

— IN THE K-NOW FEATURE

Beyond *Sight*

SENATOR ALICIA LALITE-ETTIENNE IS REDEFINING WHAT
LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE

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CTU-NOW | IN THE K-NOW

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01 INTRODUCTION

Strengthening the Voice of Caribbean Women in Global Digital Governance

Across the world, digital transformation is reshaping economies, governance systems and societies. From artificial intelligence and cybersecurity to digital public infrastructure and inclusive connectivity, the decisions taken today will influence the future of development for decades to come. In this rapidly evolving landscape, the participation of women in digital leadership and policy-making is no longer simply desirable; it is essential.

For the Caribbean, ensuring that women are represented in international ICT and digital policy forums is particularly important. As Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Caribbean nations face unique opportunities and vulnerabilities in the digital era. The region must navigate issues such as climate resilience, digital inclusion, cybersecurity

readiness and technological innovation while ensuring that development remains equitable and sustainable.

Against this backdrop, the participation of Caribbean leadership in the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Network of Women (NoW) Advisory Board represents a significant milestone. Through this role, the Caribbean is helping to amplify the voices of women from the region and ensuring that Caribbean perspectives contribute meaningfully to global digital governance discussions.

This growing leadership presence also reflects the region's commitment to advancing gender equality within the ICT sector and supporting women to take

Call to Action for CTU-NoW Members

CTU-NoW invites women across the Caribbean to become active participants in shaping the region's digital future. Members are encouraged to:

- ◆ Participate in CTU-NoW meetings, seminars and leadership initiatives
- ◆ Engage in regional and international ICT policy discussions
- ◆ Share knowledge and experiences with fellow members of the network
- ◆ Promote gender inclusion within national digital development strategies

By working together, the CTU Network of Women can continue to strengthen the presence of Caribbean women in digital leadership and ensure that the region remains an active contributor to global digital governance.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Coming Full Circle: Telling the Stories Shaping Our Digital Caribbean



In the k-NoW brings the work of the CTU Network of Women to a regional audience.

There are moments when the past and present converge in unexpected ways, reminding us that the experiences we gather along the way often prepare us for opportunities we could not have anticipated.

Long before digital transformation, artificial intelligence and emerging technologies became part of our everyday vocabulary, telecommunications were already changing the way people lived, worked and connected and one of the most persistent conversations was about **“bridging the digital divide.”**

At the time, the focus was largely on connectivity: how mobile technology could reach communities beyond traditional infrastructure; how financial services could become accessible to people previously excluded from formal banking systems; and how telecommunications could connect people, information and opportunity across geographical

and economic boundaries.

Those conversations were taking place across Africa, Asia, the Middle East and other developing markets, but the challenges and opportunities often felt remarkably familiar to those of the Caribbean.

Today, the conversation has evolved.

The Caribbean has made significant progress in expanding telecommunications infrastructure and mobile connectivity. Mobile technologies and services are now important contributors to regional economic activity, while 5G, artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies are increasingly becoming part of the region's digital landscape.

The Caribbean is no longer simply discussing the possibilities of these technologies. We are examining how they can be deployed responsibly, inclusively and strategically to advance our economies and societies.

Yet connectivity alone does not equal inclusion.

While the Caribbean's mobile coverage gap has narrowed considerably, a much larger usage gap remains. This distinction is critical. Having access to a mobile network does not necessarily mean that every Caribbean citizen has the devices, affordability, digital skills, confidence or opportunity required to participate meaningfully in the digital economy.

The digital divide, therefore, has changed.

Our conversations must now extend beyond infrastructure to **affordability, accessibility, digital literacy, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, meaningful connectivity, policy and the development of the skills required for our people to participate fully in an increasingly digital world.**

These are not simply technology issues. They are development issues.

They influence how our children learn, how entrepreneurs reach markets, how governments deliver services, how businesses compete, how communities prepare for and recover from disasters, and how Caribbean citizens participate in the global digital economy.

And women must be central to this transformation.

Through the CTU Network of Women, women across CTU Member States are being connected through a regional platform that promotes participation, leadership, knowledge-sharing and greater visibility within the ICT sector.

Across our Caribbean region, women are already building telecommunications networks, developing policy, regulating markets, strengthening cybersecurity, conducting research, designing digital services, leading organisations, developing businesses and helping governments navigate an increasingly complex technological environment.

Their stories matter.

They matter because representation matters, but they also matter because these women are helping to determine **what kind of digital Caribbean we are building.**

In the k-NoW has an important role to play in bringing those stories to the forefront.

This publication is more than a record of achievements. It is an opportunity to examine the issues shaping ICT development across our region, to share knowledge and experiences across borders, to introduce readers to the women behind important developments and to create conversations about where the Caribbean needs to go next.

As technology continues to evolve, so too must our understanding of inclusion.

Artificial intelligence is transforming industries. Cybersecurity has become fundamental to national and economic resilience. Data is increasingly central to policymaking and innovation. Digital public infrastructure is changing how governments interact with citizens. New technologies are creating opportunities that would have been unimaginable when conversations about the digital divide first began.

But technology only becomes transformative when people can use it meaningfully.

That is why the next chapter of Caribbean digital development must be as much about **people as platforms, skills as systems, inclusion as infrastructure and leadership as technology.**

Welcome to this edition of In the k-NoW.

