooperate on co-parenting, these situations affect children's emotional security and development.

Violence exposure remains a serious concern, with some children witnessing domestic violence, community violence, or experiencing abuse that creates lasting trauma affecting mental health, educational performance, relationships, and future wellbeing. The child who flinches at raised voices because of home violence, who cannot concentrate in school because of community shootings near their house, who suffers abuse in silence because they fear reporting will make situations worse, these children deserve protection requiring vigilant child welfare systems, accessible mental health services, and community interventions addressing violence at source. The normalization of corporal punishment in some homes and schools perpetuates cycles of violence, teaching children that physical force represents acceptable conflict resolution.

Children with disabilities and special needs often lack adequate support services, particularly in



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Family Islands where specialized resources may be unavailable. The autistic child whose school lacks trained special education teachers, the deaf child unable to access sign language instruction, the child with learning disabilities labeled as "slow" rather than receiving appropriate interventions, these situations deny children opportunities to develop their full potential. Mental health services for children remain insufficient despite growing recognition of needs, with limited counselors, long waiting lists for services, and stigma that prevents families from seeking help. The depressed teenager who sees no future, the anxious child whose worries interfere with daily functioning, the trauma-exposed child who cannot process their experiences, these children need accessible, quality mental health support currently inadequate across our archipelago.

THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND CHILDREN'S WELLBEING

Bahamian children increasingly navigate digital worlds that offer both opportunities and risks, requiring adults to provide guidance, protection, and digital literacy education preparing children for safe, responsible online engagement. The child exposed to cyberbullying, the teenager comparing themselves to unrealistic social media images, the pre-teen encountering inappropriate content online, these situations require parental involvement, school-based digital citizenship education, and platform accountability measures protecting children from digital harms. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated children's digital engagement while revealing stark digital

divides, between children with reliable internet access and devices versus those lacking connectivity, between children who received remote learning support versus those who fell behind academically.

Addressing digital inequality requires ensuring that every Bahamian child can access the internet and digital devices necessary for modern education and opportunity. The Family Island child who cannot complete online assignments because of unreliable electricity and internet, the urban child sharing a single device among multiple siblings, the teenager unable to apply for scholarships or jobs because they lack internet access, these situations create educational and economic disadvantages requiring infrastructure investments and programs providing devices and connectivity to disadvantaged families. The Davis administration's emphasis on digital literacy in curriculum reforms recognizes that children's future success requires technological competencies alongside traditional academic skills (The Tribune, 2025b).

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ON CHILDREN

As a low-lying archipelagic nation, The Bahamas faces existential climate threats that disproportionately affect children who will inherit a transformed environment. Rising sea levels threaten coastal communities where most Bahamians live, potentially displacing families and destroying infrastructure supporting children's education and healthcare access. Increasingly frequent and intense hurricanes



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disrupt children's lives through property damage, displacement, trauma, school closures, and economic hardships as parents lose employment and communities struggle to rebuild. Hurricane Dorian's devastation of Abaco and Grand Bahama in 2019 demonstrated climate change's catastrophic impacts on children, deaths, displacement, trauma, educational disruption, and ongoing recovery challenges affecting thousands of children's development.

Children's rights in the climate crisis context include rights to safe environments, to participate in climate policy discussions, and to inherit a viable planet. Youth climate activists globally, including Caribbean young people, have demanded that adults take urgent action addressing climate change that threatens their futures. The Bahamian child who will inherit our climate crisis deserves adults who act decisively reducing emissions, building climate resilience, and ensuring that adaptation measures protect children's rights to education, health, and development despite environmental changes. Prime Minister Davis's climate advocacy at the UN General Assembly, positioning climate finance as humanitarian finance essential for coastal communities, reflects understanding that climate action represents children's rights protection (United Nations General Assembly, 2024).

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP: PRIME MINISTER DAVIS'S TRANSFORMATIVE VISION FOR CHILDREN

Education Revolution: Building Foundations for Success

The Davis administration has launched the most comprehensive education transformation in Bahamian history, recognizing that quality education forms the cornerstone of children's rights and national development. The Bahamas Education Sector Transformation (BEST) Project, supported by the Caribbean Development Bank, represents a significant multi-million dollar investment designed to make the educational system more vibrant, inclusive, and resilient (Office of the Prime Minister, 2024). This initiative addresses pandemic learning losses through the "Find Every Child" initiative, which actively identifies and re-engages students who left school during COVID-19, ensuring no child's education is permanently derailed by circumstances beyond their control.

