



# In The K-NoW

## Network of Women (NoW) in ICT in the Caribbean

ISSUE 003 | MARCH 2023

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### ICT for Persons with Disabilities

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have the potential to enhance the quality of life for all individuals, particularly persons with disabilities. Recognising this potential, the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) launched over ten years ago work that focused on ICT for PWDs, which weeks to demonstrate and leverage ICT solutions to empower individuals with disabilities, promote social inclusion, and foster equitable access to education, employment and other opportunities in the Caribbean region.

Persons with disabilities often face numerous challenges in their daily lives, such as limited access to education, healthcare, employment, and social services. These challenges are further compounded by the barriers they encounter due to their disabilities, which may include physical, cognitive, or sensory impairments. The CTU acknowledges the transformative power of ICT in bridging the gap between persons with disabilities and the wider society, thereby creating a more inclusive environment for all.

IF YOU WANT TO BE IN THE K-NOW  
 please join our mailing list at :  
<https://form.jotform.com/CTUnion/in-the-k-now---caribbean-subscripti>

OR

Contact: CTU Focal Point for ITU's Network of Women  
 Caribbean Telecommunications Union  
 Tel. No.: 1-868-628-0281 Ext. 231;  
 Email: NoW@ctu.int



# Introducing



## WOMEN OF THE CTU



TRACY AKIE-RAYMOND



SHANEA LEWIS



NIA NANAN



MICHELLE GARCIA



FRANCOLA JOHN



CAMILLE FULLERTON-CHOW



TAMIKA CAMPBELL-CARTER

### Advancing Gender Equality: Integrating Parity and Mainstreaming into National ICT Agendas

The Secretariat of the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) presented a proposal at its recently concluded Executive Council statutory meeting to urge its Member States to make a conscious and concerted effort to advance gender equality by integrating parity and gender mainstreaming into their national Information and Communication Technology (ICT) agendas.

As ICT is a key driver of economic growth and social development, the CTU is committed to ensuring that all people, regardless of gender, have equal access to its benefits. By having Member States support gender equality in ICT policies and programs, the CTU aims to help bridge the digital gender divide and create opportunities for everyone.

CTU Secretary-General, Mr. Rodney Taylor, emphasised the importance of gender equality in ICT, stating, **"In today's digital age, the potential of ICTs to empower women and girls and to transform societies is immense. However, this potential will only be fully realised if we are able to eliminate existing gender disparities in access, use and benefits of ICTs. We call upon our Member States to actively work towards integrating gender equality into their national ICT agendas."** The Secretariat is leading by example as 54% of the professionals are women. See above.

To help achieve this goal, the CTU Secretariat has outlined several key recommendations for its Member States. Please see proposal **"Advancing Gender Equality: Integrating Parity and Mainstreaming into the National ICT Agendas of CTU Member States"** on our website at <https://www.ctu.int/document-repository/>. We are happy to announce the proposal was adopted by the Council and the Secretariat stands ready to assist with various resources and support channels.

# FEATURE ARTICLE

## GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES IN ICT

Written By: Mavis Johnson-Collie  
The Commonwealth of the Bahamas



In 2011, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) launched a new initiative “Girls in ICT”. The overarching objective of the initiative was to encourage greater participation by girls and women in the Information Communication Technology sector, while introducing them to the myriad of career choices available to persons with ICT skills. In 2015, just 8 months after I joined the Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority, URCA, I invited colleagues from the industry to partner with URCA and join more than 150 countries around the world, in organising the first observation of “International Girls in ICT Day”, GIICT in The Bahamas. The event successfully hosted about 60 female students in grade 9 to 12 from schools throughout New Providence.



The focus on girls in ICT over the last seven years has borne benefits. I mentioned the increase in participation, we have also seen from our post event evaluations that there continues to be an increase in the number of girls deciding to pursue careers in ICTs.



The partnerships with industry and other stakeholders since 2015, has been very productive, yielding internships for the young ladies, access to female leaders in the industry and life changing hands on experiences.

### ICTs and Persons with Disabilities (PWD)

For the first time, the local organisers of Girls in ICT (GIICT) look forward to welcoming girls with disabilities to the GIICT event this year. The Committee is reaching out to several special educational institutions to ensure that this year’s event is truly inclusive.



In my discussions with the leaders of persons with disabilities (PwD) stakeholder group leaders, there is no indication of a gender gap with regards to PwDs and ICTs.





In fact, the Disability Inclusion Consultant with the University of The Bahamas, Erin Brown, has witnessed an increase in the number of female students with disabilities, selecting computer science related majors.

All indicators are that there may be equity in the distribution of technological devices, training and services for students in this vulnerable segment of our population under the age of 18.

However, generally there are concerns regarding accessibility and affordability. According to the 2010 Bahamas Census report, of the more than 10,000 persons with disabilities, 19% were in households earning \$10,000 or less; 35% in households earning \$15k - \$40k and 5% lived in households with earnings over \$100,000. This suggests that barriers such as affordability and accessibility could still impede meaningful inclusion in the digital evolution for persons with disabilities.