IN THE K-NOW FEATURE

A Life Built *Beyond 'Can't'*

Senator Alicia Lalite-Ettienne Is Redefining What Leadership Looks Like



Senator Alicia Lalite-Ettienne, Independent Senator, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

One word that appears again and again when Senator Alicia Pauline Lalite-Ettienne tells the story of her life: can't. What is striking is how rarely the word comes from her.

As a visually-impaired child growing up in Trinidad and Tobago, adults had already begun deciding the shape of her future. An eye doctor told her parents she should not even be near a stove. A primary school teacher kept her back because she believed that if Alicia could not see properly, she could not learn. As a teenager she stumbled, twisted her ankle and sometimes walked into things she could not see, attracting laughter and misunderstanding from people who did not understand the space between fully sighted and not. Alicia retreated. She describes

From adaptive technology pioneer to university lecturer and Independent Senator, Alicia Lalite-Ettienne has spent a lifetime challenging other people's ideas of what she could do. Her story is also a powerful argument for what technology can make possible when women are given access, opportunity and the confidence to lead. for others.

herself then as so introverted that if visitors came to the family home, "before they reach to the front door, Alicia is gone."

Eventually, though, something changed. "In order for me to make that difference and to demand my presence within the society and not be just a fadeaway shadow, I had to start standing out and stepping out."

It is difficult to reconcile that disappearing little girl with the woman who today sits in the Senate of Trinidad and Tobago, lectures at The University of the West Indies, across the Caribbean how to use adaptive technology for the visually-impaired.

Yet the distance between those two Alicias is precisely where her one-of-a-kind story lies. She did not arrive at national prominence because the barriers disappeared. She learnt to navigate, challenge and, in many cases, dismantle them. Her mother repeatedly taught her and her siblings the importance of becoming independent. Her father was protective, but Alicia remembers another piece of advice from him that stayed with her: prepare yourself before opportunity arrives so that when it does, you are ready. For a woman who would repeatedly find herself entering spaces that had never accommodated someone like her before, preparation became almost a philosophy of life.

Her route into technology began not with a grand plan to work in ICT, but with a problem that needed solving. After secondary school, when the employment opportunities normally offered to promising business students did not readily extend to her, Alicia was placed at the Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association through on-the-job training. She was given responsibility for building a library from scratch, stocked with Braille, large-print and audio material. She had never catalogued a library. So she went to NALIS and asked someone to teach her. She returned with that information and created the system herself: index cards, drawers separated by author and title, Braille labels, coded book spines, cassette copies and organised client records. At the time, she says, adaptive computer technology for blind people was not something readily available to her. She had already taught herself to type and pursued correspondence courses because sitting at home waiting for someone to decide what she could do was never going to satisfy her.

That library would prove to be more than an early job. It showed what happens when Alicia encounters a gap: she looks for a way through it. When members of the blind community living overseas later offered to assist people at home, Alicia challenged one of them directly. “We are tired of promises. What are you doing for us?” The answer was an opportunity for adaptive technology training abroad. She took it, returned to Trinidad and Tobago and began teaching blind and low-vision people how to use technology themselves. Her work spread beyond Trinidad and Tobago, with former students in St Kitts and Nevis, Barbados, Grenada, Saint Lucia and St Vincent. She also trained sighted professionals who worked with persons with

disabilities, including staff in adaptive technology. What began as Alicia learning how technology could increase her own independence became a career in transferring that independence to other people.

She remembers what that meant in human terms. Students who had been written off because of their vision learnt to use computers, access the internet, write emails and complete examinations. Some achieved perfect scores after others had assumed they could not learn. For Alicia, that transformation remains intoxicating. Once people are shown what they can do, she says, they want to do more. It is an important distinction in conversations about digital inclusion. Access to technology is not simply access to a device or an internet connection. For someone who has previously depended on another person to read, write, retrieve information or complete a task, accessible technology can transfer agency back to the individual. Alicia was working in that space long before “digital inclusion” became the language of policy documents and international development agendas.

Her own education would test the same principle. Alicia says she contacted tertiary institutions in Trinidad and Tobago wanting to study further and was repeatedly told that the facilities she needed were not available. She remembers sitting on her parents’ steps watching aeroplanes pass overhead and telling herself that one day she would leave to study. When an American university recruitment team eventually came to Trinidad, she did not simply arrive and ask them to believe she could manage. She carried her adaptive technology into the interview and showed them. The screen-reading technology spoke the material on the computer back to her as she typed, demonstrating how she could operate independently in a classroom. She was accepted, but acceptance presented the next problem: she had enough money for only one semester. Alicia responded by writing more than 200 letters seeking financial help, with her father assisting her to locate where she needed to sign. “This child not giving up at all,” she remembers him telling her mother.

At Monroe, she moved through an associate degree into a bachelor’s degree and ultimately postgraduate study, entered the Honors Program and completed an internship at the United Nations. She recalls professors who did not merely accommodate her, but recognised

her ability and pushed her further. Accessible learning material was organised and she was provided with the tools and support required to compete academically. The journey was hardly seamless. Money was uncertain, funding arrived and disappeared, classes could mean returning to her dormitory close to midnight and, two weeks before she began her studies at Monroe University New Rochelle, New York her father passed away. Alicia returned to school grieving so intensely that she remembers putting a pillow over her head and crying herself to sleep at night. She buried herself in her studies and earned straight As. When she completed her bachelor's degree, a senior university administrator and mentor, Dr Donald Simon, called her aside and gave her news she had not expected: she was not going home; she was staying to do her Master's. "I didn't know if to cry or if to laugh," she recalls.