The national curriculum overhaul Prime Minister Davis announced aims to modernize education for the 21st century economy, incorporating digital literacy, critical thinking, and skills development that prepare children for a rapidly changing world (The Tribune, 2025b). This transformation recognizes that yesterday's educational models cannot prepare children for tomorrow's challenges. As the Prime Minister emphasized, "We cannot afford to let another year go by without making the necessary investments and rolling out the needed reforms to create a better future for education in The Bahamas, not when education is so closely tied to productivity and economic growth" (Office of the Prime Minister,



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2024). The reforms address three major global shifts, climate change, digital transformation, and population growth, ensuring Bahamian children become "bold, innovative, critical thinkers capable of competing on the world stage."

Minister of Education Glenys Hanna Martin has championed holistic student support, ensuring special education, mental health services, and speech therapy are treated as essentials rather than luxuries (Office of the Prime Minister, 2025c). The expansion of the Marjorie Davis Institute, growth of behavioral support programs, and training of additional counselors demonstrate the administration's understanding that children's educational success depends on addressing their complete developmental needs. Prime Minister Davis observed firsthand the results: "I've seen students sitting tall again. I have seen parents with a renewed trust in our schools. I have seen teachers who feel seen, valued, and supported" (Office of the Prime Minister, 2025c). This comprehensive approach recognizes that trauma, learning differences, and mental health challenges do not diminish a child's potential but require responsive support systems that enable every child to excel.

The "Let's Swim" initiative addresses both safety and equity, providing swimming instruction to children across The Bahamas, a vital skill in an archipelagic nation where water surrounds every community (Office of the Prime Minister, 2025a). This program saves lives while creating opportunities for children to participate in aquatic sports and maritime careers. The National School Attendance Hotline tackles truancy through

community engagement, recognizing that attendance barriers often reflect deeper family challenges requiring supportive intervention rather than punitive measures. Together, these initiatives demonstrate the administration's commitment to removing obstacles that prevent children from accessing education, from hunger and transportation difficulties to safety concerns and family circumstances.

HEALTHCARE EXPANSION: PROTECTING CHILDREN'S PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING

The comprehensive 2025 Health Bills package that Prime Minister Davis championed represents a transformative investment in children's health across multiple dimensions (Office of the Prime Minister, 2025b). The Health Promotion and Wellness Bill establishes preventive care as a national priority, with school programs designed to establish healthy habits from childhood. For Bahamian children facing one of the highest obesity rates in the region (Caribbean Public Health Agency [CARPHA], 2021), these initiatives provide education about nutrition and exercise that can prevent chronic diseases before they develop. The emphasis on limiting harmful foods and requiring warning labels protects children from the ultra-processed products that fuel the chronic disease epidemic affecting too many young Bahamians.

The National Health Insurance prescription drug program expansion will directly impact thousands of Bahamian children living with chronic conditions. Where families previously faced impossible choices between medication and basic



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necessities, sacrificing a child's insulin to pay rent or skipping doses to stretch prescriptions, the program will provide free medications and medical supplies to over 160,000 NHI members with chronic diseases, up from 44,000 under the previous plan (Office of the Prime Minister, 2025b). For the diabetic child whose family struggled to afford insulin, for the asthmatic child whose family rationed inhalers, for children with any chronic condition requiring ongoing medication, this program represents not just healthcare but hope.

The Dental Professions Bill establishes modern standards protecting children's oral health, recognizing that dental care significantly impacts overall health, nutrition, and self-esteem (Office of the Prime Minister, 2025b). Too many Bahamian children have suffered unnecessarily from preventable dental problems due to inadequate regulation and access. The new standards, continuing education requirements, and disciplinary processes ensure that every child receives quality dental care regardless of their family's income or their island of residence. These health initiatives collectively demonstrate the Davis administration's understanding that children's right to health encompasses physical, mental, dental, and preventive care delivered through systems designed for equity and accessibility across our archipelago.

SOCIAL PROTECTION AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT: BREAKING CYCLES OF DISADVANTAGE

Beyond education and health, the Davis administration has strengthened social protection systems that safeguard children's wellbeing during family hardship. The expansion of social services support helps families remain stable during economic challenges, preventing circumstances that might force children to leave school or face neglect. The Home Assistance Repair Programme operating in New Providence, Grand Bahama, Abaco, and Bimini ensures families can maintain safe housing despite increasingly frequent and severe weather events, protecting children from the trauma and disruption of displacement (Office of the Prime Minister, n.d.). When grandparents raising grandchildren receive support to repair storm-damaged homes, we protect not just structures but childhood stability and family integrity.