URCA's work as regulator impacts not just those under its regulatory remit, but all consumers of ICT services. As an independent regulator of two critical sectors, URCA's work must further enhance the social and economic development of The Bahamas through the execution of the objectives of the Government's policy for the regulated sectors.

The sector policy speaks to all residents having access to affordable broadband to ensure adequate connectivity for all.

In pursuit of both the sector's policy objectives and URCA's overall work and in recognising that **ICT is the equaliser that provides PwDs with opportunities to make meaningful contributions to society, achieve work satisfaction, access training and engage socially**, URCA has initiated an ICTs and PwDs project. Initial work included engagement with the leaders of PwD stakeholder groups and the commissioning of a survey of persons with disabilities on several islands in The Bahamas to gather information about their access to, use of and assistance with available ICT services.







URCA has also facilitated my participation and that of other representatives of the PWD stakeholder groups in several workshops and seminars both in The Bahamas and within the region. These include two ICT for PwD Workshops co-sponsored by the CTU, one in 2016 and the other in 2022 in New Providence; and two ITU Accessible Americas seminars in Jamaica and Cuba.

Although this work is not completed, it is encouraging to note that persons with disabilities, both male and females, have been and are gainfully employed with several service providers.

The Bahamas Persons with disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act, 2014, mandates that all persons with disabilities should have access to Information Communication Technology (ICT).

We have received reports that even private institutions strive to ensure that electronic devices and or training opportunities, where and when they become available are equitably distributed and available to both girls and boys.

**While I have always been involved with women's organisations working to ensure that women are not left behind and that there is gender equality in all aspects of life, I first became involved with advocacy for persons with disabilities in the late 90s, following the birth of my eldest child who was born with mild cerebral palsy.**

I worked initially with smaller organisations for persons with disabilities. However, my formal work began in the early 2000s when I was appointed by the then Minister of Social Services, the Hon. Melanie Griffin, to a special taskforce to review certain sections of the draft bill for persons with disabilities. This work aided the eventual passing of The Bahamas Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act 2014.

The Act encourages nondiscrimination in any form against persons with disabilities and in certain instances makes it an offence.



Section 20 of the Act reads as follows:

**“every person with a disability shall be entitled to a barrier-free and disabled friendly environment to enable him to have access to buildings, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), roads and other social amenities, assistive or adaptive devices and other equipment to promote his mobility.”**

This provision in The Bahamas Act, and the national conversation around PwD and ICTs, is underpinned by the larger efforts made by international bodies concerned with the promotion, provision and enabling of accessible ICTs for all, including PwDs.

This was quite evident during the robust, stimulating and contentious discussions and negotiations that took place during the recent ITU Plenipotentiary Conference held in Bucharest, Romania in 2022 around several resolutions concerned with bridging the digital divide, particularly resolution 139.

**Unfortunately, text proposed supported by several Member States, which would have instructed the Director of the Development Bureau of the ITU to focus attention on certain vulnerable groups such as PwDs, did not make the final approved version as there was no consensus.**

This was disheartening to many including myself, who were engaging in the work of the ITU at this level for the first time.

However the experience was well worth the work and it is my hope that as we in the Caribbean continue to be exposed to training and opportunities in ICTs and adapt to the evolving digital environment, that we will remove barriers to meaningful connectivity and the affordable deployment of broadband for all, especially women, girls and persons with disabilities.

**About the Author: Mavis Johnson-Collie is a qualified Attorney and Public Outreach Communications Specialist. She is currently employed with the Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority as the International Relations Advisor in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.**





# Girls in ICT

## *Digital Skills for Life*

27 April 2023

Join us online!

[www.ctu.int/events](http://www.ctu.int/events)

## Girls in ICT Day 2023: Digital Skills for Life - Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow

27th April marks Girls in ICT Day 2023, a global initiative aimed at empowering girls and young women by encouraging their participation in the world of digital technology. This year's theme, "**Digital Skills for Life**" underscores the importance of equipping girls with the essential digital skills they need to excel in their personal and professional lives.

As we move further into the digital age, access to and proficiency in technology become increasingly crucial for growth and gender equality. Through various events and activities, Girls in ICT Day 2023 aims to inspire girls to develop digital skills, helping them to unlock their potential and contribute positively to the world.

### Why Digital Skills for Life?

The world is rapidly evolving, and digital technologies are transforming the way we live, work, and interact with one another. To remain competitive in the global market and to address the gender gap in ICT, it is essential to provide girls with the skills and resources necessary to navigate this digital landscape. Digital skills encompass not only basic computer literacy but also **coding, data analysis, cybersecurity** and more. These skills are valuable not just for career development, but also for everyday life, as they help individuals to communicate, solve problems and access critical information.