The academic qualifications matter but so does what Alicia did with them. She returned to Trinidad and Tobago and continued the work of teaching, advocating and creating access. She became a university lecturer and pursued doctoral research focused on attitudes and perceptions towards persons with disabilities, examining the very assumptions that had shaped her own experiences of education and employment. Her interest is not abstract. She understands how quickly somebody else's perception can become a barrier to opportunity. In her words, people see a cane and immediately categorise the person carrying it as different. Those perceptions influence behaviour, expectations and ultimately the opportunities people are prepared to extend. Her career has become, in many ways, a sustained challenge to that process.

It is also why Alicia's perspective belongs squarely in the conversation about women and ICT. She describes being a woman with a disability as facing two simultaneous challenges and credits her experience at university with showing her what can happen when an institution stops concentrating on presumed limitations and instead gives someone "room to do what I have to do." Technology, she says, is an enabler but her definition goes well beyond assistive devices. It allows women to learn, saves time, creates independence and opens economic possibilities. A woman who cannot afford a physical business location, for example, can now build a viable enterprise with a computer, connectivity

and creativity. "If you isolate yourself, you are just going to stay behind," she says, urging young women to understand technology not simply as something they consume but as a platform from which they can move forward.

Her enthusiasm is tempered by experience. Alicia is acutely aware that technology can replicate discrimination just as effectively as it can remove barriers. She points specifically to artificial intelligence and algorithmic bias. If the assumptions going into an AI system are biased, she argues, the resulting decisions can exclude minority groups, particularly when the people most affected by a technology have had no voice in its design. Her rule is straightforward and should resonate far beyond disability advocacy: "You don't look to do something for people without the persons that [are] being impacted involved in the planning." It is an important proposition for the future of Caribbean ICT. Closing gaps for women cannot mean teaching them to use systems after those systems have already been imagined, designed and governed without them. Women must be present where technology is created, tested, regulated and deployed, and women whose experiences fall outside the assumed "average user" may be among the people most capable of showing designers what they have overlooked.

Alicia's own barrier would take her into a place she never expected. When The President's House contacted her, she initially thought she might be needed to provide some form of disability or adaptive-technology training. Politics had not been part of her plan. Yet in 2025, she was appointed an Independent Senator, taking a life spent advocating for inclusion into the chamber where national legislation is debated. She has since used that position to press for a legislative framework for persons with disabilities and to raise questions around technology, AI, accessibility and participation. When discussing the motion she moved in the Senate, Alicia is clear about why it mattered to her. She wanted persons with disabilities to know that she had not occupied that seat without using it to give their concerns a voice. "I have done my part," she says. "It's on record."

Perhaps the most powerful thing about Senator Alicia Lalite-Ettienne's story is that every major achievement appears connected to another person who might otherwise have been left behind.

She learnt adaptive technology and came home to teach it. She accessed higher education and became an educator. She experienced exclusion and made it the subject of serious academic enquiry. She entered the Senate and moved to put the rights of persons with disabilities on the national record. Even when discussing her own success, she returns repeatedly to the people who believed in her: her parents and siblings, teachers who recognised her ability, university professors, mentors, former presidents, her husband and the people who, at pivotal moments, decided to give her an opportunity instead of making a decision based on what they assumed she could not do.

For women in ICT, that is perhaps the most compelling part of Alicia's story. Breaking barriers is often presented as the spectacular moment when a woman becomes "the first". Alicia's life suggests that the more consequential work comes afterwards, when being first is used to make being next less difficult for somebody else. Her technology has changed over the decades, from Braille labels and cassette tapes to screen-reading software, the internet and now artificial intelligence, but her purpose has remained remarkably consistent: access, independence, participation and choice. The little girl who once disappeared when visitors arrived eventually decided she would no longer be "a fadeaway shadow". She stepped out, prepared herself and built a life that repeatedly expanded other people's understanding of what was possible. If Senator Lalite-Ettienne looks back at the distance between that girl in Carenage and the woman now sitting in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, she has every reason to be proud. The doors she walked

through are impressive. However, it is the doors she has helped open behind her that prove to be an even greater achievement.



"Sometimes the person who enters the room differently is exactly the person whose perspective that room needs"

Senator Alicia Lalite-Ettienne

Independent Senator | Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Educator • Assistive Technology Advocate • Disability Inclusion Champion • Parliamentarian

First visually impaired person to serve in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

IN THE K-NOW

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POLICY PULSE

Building *Digital Resilience*

A four-part series on meaningful connectivity, spectrum, satellite resilience, sustainable infrastructure and cybersecurity in Caribbean Small Island Developing States.

INSIDE THE SERIES — PART 01 IN THIS EDITION

01. Beyond Bars & Broadband: What Meaningful Connectivity Really Requires
02. Spectrum, Satellites & Survival: Designing Networks for the Hardest Day
03. Powering the Digital Caribbean: Data Centres, Renewable Energy & Cyber Trust
04. From Silos to Resilience: A Regulatory Agenda for the Caribbean

“Connectivity is no longer only about getting online. It is about whether people, institutions and economies can remain connected, productive and safe when conditions are at their most difficult.”



MARIA MYERS HAMILTON argues that, to close connectivity gaps, regulators need to develop frameworks that encompass the triple pillars of spectrum policy, sustainably powered infrastructure and cybersecurity

NEXT IN THE SERIES

This edition carries Part 01 of the series. Parts 02, 03 and 04 – on spectrum and satellite resilience, sustainable infrastructure and cyber trust, and a regulatory agenda for the region – continue in upcoming issues of In the k-NoW.