The National Youth Guard Programme exemplifies the administration's commitment to empowering young people with skills, discipline, and purpose. Prime Minister Davis described the program as a "positive gang" that channels young Bahamians toward national development, challenging narratives that portray youth as unmotivated or problematic (The Tribune, 2025a). With over 250 graduates to date, many passing entrance exams to join the RBDF and Royal Bahamas Police Force, the program demonstrates that young people thrive when given opportunity and direction (Government of The Bahamas, 2025). The initiative is particularly personal to the Prime Minister, who emphasized, "For too long we have been broadsiding our young people instead of attempting to uplift them. We continue to categorize them as persons that



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are not productive, lazy, and not interested in anything positive. Today, this initiative demonstrates that that is not true" (The Nassau Guardian, 2025a).

The Ministry of Youth's All Boys Afterschool Programme addresses the specific challenges facing young men in our society, providing mentorship, skills development, and positive male role models. The Royal Bahamas Police Force's Second Chance Program offers redemptive pathways for young people who made mistakes, recognizing that children deserve opportunities to learn, grow, and contribute rather than being defined by single poor decisions. Youth Parliament and Youth Ambassadorships create platforms for young voices in governance, ensuring children and adolescents can participate in democratic processes and policy discussions affecting their futures. Together, these initiatives demonstrate the administration's holistic understanding that supporting children requires addressing education, health, protection, and participation simultaneously across multiple government ministries and community partners.

ROYAL BAHAMAS DEFENCE FORCE (RBDF): NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

National Youth Guard: Building Resilience and Patriotism

The Royal Bahamas Defence Force's flagship youth initiative, the National Youth Guard Programme, transforms young Bahamians into

skilled, disciplined, and civic-minded citizens ready to serve during national emergencies while gaining workforce-ready skills for civilian careers (Government of The Bahamas, 2025). This comprehensive 10-week training program, followed by a four-week internship, provides participants with disaster management training, technical skills development through partnership with the Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI), and military discipline that instills values of service, teamwork, and personal excellence (The Nassau Guardian, 2025a).

Cohort 4, comprising 104 trainees (59 males and 45 females), demonstrated their capabilities through emergency drill simulations, chants, and ambulance response scenarios observed by Prime Minister Davis at the RBDF Base in Coral Harbour in April 2025 (The Tribune, 2025a). Captain Sonia Miller, disaster risk management officer at the RBDF and programme coordinator, emphasized the training's real-world impact, noting that recruits provided crucial assistance during a bush fire in Grand Bahama, demonstrating that these young people are not merely training for future service but actively contributing to national security and disaster response today (The Tribune, 2025a; The Nassau Guardian, 2025a).

The program's internship component places participants with national agencies including the Bahamas Red Cross, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Disaster Reconstruction Authority (DRA), and LJM Maritime Academy, providing hands-on experience applying their skills in professional



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settings (The Nassau Guardian, 2023). This practical training creates pathways to employment both within and beyond law enforcement, with graduates gaining QuickBooks proficiency, electrical skills, plumbing expertise, and other technical capabilities that make them attractive candidates across multiple sectors. By receiving a weekly \$250 stipend during training, participants gain financial independence while developing skills, recognizing that young people often need immediate support to access longer-term opportunities.

Cohort 5's wellness check at BTVI in October 2025, conducted by Captain Miller, revealed the program's comprehensive approach to youth development (The Nassau Guardian, 2025b). As participants worked in electrical, plumbing, and QuickBooks classes, Captain Miller and BTVI President Dr. Linda Davis discussed strengthening program delivery and exploring further collaboration opportunities. This partnership between military discipline and technical education creates graduates with unique combinations of skills: technical expertise combined with disaster response capabilities, professional credentials reinforced by leadership training, and workforce readiness enhanced by the discipline and teamwork emphasized in military training environments.

