



From the Desk *of the*

Special Edition: 07

President

The Bahamas Military and Maritime Academy

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World Youth Skills Day 2025

“Youth Empowerment Through AI and Digital Skills,”



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Youth Empowerment Through AI and Digital Skills

On this World Youth Skills Day 2025 – marking the 10th anniversary of the UN observance – we reflect on the transformative role of skills development in national resilience and security. The United Nations established this day to underscore the strategic importance of equipping young people with the skills needed for employment, entrepreneurship, and for addressing global challenges while advancing sustainable development. This year’s theme, *“Youth Empowerment Through AI and Digital Skills,”* emphasizes that in an era of rapid technological change, empowering youth with

digital proficiencies is central to unlocking career opportunities, strengthening national security, and achieving sustainable progress. Globally, leaders recognize that bridging the digital skills gap is essential to resilience – without action, the digital divide will widen, especially for vulnerable youth. Embracing youth skill-building in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is therefore not only an educational priority but a national imperative for The Bahamas’ future readiness.

GOVERNMENT PROGRESS: PRIME MINISTER DAVIS’S YOUTH INITIATIVES

Prime Minister the Hon. Philip Davis has championed several youth-focused programs (2023–2025) that advance education, connectivity, and skills training. These initiatives align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and are laying the groundwork for youth empowerment in the digital age:





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- **National Youth Guard:** More than 160 cadets have been trained through this program (four cohorts), gaining job-ready skills in disaster preparedness, community service, and discipline. Over 85% of graduates have already secured meaningful employment – a testament to the program’s success. These young leaders form a ready reserve of first-responders to support the nation during emergencies and crises.



- **National School Breakfast Programme:** Over half a million free breakfasts have been served to students at 90 schools across our islands. This ensures children start the day nourished and ready to learn, significantly reducing absenteeism and improving school readiness. (Notably, reaching the 500,000 meals milestone also advances SDG 2: Zero Hunger by combating child hunger in our schools.)
- **ParkConnect Free Wi-Fi:** The government’s launch of nationwide free Wi-Fi in public parks ensures at least one free Wi-Fi hotspot in every constituency.

This initiative dramatically expands youth access to online learning platforms, job opportunities, e-government services, and other digital resources. By providing connectivity as a public service, thousands of Bahamians – especially those who could not afford internet – can now participate in virtual education, conduct job searches, and develop digital skills *at no cost*. This investment in digital infrastructure helps close the connectivity divide and is as crucial to development as roads or utilities in the modern era.

- **“Upskill” Training Platform:** The government is introducing Upskill, a new online platform that will offer courses in vital *future-oriented skills* – such as data analysis, IT administration, graphic design, and other in-demand digital competencies – to help Bahamians qualify for emerging job markets. Prime Minister Davis described Upskill as *“another bridge we are building to opportunities”* for young people. This platform will enable our youth (and others seeking to retrain) to gain certifications in AI, technology, and creative digital fields, enhancing the nation’s overall talent pool for the jobs of tomorrow.

Together, these efforts chart a comprehensive path for youth empowerment – spanning nutrition, education, civic training, connectivity, and workforce development. They illustrate a holistic approach by the Government: from making sure students can learn on a full stomach,



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to preparing young Bahamians for climate disasters, to connecting communities to the digital world, and finally to teaching the high-tech skills needed in the 21st-century economy. This multi-faceted investment in youth aligns closely with our national development and security goals, ensuring that the next generation is healthy, educated, connected, and highly skilled.

REGIONAL STRATEGIES IN THE CARIBBEAN FOR DIGITAL SKILLS

The Bahamas is not alone in this push; across the **Caribbean region and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**, leaders are prioritizing digital skills development as key to future resilience. In February 2025, CARICOM Heads of Government agreed to establish a **Caribbean Digital Skills Commission** and adopted a *“Strategic Framework for Regional Digital Resilience 2025–2030,”* aiming to coordinate efforts on ICT infrastructure, skills training, and digital inclusion throughout member states. CARICOM’s youth agenda explicitly frames **young people as “the architects of the future”** in a digital age, calling for bold collaboration to *“take advantage of the digital revolution, and accelerate regional integration”* through innovation.