Beyond Bars & Broadband

The Caribbean has made real gains in connectivity. The next challenge is harder: ensuring that access is affordable, useful, resilient and available to everyone.

THE NEW CONNECTIVITY TEST

For years, the digital development story was told in simple terms: who had internet access and who did not. That measure is no longer enough. The International Telecommunication Union's concept of meaningful connectivity shifts the focus from basic access to the quality, affordability and usefulness of the online experience. In practical terms, people must be able to connect reliably enough to work, learn, use public services, access healthcare and participate in the digital economy.

For Caribbean Small Island Developing States, that distinction matters. High-speed internet coverage expanded from about 30 per cent in 2012 to more than 75 per cent in 2024, supported in part by the World Bank's Caribbean Regional Communications Infrastructure Program. Yet the region still carries deep gaps beneath that headline progress: 15 million citizens lack mobile broadband access and more than four million households have no fibre connection, even as regional data demand is projected to grow five-fold by 2030.

THE CONNECTIVITY GAP AT A GLANCE

- ◆ High-speed internet coverage: more than 75% in 2024
- ◆ Citizens without mobile broadband access: 15 million
- ◆ Households without fibre connectivity: more than 4 million
- ◆ Projected regional data-demand growth by 2030: five-fold

WHY ACCESS ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the consequences of weak connectivity with unusual clarity. Work, education, healthcare and government services

moved online almost at once. Where broadband was unreliable or unaffordable, several essential parts of daily life failed simultaneously. The lesson was not simply that more people needed internet service. It was that telecommunications had become part of the region's social and economic resilience infrastructure.

That resilience depends on more than cables and towers. Network quality is tied to spectrum availability, dependable electricity and cybersecurity. A broadband network that loses power during a crisis, cannot obtain emergency spectrum quickly, or cannot be trusted by users is not meaningfully connected in the fullest sense.

"The real policy question is no longer, 'Can people connect?' It is, 'Can they connect well enough – and safely enough – for the connection to matter?'"

THE INVESTMENT QUESTION

The scale of investment required is significant. The ITU's Digital Infrastructure Investment Initiative estimates that USD 1.6 trillion is needed globally by 2030 across wireless and fixed networks, backbone infrastructure, data centres, undersea cables and internet exchange points. For the Caribbean, attracting a viable share of that investment will require policies that make small markets more investable while protecting public-interest outcomes.

The debate also extends to who should help carry the cost. The supplied paper notes that four major global content platforms generated more than USD 11.5 billion in revenue from Caribbean users in 2024 while making limited direct contributions to regional network infrastructure. This sits at the heart of the international 'fair share' debate: whether high-traffic digital platforms should contribute to the networks on which their services depend.

A CARIBBEAN POLICY SHIFT

The region's next phase of digital development therefore needs to move beyond coverage targets alone. Regulators and policymakers must ask whether spectrum assignments drive service into underserved communities; whether infrastructure can survive disasters; whether energy systems can support growing digital demand; and whether cybersecurity capacity is strong enough to sustain trust.

Meaningful connectivity, viewed this way, is not a telecommunications target sitting on its own. It is a development benchmark – one that links inclusion, economic opportunity and national resilience.

NEXT IN THE SERIES - Part 2

Examines how Jamaica's 600 MHz spectrum award and the Hurricane Melissa satellite response show what resilience looks like when regulation is designed for outcomes, not only licences.



PERSPECTIVE

Scaling *Smart*

Turning Inclusion into a Digital Delivery Strategy

BY NATHALY CAROLINA, COO, DATAAXIS

The Caribbean's digital transformation will not be determined by infrastructure alone. Its success will depend on whether the region can build, organise and retain the human capacity required to turn technology into functioning systems – and whether women are positioned not simply as participants, but as architects, leaders and decision-makers.



Nathaly Carolina, Chief Operations Officer, DataAxis

If the Caribbean's digital challenge is fundamentally a capacity challenge, the question becomes not simply how much technology the region can acquire, but how that capacity is built, organised and sustained.

Over the past year, an important shift has begun to emerge: from seeing inclusion as an aspiration to treating it as a delivery requirement.

That distinction matters.

For years, digital inclusion has often occupied the margins of technology policy – discussed through access programmes, gender initiatives and skills campaigns while the “serious” business of infrastructure, regulation and investment proceeded elsewhere.

But the Caribbean is reaching a point where that separation is no longer viable. Digital transformation

depends on people: people who can regulate emerging technologies, manage data, design interoperable systems, secure networks, build digital services and translate policy into products that citizens can actually use.

In a region of small economies and constrained talent pools, leaving women outside those systems is not merely inequitable.

It is inefficient.

FROM INFRASTRUCTURE TO HUMAN CAPITAL

One signal of this changing approach is the strategic partnership formed in October 2025 between **DataAxis**, a Curaçao-based technology and data science company, and the **Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU)**.

Its significance lies less in the agreement itself than in what it recognises: **infrastructure is no longer the only binding constraint. Human capital is.**

The Caribbean can invest in broadband networks, cloud infrastructure, digital identity, cybersecurity systems and data platforms. But without the people capable of governing, integrating and scaling those systems, technology investment alone cannot deliver transformation.

This changes the policy conversation.