RBDF RANGERS: DEVELOPING CHARACTER THROUGH SERVICE

The Royal Bahamas Defence Force Rangers Programme represents another critical youth development initiative, serving as a certifying

branch of the Governor General Youth Award (GGYA) Programme (Royal Bahamas Defence Force, n.d.). This high school course provides structured character development through physical fitness training, community service, skill acquisition, and expedition experiences that build confidence, resilience, and leadership capabilities. The Rangers Programme teaches young Bahamians the values of service, discipline, and excellence while connecting them to their national heritage and preparing them for future RBDF service or civilian careers requiring similar attributes.

The Rangers' special Divisions ceremony honoring HRH Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, showcased the program's achievements, with forty Rangers who earned bronze and silver GGYA awards demonstrating crisp drill movements and physical fitness capabilities to distinguished visitors (Royal Bahamas Defence Force, n.d.). Parade Commander D'Quan Smith and Colour Guard leader Johnathon Tellis Nord exemplified the leadership development the program fosters, while Ranger Raven Davis's presentation of a wreath for the HMBS Flamingo Monument demonstrated the program's emphasis on honoring sacrifice and maintaining military traditions. The recently formed Rangers Band adds artistic expression to military discipline, recognizing that comprehensive youth development includes cultural and creative dimensions alongside physical and tactical training.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND YOUTH MENTORSHIP



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Beyond formal programs, the RBDF maintains sustained engagement with young Bahamians through school visits, mentorship initiatives, and community partnerships. The September 2025 visit to Thelma Gibson Primary School, partnering with the Young Gentlemen's Club, demonstrated the Defence Force's commitment to reaching children early with positive messages about service, discipline, and citizenship (Royal Bahamas Defence Force, 2025). These interactions introduce children to potential military careers while modeling positive adult mentorship and demonstrating that uniformed service members are accessible community partners invested in youth success.

The RBDF's youth engagement recognizes that children growing up in challenging circumstances benefit from seeing successful role models who overcame similar obstacles. When Defence Force members share their journeys, from difficult childhoods to meaningful careers serving the nation, they provide children with proof that their current circumstances do not determine their futures. This mentorship operates both formally through structured programs and informally through community presence, with RBDF personnel serving as coaches, tutors, and youth group leaders who demonstrate that military values of honor, courage, and commitment apply equally to civilian life and community service.

**BAHAMAS MILITARY AND MARITIME
ACADEMY: PREPARING THE NEXT
GENERATION OF LEADERS**

As BMMA progresses toward full operational status, our institutional mission directly supports children's rights by creating educational pathways that transform young Bahamians into skilled professionals capable of contributing to national development, security, and prosperity. Each proposed school addresses aspects of children's wellbeing, development, and future opportunities while contributing to national capacities essential for protecting and advancing children's rights across The Bahamas.

**SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND HUMAN
PERFORMANCE: CHAMPIONING
CHILDREN'S WELLBEING**

This school will produce healthcare professionals, nutritionists, exercise scientists, and health educators specifically trained to address children's physical and mental health needs across our archipelago. Students will study pediatric care delivery, child nutrition, youth fitness programming, and adolescent mental health services, graduating with expertise directly applicable to improving Bahamian children's health outcomes. The curriculum will address regional challenges including childhood obesity, nutrition-related chronic diseases, mental health disorders, and preventable injuries that currently affect too many young Bahamians.

Graduates will implement school-based health initiatives, develop community wellness programs targeting children and families, and work within healthcare systems to ensure pediatric services meet international standards. Understanding that



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children's health extends beyond treating illness to promoting wellness and preventing disease, students will learn health promotion strategies appropriate for diverse settings. The emphasis on culturally competent care ensures graduates can work effectively within Bahamian communities, respecting local traditions while introducing evidence-based health practices that improve children's outcomes.

**School of Business and Information
Technology: Creating Economic Opportunities
for Youth**

This school will produce entrepreneurs, business leaders, and technology professionals capable of creating employment opportunities for the next generation while teaching youth the skills needed to succeed in 21st century economies. Programs in digital marketing, e-commerce, and financial technology will graduate young Bahamians equipped to establish businesses that provide jobs for their peers, creating economic opportunities in communities where youth unemployment threatens both individual futures and community stability.

Understanding that economic opportunity represents a children's rights issue, as adolescents aging out of child protection systems need pathways to self-sufficiency, the school will emphasize youth entrepreneurship, skills development, and financial literacy. Graduates will establish mentorship programs teaching teenagers business concepts, implement youth employment initiatives providing first job opportunities, and create training programs

preparing young people for careers in Bahamas' dominant industries including tourism, finance, and maritime commerce. The integration of technology with business education prepares students to lead digital transformation that creates opportunities for young Bahamians who might otherwise face limited prospects in traditional employment sectors.