At the SIDS level, the United Nations has highlighted digital transformation as a driver of sustainable development in island states. A 2024 high-level SIDS conference side-event on “Digital Transformation for Resilience” (held in Antigua and Barbuda) issued an **urgent call to boost digital capacity in Eastern Caribbean**

SIDS. UN officials there noted that as 2030 approaches, *“the role of digital technologies is key to accelerate the SDGs and impact social protection, inequality, and access for the most vulnerable”*. However, regional leaders also acknowledged **persistent challenges** that must be overcome: *“the Caribbean region continue(s) to face many challenges, including lack of digital skills for the digital world, gaps in digitization, (and) policy... challenges, as well as significant gaps in the digital trust environment”*. In other words, while Caribbean youth are eager and populations increasingly online, there is work to do in upgrading skills training, improving affordable access, and building trust in digital services.

BMMA’S EVOLVING ROLE & FUTURE-FACING SCHOOLS OF STUDY

As The Bahamas Military and Maritime Academy (BMMA) continues its development, it is strategically aligning its academic vision with national efforts to empower youth through technology, innovation, and resilience-building. In keeping with the 2025 World Youth Skills Day theme—**“Youth Empowerment Through AI and Digital Skills”**—BMMA’s proposed schools and centers are designed to equip young Bahamians with both discipline and future-ready capabilities. Each area of study integrates military excellence with 21st-century knowledge demands:

- **School of Business & Information Technology (SBIT):**

This school will prepare cadets and



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students for leadership in the digital economy, offering programs in cybersecurity, AI, data analytics, digital content creation, and sustainable business. SBIT fosters innovation and ethical tech integration, ensuring graduates are adept in both military and civilian domains.

- **School of Military Science & Strategy (SMSS):**

Bridging traditional defense training with next-generation tools, this school embeds AI, geographic information systems, and autonomous technologies into curricula on leadership, disaster response, and intelligence. Graduates will be equipped to lead confidently in a rapidly evolving security landscape.

- **School of Engineering & Applied Sciences (SEAS):**

With programs in robotics, coastal engineering, renewable energy, and the Internet of Things (IoT), SEAS responds to The Bahamas' development and climate priorities. Students will engage in hands-on problem-solving with smart infrastructure and defense technologies, addressing the technical skills gap head-on.

- **School of Maritime & Coastal Studies (SMCS):**

As a maritime nation, The Bahamas needs skilled leaders in ocean governance. SMCS will train students in navigation, sustainable fisheries, marine conservation,

and blue economy management—including cutting-edge areas like autonomous maritime systems and coastal resilience.

- **School of Health & Human Performance (SHHP):**

SHHP prepares future professionals to strengthen national well-being through careers in health informatics, sports science, wellness technologies, and telemedicine. It emphasizes digital health solutions that support both community and defence health priorities.

- **School of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences (SAHSS):**

This school nurtures cultural literacy, communication, and digital creativity—offering programs in digital production, intercultural communication, and social innovation. Students will explore the human dimensions of security, development, and digital life.

- **School of Professional Studies & Continuing Education (SPSCE):**

SPSCE offers flexible, non-credit programs focused on professional advancement, AI collaboration, and upskilling for the future of work. Through specialized divisions in military training, industry partnership, lifelong learning, and silver economy development, the school supports youth, adults, and older learners alike.



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- **Center for Academic Success (CAS):**
CAS will serve as BMMA’s academic support and bridge program hub, helping students transition from secondary school, navigate demanding coursework, and access digital learning tools. It includes tutoring, wellness services, and a college-preparatory division to foster inclusive, sustained success.
- **Security & Sustainability Research Institute (SSRI):**
SSRI leads BMMA’s applied research in climate resilience, AI ethics, public safety, and socio-economic inclusion. With a strong regional focus, the Institute supports innovative inquiry into how education, technology, and sustainability intersect in the Caribbean’s evolving security environment.

strengthening national resilience and security in an increasingly digital world. Prime Minister Davis recently emphasized at the SDG Youth Conference that young people “*are not just tomorrow’s leaders; you are today’s trailblazers, catalysts for transformation, and the stewards of our collective future*”, and that sustainable development “*is an imperative that demands action from all sectors of society*”. This perspective underscores that empowered youth are a central pillar in our country’s strategy – their energy and innovation are crucial for tackling challenges from climate change to cybersecurity.