The question is no longer simply, *What technology does the Caribbean need?*

It is also: **Who will build it? Who will govern it? Who will secure it? And who will lead it?**

"In small economies, inclusion is efficiency. Capacity constraints make exclusion economically irrational"

BUILDING THE CARIBBEAN'S TALENT FLYWHEEL

Alongside this emerging focus on human capital, the CTU has begun formalising its response to the gendered dimension of the capacity gap through the **CTU Network of Women (CTU-NoW)**.

The initiative focuses on gender mainstreaming within national ICT agendas, mentorship and knowledge-sharing, advocacy for inclusive policies and stronger regional collaboration.

Together, these interventions begin to address a long-standing structural weakness: the absence of an organised, cross-border **talent flywheel** connecting education, professional development and leadership opportunities for women in ICT.

The importance of that pipeline cannot be overstated.

Women cannot suddenly appear in senior cybersecurity, spectrum management, data

governance, artificial intelligence or digital policy positions if they have not first been given opportunities to enter those fields, build technical expertise, manage significant projects and gain visibility.

Leadership is not created at the point of appointment.

It is built through years of exposure, responsibility and opportunity.

START BEFORE THE LABOUR MARKET DECIDES

Complementing this longer-term effort is the CTU's **Girls in ICT Day**, which targets perhaps the earliest bottleneck of all: **aspiration**.

Its 2025 focus on inspiring girls to pursue STEM and ICT careers, while engaging boys and youth allies, reflects an important insight.

Many interventions arrive too late.

By the time organisations begin discussing gender balance in recruitment and leadership, young people may already have absorbed powerful messages about which careers are supposedly "for them". Educational choices have been made. Confidence has been shaped. Networks have begun forming. Labour markets have already started sorting future winners and losers.

Effective capacity-building therefore begins much earlier – when a girl is deciding whether she can imagine herself as a software engineer, cybersecurity specialist, telecommunications regulator, data scientist or technology entrepreneur.

But inspiration is only the beginning.

BEYOND PANELS AND CAMPAIGNS

The barriers to women's participation in technology are often less glamorous than the programmes designed to address them.

They include childcare.

Transport.

Informal gatekeeping.

Recruitment practices that reward familiarity and sameness.

Limited access to influential professional networks.

And the very real time costs associated with continuous upskilling in societies where many high-performing women already carry disproportionate unpaid responsibilities.

These obstacles cannot be solved through visibility campaigns alone.

A serious digital development agenda must treat women's participation not as a communications objective, but as a condition for delivery.

And that requires changing the systems through which digital transformation itself is financed and implemented.

MAKE PROCUREMENT PART OF THE SOLUTION

Public-sector digital projects represent one of the region's most underused workforce-development tools.

Governments collectively spend significant resources procuring technology systems, consultancy services, software platforms and digital infrastructure. Those contracts can do more than deliver technology.

They can build people.

Vendor requirements could incorporate paid internships, apprenticeships, knowledge-transfer provisions and on-island training cohorts, with explicit targets for women's participation.

That is not charity.

It is workforce strategy.

It allows governments to finance talent development through projects that already depend on skilled people to succeed – while reducing the risk that critical knowledge disappears when an external vendor's contract ends.

The result is a powerful shift: **procurement becomes capacity-building.**

WHEN SYSTEMS INTEROPERATE, SKILLS TRAVEL

Interoperability should also be understood as more than a technical issue.

It can be a **talent strategy**.

The CTU-DataAxis emphasis on regulatory harmonisation and SIDS-customised, standards-based solutions points towards an important regional opportunity.

When Caribbean systems operate according to compatible standards, the skills required to build and manage those systems become more portable.

A developer trained on common standards in one island becomes employable in another.

A cybersecurity specialist can work across multiple jurisdictions.

A data-governance professional can apply knowledge acquired in one market to another.

The region effectively begins transforming several small national labour markets into a larger Caribbean digital talent market.

That reduces one of the persistent constraints facing small island economies: the “**smallness penalty**” that can limit both professional mobility and career progression.

“When systems interoperate, skills travel.”

MENTORSHIP MUST LEAD TO RESPONSIBILITY

Mentorship remains important, particularly for women navigating sectors where senior leadership and technical networks have historically been difficult to access.

But mentorship must evolve.

The highest-value mentorship is not simply advice.

It is **sponsorship paired with accountability**.

Capacity grows when women are trusted with difficult problems, visible deliverables and responsibility for outcomes.

It grows when emerging professionals are placed in multi-stakeholder environments where they must navigate government, industry, regulation and technology simultaneously.

It grows when women are not simply invited to observe the rooms where decisions are made, but are given responsibility for what happens inside them.

This is how policy becomes product.

This is how governance becomes code.

And this is how the next generation of Caribbean digital leaders is created.

COUNT WHAT MATTERS

Measurement must evolve as well.

Many countries can quote broadband penetration and coverage rates.

Far fewer can readily answer questions such as:

- *How many women lead national cybersecurity teams?*

- *How many manage spectrum portfolios?*
- *How many architect digital identity systems?*
- *How many oversee national data strategies?*
- *How many lead artificial intelligence programmes?*
- *How many sit at the decision-making table when governments negotiate major technology investments?*

If these numbers are unknown, the region cannot determine whether progress is actually occurring.

Counting women in ICT leadership is not an afterthought to building leadership. It is part of building it.

CREDIBILITY CAN BE THE CARIBBEAN'S ADVANTAGE

This is where the Caribbean's potential competitive advantage begins to emerge.

The region is unlikely to outspend the world's major technology hubs.

Nor does it need to.