**School of Engineering and Applied Sciences:
Building Climate-Resilient Futures for
Children**

Children's rights to safe environments, quality education, and healthcare access depend on resilient infrastructure capable of withstanding climate impacts. This school will produce engineers capable of designing and maintaining systems essential for children's wellbeing, from hurricane-resistant schools and healthcare facilities to renewable energy systems ensuring reliable electricity for educational and medical equipment. Students will study climate-adaptive design, disaster risk reduction, and resilient infrastructure development, graduating with expertise directly applicable to protecting Bahamian children from climate change impacts.

Coastal engineering programs will address sea-level rise threatening communities where children live, developing solutions that protect homes, schools, and vital infrastructure from ocean encroachment. Renewable energy and robotics programs will prepare graduates to implement sustainable technologies reducing carbon emissions while creating employment opportunities in emerging sectors. Understanding



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that children inherit the infrastructure we build and the environmental consequences of our energy choices, graduates will prioritize sustainability alongside functionality, ensuring their projects contribute to rather than compromise children's futures.

School of Military Science and Strategy: Protecting Children Through Security and Service

This school will produce military leaders and security professionals who understand that national security includes protecting children from violence, exploitation, trafficking, and abuse. Programs in disaster preparedness will train graduates to coordinate evacuations that prioritize children's safety, establish emergency shelters meeting children's special needs, and implement recovery programs addressing children's trauma following disasters.

Understanding that children represent particularly vulnerable populations during emergencies, students will learn to incorporate child protection principles into disaster response and recovery operations.

Intelligence and security courses will address transnational crimes affecting children including trafficking, exploitation, and online abuse, preparing graduates to dismantle criminal networks threatening Bahamian children. The emphasis on comprehensive leadership development will produce military officers who model integrity, service, and ethical decision-making, providing positive role models for youth considering military careers. By integrating child

protection, disaster response, and community security into military education, BMMA will graduate security professionals who understand that protecting the nation means protecting its most vulnerable citizens, especially children.

School of Maritime and Coastal Studies: Connecting Children to Ocean Heritage

This school will preserve and transmit maritime knowledge and skills that have sustained Bahamian families for generations while preparing children for careers in our blue economy. Programs in navigation, maritime logistics, and sustainable fisheries management will ensure young Bahamians can access the ocean-based livelihoods that supported their ancestors while employing modern technologies and sustainable practices. Understanding that many Bahamian children grow up in coastal communities where livelihoods depend on ocean resources, graduates will teach maritime skills to youth, create opportunities for children to safely engage with their ocean heritage, and ensure that future generations can benefit from marine resources we responsibly manage today.

The integration of marine conservation with maritime commerce recognizes that children's futures depend on healthy oceans providing food, employment, climate regulation, and the natural beauty attracting tourism that supports thousands of Bahamian families. Graduates will implement programs teaching children about ocean ecosystems, engage youth in conservation initiatives, and create pathways for young people to pursue marine science careers. By connecting



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children to ocean heritage while teaching conservation principles, these programs ensure that future generations can enjoy the same ocean experiences that enriched their parents' and grandparents' childhoods.

School of Professional Studies and Continuing Education: Supporting Families and Community Development

This school's non-credit programs will provide parenting education, family support services, and community development initiatives that indirectly benefit children by strengthening families and communities. Programs teaching positive parenting, child development, and family communication equip parents with knowledge and skills to support children's healthy development. Lifelong learning opportunities for adults create economic opportunities for parents struggling financially, enabling them to better provide for children's needs. Senior learning programs support grandparents raising grandchildren, providing them with current information about child-rearing and education that helps them effectively parent grandchildren in contemporary contexts different from when they raised their own children.

The Division of Professional Studies will design training for youth workers, teachers, and child-serving professionals that improves service quality across sectors affecting children. By maintaining strong connections with communities and responding to expressed needs, the school will help build community capacity to support

children's development, protection, and wellbeing. The emphasis on accessible, responsive programming recognizes that supporting children's rights requires strengthening the families and communities where children grow up.

Center for Academic Success: Preparing Every Child for Higher Education

The Center for Academic Success will ensure that Bahamian students from disadvantaged backgrounds can access higher education opportunities that might otherwise be foreclosed by inadequate academic preparation. College preparatory programs will address learning gaps, provide intensive remediation in core subjects, and build study skills necessary for post-secondary success. By removing barriers that prevent capable students from accessing higher education due to inadequate secondary preparation, the center will create pathways for first-generation college students to achieve educational goals.