Please click the video for Message from Dr. Cosmas Zavazava, Director, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau

### Empowering Girls with Digital Skills:

Girls in ICT Day 2023 will see numerous initiatives worldwide to help girls gain digital skills for life.

These initiatives include:

- **Coding Workshops:** One of the CTU partners, the Caribbean Agency for Justice will be hosting a **Girls in ICT: CodeFest: Coding for Justice**.
- **Mentorship Programs:** NoW4WRC23 initiative through the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL) will be sharing more on their mentorship program for Girls in ICT
- **Cybersecurity Training:** Girls will learn the importance of data privacy and security, as well as how to protect themselves and their information online.
- **Digital Literacy Courses:** Will cover topics such as internet usage, social media and document creation.
- **Career Guidance Sessions:** Industry experts will help girls explore various ICT careers.

### The Impact of Girls in ICT Day

Girls in ICT Day plays a vital role in increasing awareness about the importance of including girls in the digital world. By fostering a supportive environment, the initiative strives to bridge the gender gap in ICT and create a more inclusive and diverse workforce. As girls acquire digital skills, they gain the confidence to pursue careers in technology, contribute to their communities, and drive global innovation.

#### Conclusion

**Digital Skills for Life**, the theme for Girls in ICT Day 2023, highlights the importance of empowering girls with essential digital skills that will not only benefit their professional lives but also enrich their personal experiences. By creating a more inclusive and diverse ICT workforce, we can harness the power of technology to build a brighter future for all. Let's come together to celebrate the potential of girls in ICT and support their journey toward success in the digital world.



# HIGHLIGHTS

MARCH 2023



**International Women's Day**  
**Webinar**

**FEATURE SPEAKER:**  
Tais Niffenegger  
ICT Safety Policy Manager - LATAM  
META

Dr. Maria Myers-Hamilton  
Managing Director, SMA, Jamaica

Ms. Desha Clifford  
Director, CANTO

Ms. Maria Celeste-Fuenmayor  
Telecommunications  
Specialist CITEL

Ms. Jennifer Manner  
Co-Chair - ITU's Network  
of Women for WRC23

**"Empowering Women: Promoting Gender Equality and Creating Opportunities"**  
**Wednesday 8th March 2023**

In commemoration of International Women's Day, the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) hosted a webinar titled **"Empowering Women: Promoting Gender Equality and Creating Opportunities"**. Our dynamic line up of speakers spoke to over 200 registrants on topics of mentorship, the need for more young women to take up careers in STEM and female leadership in the digital space.

## USTTI Training in Cybersecurity - Costa Rica

The CTU encouraged and ensured that our Member States benefitted from USTTI **Cybersecurity and Internet Policy Training** held during the period 14th - 16th March 2023 in Costa Rica. Eleven (11) candidates participated from Trinidad and Tobago (3), Barbados (2), Suriname (4), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (1) and Jamaica (1).



## Bridging the Gender Digital Divide

During the period 27th - 31st March 2023 Caribbean Women in ICT had the opportunity to benefit from USTTI Training on **"Bridging the Gender Digital Divide"** in Washington, D.C. In photo from left to right: Stephanie Charles-Soverall, Barbados; Meredith Leter, Suriname; Dr. Kim Mallalieu, Trinidad and Tobago; Mavis Johnson-Collie, The Bahamas; Xaviëra Agard, Suriname; and Simone Joseph-Ollivierre, St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Stay tuned as they share their learnings in the next issue of In the K-NoW.

# Upcoming

**2023**

**APRIL**  
**EVENTS**

**16th - 19th**

**ARIN 51 - Tampa, Florida**  
<https://arin.net/ARIN51>

**19th**

**1st ARIN Forum for High Level Officials**  
<https://arin.net>

**27th**

**CTU's Grls in ICT Webinar**  
[www.ctu.int/events](http://www.ctu.int/events)

**28th**

**CTU's 34th Anniversary**  
[www.ctu.int/events](http://www.ctu.int/events)

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# In The K-NoW

Network of Women (NoW) in ICT in the Caribbean

## VISION OF THE CTU

To be the prime catalyst for ICT-enabled cooperation and development in the Caribbean

## MISSION OF THE CTU

To create an environment in partnership with members to optimise returns from ICT resources for the benefit of stakeholders

## OBJECTIVES OF IN THE k-NoW

Stakeholder engagement and data collection are critical improvements to the CTU's mandate.

The Caribbean has a staggering record of potent women leaders in telecommunications, yet there is no channel for the sharing of experiences, mentoring and encouraging women across the region to take on leadership roles in the longitudinal processes associated with ITU's statutory meetings and study groups. ITU's networks of women are available to fill this gap. At the same time, In the K-NoW provides key supporting resources with a Caribbean focus.

In the k-NoW is a monthly newsletter used to inform and share updates and information on activities, data, announcements and successes of Women in ICT in the Caribbean Community.

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