Its opportunity lies in becoming a **credible regional market for governable technology** – trusted digital identity, compliant data sharing, resilient infrastructure, responsible data monetisation and public services capable of working across borders.

Credibility, rather than scale alone, can attract serious investment and long-term partners.

Women are central to building that credibility for two reasons.

First, in small economies, inclusion is efficiency.

When specialist talent is already scarce, systematically underutilising half of the potential workforce makes little economic sense.

Second, legitimacy is essential to data governance.

Decisions concerning data monetisation, surveillance, fraud prevention, artificial intelligence and algorithmic risk inevitably raise questions about power: who designs systems, who benefits from them, whose experiences are represented and who determines the acceptable boundaries of their use.

A region seeking to build a trusted data economy cannot afford governance structures that resemble **closed clubs**.

WOMEN AS SYSTEM BUILDERS

Seen through this lens, the CTU-DataAxis partnership and the CTU Network of Women are not side initiatives operating alongside the region's digital transformation.

They represent elements of the transformation itself.

They signal a broader change in how the Caribbean can think about its digital future:

- ◆ Data as an asset.
- ◆ Platforms and APIs as infrastructure.
- ◆ Harmonisation as a growth strategy.
- ◆ Procurement as a workforce-development instrument.
- ◆ Interoperability as a talent multiplier.

- ◆ Women as system builders and decision-makers.
- ◆ And human capital as the determinant of whether any of it ultimately works.

The Caribbean's next great digital export may therefore not be a piece of code or a technology platform.

It may be a **model**.

A model in which small jurisdictions overcome the limitations of scale by pooling standards and expanding the effective regional labour market.

A model in which governments deliberately use digital investment to develop local capability.

A model in which women move from being beneficiaries of inclusion programmes to becoming architects of the systems themselves.

And a model in which trusted data governance becomes an instrument of development and regional competitiveness.

The technology is only one part of that future.

The people who design, govern and deliver it will determine whether it succeeds.

That is a future worth building – and one the Caribbean cannot afford to leave to half its population.



GKI CARIBBEAN SUMMIT

SAVE THE DATE

7TH – 9TH JANUARY 2027

**BUILDING THE CARIBBEAN'S GEOSPATIAL
KNOWLEDGE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR A SMARTER,
MORE RESILIENT FUTURE**

From Data to Decisions. From Knowledge to Transformation.

The GKI Caribbean Summit

The regional platform connecting governments, policymakers, technology leaders, geospatial and cadastral professionals, development institutions, academia and business.

2027 broadens the conversation beyond geospatial technology to the practical use of data and location intelligence to transform Caribbean economies and public services.

- Core themes: Digital Government • Geospatial Intelligence • AI & Data Analytics • Land Administration
- Cybersecurity Critical Infrastructure • Climate Resilience • Digital Twins.

Better Data → Better Knowledge → Better Decisions → Better Caribbean Outcomes

AN INITIATIVE BY CTU MEMBER — DATAAXIS

SHEields *of the Caribbean*

GUARDIANS OF THE GRID

Female Leaders Securing Our Critical Future

WOMEN • RESILIENCE • CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE • CARIBBEAN SECURITY

“Women are not only participating in the Caribbean’s resilience; they are leading it.”

Across the Caribbean, women are already protecting the systems that power our economies, connect our communities, move our goods and keep our societies functioning when crisis strikes. SHEields of the Caribbean presents a bold proposition: make these women visible, connect their expertise and recognise women’s leadership in critical infrastructure for what it truly is - a strategic asset for Caribbean resilience.

WHEN RESILIENCE BECOMES EVERYONE’S BUSINESS

In the Caribbean, resilience is not an abstract policy concept.

It is what happens when a hurricane approaches and electricity providers, telecommunications operators, ports, financial institutions and emergency services must prepare simultaneously.

It is what happens when a cyberattack threatens an essential service; when communications networks fail; when water supplies are disrupted; when ports cannot operate; or when food and other critical supplies cannot reach communities.

These are no longer hypothetical scenarios. The Caribbean exists at the intersection of climate volatility, digital dependency and geopolitical



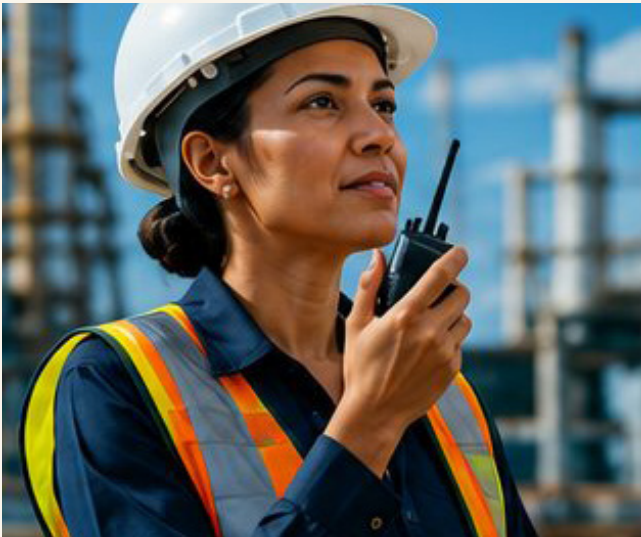
Decisions made in operations rooms determine whether essential systems withstand disruption.

exposure, where disruptions can quickly have consequences for economic development, public safety and regional stability.