Understanding that children's educational trajectories often diverge early, the center will partner with secondary schools to identify and support students at risk of not meeting college entrance requirements. Targeted interventions addressing literacy, numeracy, and foundational knowledge gaps will prevent potential from being wasted because children lacked access to quality early education or experienced disruptions during formative learning periods. The center's work directly supports SDG 4's emphasis on inclusive, equitable quality education by ensuring that



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socioeconomic disadvantage does not permanently limit children's educational opportunities.

**Security and Sustainability Research Institute:
Advancing Knowledge for Children's Futures**

The institute will conduct research on issues directly affecting children including climate change impacts, disaster risk reduction, food security, water quality, and public health, generating knowledge that informs policies and programs protecting children's wellbeing. Research on climate adaptation will identify strategies protecting children from environmental changes threatening their health, safety, and development. Studies on food security will address nutrition challenges affecting children's physical and cognitive development. Water quality research will ensure children have access to safe drinking water essential for health.

By positioning BMMA as a research institution advancing knowledge about children's rights, protection, and development in Bahamian contexts, the institute will contribute evidence-based approaches to child welfare policy and practice. Research partnerships with international organizations, regional institutions, and community organizations will ensure findings translate into practical applications improving children's lives. The integration of student researchers into institute projects will train the next generation of scholars committed to advancing children's rights through rigorous inquiry and evidence-based advocacy.

**OUR SACRED RESPONSIBILITY TO
CHILDREN**

As we observe World Children's Day 2025, we must move beyond celebration to recommitment, renewing our dedication to protecting, nurturing, and empowering every child in The Commonwealth of The Bahamas. The twin themes "My Day, My Rights" and "Investing in our children is investing in our future" converge in a simple truth: children are not passive recipients of adult charity but active rights-holders whose voices must be heard, whose rights must be protected, and whose potential must be unleashed for our nation to prosper (UNICEF, 2025a; Vedantu, 2025).

Prime Minister Philip Davis's vision of education reform, healthcare expansion, social protection, and youth empowerment demonstrates the kind of comprehensive investment children deserve. The Royal Bahamas Defence Force's National Youth Guard and Rangers programmes prove that young people thrive when given opportunity, discipline, and purpose. CARICOM's regional frameworks protecting children's rights show that small nations can achieve more together than apart. The Bahamas Military and Maritime Academy's emerging educational architecture will train professionals specifically equipped to advance children's wellbeing across every dimension of development.

But institutions, programs, and policies mean nothing without the daily commitments of



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individuals who interact with children, parents, teachers, coaches, neighbors, extended family members, and community leaders. Every adult who listens to a child with respect, who protects a vulnerable child from harm, who encourages a struggling child to persevere, who creates opportunities for a disadvantaged child to succeed, these individuals transform children's rights from abstract principles into lived reality. The grandmother patiently helping her grandchild with homework, the uncle mentoring his nephew through adolescence, the teacher staying after school to tutor struggling students, the neighbor who notices signs of child abuse and reports it, the coach who builds struggling athletes' confidence, these everyday heroes demonstrate that investing in children begins with how we treat the children in our daily lives.

As we commemorate the 36th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, let us recommit to the vision that animated that historic document: a world where every child enjoys dignity, protection, education, healthcare, and voice regardless of circumstances of their birth. For The Bahamas, this means ensuring that the child in Ragged Island enjoys the same rights and opportunities as the child in Lyford Cay, that the girl-child can dream as boldly as her male counterparts, that children with disabilities receive the support they need to thrive, and that no child's potential is wasted because adults failed to provide the opportunities they deserved.

The children of The Bahamas, from Nassau to Inagua, from Bimini to San Salvador, are not merely our future but our present, not merely our

responsibility but our greatest resource. Every child selling coconuts to tourists possesses untapped talents that could transform industries. Every child struggling in school today could become tomorrow's innovator solving challenges we cannot yet imagine. Every child facing adversity today could become tomorrow's leader if we provide support, opportunity, and belief in their potential.

May God bless the children of The Bahamas, and may we prove worthy of their trust.

Dr. Origin Deleveaux, Jr., DD MSc, JP.,
Commander

President, Bahamas Military and Maritime
Academy (BMMA)



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