Our national focus on youth empowerment echoes broader regional priorities as well. For example, CARICOM’s incoming chairman, Prime Minister Andrew Holness of Jamaica, has highlighted the need to embrace digital technology (including AI) to drive growth, improve public safety, and enhance quality of life across the Caribbean – calling on “youth as the architects of the future” in the region’s development. Small Island Developing States like ours recognize that when our youth are skilled in technology, our whole society becomes more adaptable and resilient.

For BMMA, this means our mandate goes beyond the classroom or the base we are cultivating digitally-capable officers, analysts, engineers, and community leaders who can serve as force-multipliers for national security. A cohort of tech-savvy, civic-minded youth is a strategic asset: they bolster defense operations through enhanced cyber-readiness, support humanitarian missions with modern tools, and improve disaster response with data-driven strategies. In fact, graduates of

YOUTH AS STRATEGIC ASSETS



Investing in youth digital skills is not just about creating jobs; it is fundamentally about



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programme like the National Youth Guard already form “a capable cadre of national first-responders,” prepared to support The Bahamas in times of crisis – a role that is ever more critical as we face severe climate-driven emergencies. By nurturing these skill sets in young people, BMMA and The Bahamas are building a more secure, resilient future, in which our youth stand ready to safeguard their communities and collaborate with regional partners on shared security challenges.

CALL TO ACTION

As we commemorate World Youth Skills Day 2025, all members of the BMMA and RBDF community are called to actively support this youth empowerment agenda:

- **Champion Inclusion:** Commit to advocating for inclusive access to digital skills. Whether mentoring a young person, volunteering in a school tech program, or simply ensuring no colleague or subordinate is left behind in training, we must strive to bring digital literacy opportunities to all, especially youth from underrepresented communities.
- **Modernize Training:** Embrace and integrate AI tools and digital resources in our daily work and training activities. This could mean using simulation software for drills, encouraging junior officers to take online courses, or incorporating data analysis in planning exercises. By normalizing technology use in our

routines, we embed a culture of continuous learning and innovation.

- **Collaborate & Lead:** Help position BMMA as a digital skills hub. Support partnerships with government agencies, tech companies, and NGOs that can provide resources or expertise for youth programs. Be open to hosting joint workshops, participating in tech events, or piloting new training methods. Our Academy should be seen as a leader and collaborator in national digital empowerment efforts.
- **Empower Youth Leadership:** Recognize young people not just as learners, but as active agents of innovation and resilience. Give our youth platforms to voice ideas and take initiative. Whether through a BMMA youth advisory panel, hackathon team projects, or student-led community service, create spaces where young talent can solve problems and lead projects. Their fresh perspectives and tech-savvy can spark improvements in our operations and strategies.

By taking these actions, each one of us contributes to a stronger foundation for The Bahamas’ future. We all share responsibility in lifting up the next generation.

Conclusion: The empowerment of youth through AI and digital skills is integral to our national security, prosperity, and future readiness. BMMA – built on the proud legacy of the RBDF and now expanding into a comprehensive academy – is



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uniquely positioned to nurture these modern competencies among our nation's young people. Together with the government programs championed by Prime Minister Davis, the Academy will help shape a future where Bahamian youth are prepared, connected, and empowered to lead. This vision aligns with our guiding principles of "Knowledge, Security, Sustainability," ensuring that as we educate and train, we are also safeguarding the long-term security and development of The Bahamas. Let us all renew our commitment to investing in our youth, as they are the key to a resilient and thriving nation.

Sincerely,

Origin Deleveaux

President, Bahamas Military and Maritime Academy (BMMA)

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