Behind the scenes - often long before a crisis becomes visible to the public - women are among the engineers, policymakers, regulators, cybersecurity specialists, emergency managers, technology professionals and operational leaders making decisions that determine whether essential systems withstand disruption and how quickly communities recover when they do not.

Yet many of these women, and the critical roles they perform, remain largely invisible outside their individual sectors.

SHEields of the Caribbean - Guardians of the Grid: Female Leaders Securing Our Critical Future seeks to change that.



Women are already among the engineers and operational leaders protecting essential systems.

RETHINKING CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE THROUGH A CARIBBEAN LENS

What exactly constitutes critical infrastructure in the Caribbean? The answer extends far beyond electricity grids, telecommunications towers and physical networks.

For Caribbean societies, critical infrastructure encompasses the interconnected systems that allow economies and communities to function: energy grids and renewable infrastructure; telecommunications networks and subsea cables; ports, airports and maritime routes; water systems; healthcare and emergency response; financial networks and digital payments; agriculture and food supply chains; cybersecurity; and tourism infrastructure.

These systems do not operate independently. A severe weather event can damage electricity infrastructure while simultaneously affecting telecommunications, electronic payments, ports, food distribution and emergency services. A significant cyber incident can similarly produce consequences far beyond an organisation's technology department.

Resilience therefore requires leaders who understand interdependence, collaborate across institutional boundaries and make difficult decisions under pressure. Women across the Caribbean are already doing precisely that.

FROM REPRESENTATION TO REGIONAL SECURITY

For decades, conversations about women in

technology, infrastructure and STEM have understandably focused on representation, equality and access. Those issues remain important. SHEields, however, takes the conversation one step further.



A significant cyber incident can produce consequences far beyond an organisation's technology department.

When a woman manages a telecommunications network during a hurricane, oversees cybersecurity protecting financial systems, coordinates disaster response, safeguards a port, manages water infrastructure or develops policies governing essential digital services, her presence at the decision-making table is not symbolic. Her decisions have consequences for economies, governments, businesses, communities and lives.

Connecting women working across these systems can establish trusted professional relationships before the next emergency occurs, facilitate cross-sector knowledge sharing, expose leaders to vulnerabilities outside their own areas of expertise and transform individual experience into collective Caribbean knowledge.

Women's leadership in critical infrastructure is not simply a diversity objective. It is a regional security and resilience imperative.

NOT YOUR TYPICAL CONFERENCE

SHEields of the Caribbean is envisioned as a highly curated, one-day gathering of approximately 60 to 80 participants, deliberately designed to move beyond the traditional succession of speeches and panel discussions.

At its centre would be lived experience, practical problem-solving and cross-sector collaboration. One of its most compelling proposed features is a live crisis simulation.

Imagine a major hurricane approaching the Caribbean. At the same time, a cyberattack begins disrupting digital systems. Then a critical port experiences an operational interruption. Energy. Telecommunications. Ports. Finance. Government. Food supply. Emergency management. Cybersecurity. Every decision affects another.

Women decision-makers representing different sectors would respond to the evolving scenario in real time, with participants becoming part of the exercise. The simulation would expose something conventional conference dialogue rarely captures: leadership under pressure.

FROM THE EYE OF THE STORM

Some of the Caribbean's most valuable leadership lessons already exist in the experiences of women who have navigated real emergencies.

The proposed "From the Eye of the Storm" sessions would create space for those stories - not polished corporate presentations or theoretical accounts, but authentic leadership experiences: What happened? What decisions had to be made? What worked? What failed? What would they do differently today?

These stories represent more than personal experiences. They are Caribbean institutional knowledge.

The women who have navigated hurricanes, cyber incidents and infrastructure failures carry knowledge that can strengthen the Caribbean's response to the next crisis.



Subsea cables underpin much of the region's international digital connectivity.

MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

Some of the Caribbean's most important infrastructure is almost never seen. Consider subsea cables. They lie beneath the ocean, largely outside public consciousness, yet they underpin much of the region's international digital connectivity.

The same invisibility can surround food-security systems, tourism technology, digital payments and cybersecurity infrastructure. The proposed Invisible Infrastructure video series would shine a light on these under-recognised systems and the risks associated with them, while introducing audiences to the women protecting, operating and making decisions about those systems.

By connecting infrastructure with the people behind it, SHEields can make Caribbean resilience both understandable and human.

POWER CIRCLES

The initiative also proposes focused Power Circles - parallel sessions allowing women from different sectors to move beyond surface-level conversation. Alongside them, closed-door sector-specific strategy sessions would give specialists space to identify challenges and develop concrete regional recommendations.

The ambition is greater than simply hosting another event about women's empowerment. It is about creating a platform capable of producing knowledge, connections, collaboration, policy insight and regional action.

THE FUTURE GUARDIANS

Visibility matters for another reason. Somewhere in the Caribbean today, a young woman is considering a career in engineering. Another is fascinated by cybersecurity. Another may see her future in telecommunications, agriculture, environmental science, emergency management, logistics or another STEM-related profession.

But she may know very little about the Caribbean women already leading these fields. Young women cannot easily aspire to leadership roles they rarely see.

The proposed Future Guardians component of SHEields can connect established leaders with emerging professionals. Experience can become mentorship. Lessons from crises can become institutional knowledge. Professional relationships can become regional collaboration. And today's emerging professionals can become tomorrow's guardians of Caribbean resilience.

THE CONVERSATION MUST CONTINUE

The strongest regional initiatives do not end when the conference room empties. SHEields of the Caribbean proposes capturing its substantive

discussions through proceedings, articles, policy-oriented outputs and media content, including podcast-style interviews and documentary material.

This creates an opportunity to develop a Caribbean repository of women's resilience expertise. The experiences of women who have navigated hurricanes, cyber incidents, infrastructure failures and other emergencies should not disappear when those crises pass.

Their experiences are regional knowledge. Capturing and sharing them can help policymakers understand operational realities, help organisations improve preparedness and give future leaders access to lessons that might otherwise remain within individual organisations.

THE CTU-NOW CONNECTION

For the CTU Network of Women (CTU-NoW), SHEields of the Caribbean reflects an important evolution in the regional conversation about women and digital development.

Digital transformation means telecommunications and technology can no longer be viewed as isolated sectors. Energy systems depend upon communications networks. Financial services depend upon digital connectivity. Ports rely on sophisticated information systems. Emergency responders depend upon telecommunications. Tourism businesses depend upon digital platforms and payment systems. Governments increasingly depend upon digital infrastructure to provide public services. Cybersecurity cuts across virtually all of them.

The women leading within these environments therefore share a common stake in the resilience of the wider Caribbean ecosystem. Bringing those perspectives together can move the conversation from women participating in individual sectors towards women serving as strategic leaders of interconnected Caribbean resilience.

SEE HER. • LEARN FROM HER. • CONNECT WITH HER. • BECOME HER.

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SHE IS ALREADY THERE.

Perhaps the most powerful idea behind SHEields of the Caribbean is that it does not begin from the assumption that women need to be invited into the resilience conversation. They are already there.

They are in control rooms, ministries and regulatory authorities. They are managing telecommunications networks, protecting digital systems, working in ports and utilities, safeguarding financial infrastructure, strengthening agriculture and food systems, coordinating emergency responses and developing policy.

They are making decisions. They are managing risk. They are solving problems. They are protecting systems upon which millions of Caribbean citizens depend.

The opportunity now is to make these women visible to one another, connect their expertise across sectors and borders, capture what they have learned and ensure their voices help shape the strategies determining the Caribbean's future.

Because the Caribbean's next major disruption will not respect organisational charts, sectoral boundaries or national borders. Neither should our approach to resilience.

The women protecting the Caribbean's critical future are already among us. SHEields gives us the opportunity to see them, connect them and strengthen the region through their leadership.



NEW MEMBER CORNER — ANNE MATHIEU

Building *Bridges*

Thirteen years of Strategic Integration between French Guiana and the Caribbean

BY ANNE MATHIEU

When people look at French Guiana's accession to the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU), our ongoing journey towards CARICOM, or the organisation of the CTU ICT Week 2026 in Cayenne, they often see three independent milestones.

I see one vision.

Since my appointment in 2013 as Permanent Representative of the Collectivité Territoriale de Guyane (CTG) in Paramaribo, my mission has been to reconnect French Guiana with its natural regional environment: the Caribbean.

Although French Guiana is politically part of France and the European Union, our geography, our history and our people are deeply connected to the Caribbean basin. I quickly understood that this reality needed to be translated into institutional partnerships, economic cooperation and human relationships.

From the very beginning, I knew that regional integration would be a long journey.

CARICOM accession was always our ultimate objective. However, I also understood that such a process would require years of diplomatic dialogue,



Anne Mathieu, Permanent Representative of the Collectivité Territoriale de Guyane in Paramaribo.

legal work and political consensus. Regional organisations are built on trust, and trust cannot be rushed.

At the same time, I anticipated another challenge.

Once French Guiana became associated with CARICOM, some would inevitably ask: What concrete benefits has this membership produced?

I wanted us to have an answer before the question was even asked.

That is why, in 2024, together with Marie-Lucienne Rattier, Territorial Councillor of French Guiana in charge of Digital and Innovation, President of SPLANG1, we decided to pursue French Guiana's accession to the Caribbean Telecommunications Union.

This was much more than joining another regional organisation.

It was a strategic decision.

Telecommunications and digital transformation are among the Caribbean's greatest opportunities for economic development, resilience and innovation. By joining the CTU, French Guiana could immediately contribute to regional projects while reinforcing its place within the Caribbean family during the longer CARICOM accession process.

Looking back today, I realise that this decision became the missing link connecting our long-term political ambition with immediate regional action.

One memory perfectly illustrates what Caribbean cooperation truly means.

In October 2024, during the Caribbean Cybersecurity Congress organised in Cayenne, CTU Secretary-General Rodney Taylor accepted our invitation to participate.

His journey was unforgettable.

After flying to Paramaribo, he left before sunrise to reach the border between Suriname and French Guiana. To continue his journey, he crossed the Maroni River in a traditional wooden pirogue before travelling onwards to Cayenne.

For many visitors, such a journey might have seemed complicated.

For me, it became a powerful symbol.

The Maroni River is often perceived as a border separating two countries.

That morning, it became a bridge.

Watching the Secretary-General cross the river reminded me why regional integration matters.

Geography should never divide us. It should encourage us to build stronger connections.



Telecommunications and digital transformation are among the Caribbean's greatest opportunities for development.

Secretary-General Taylor embraced the experience with remarkable enthusiasm, demonstrating that genuine partnership begins with understanding each other's realities.

The Congress itself proved that French Guiana possessed both the expertise and the ambition to become an active contributor to the Caribbean's digital transformation. It strengthened the confidence between the CTU Secretariat, SPLANG and the Collectivité Territoriale de Guyane.

On 5 May 2026, French Guiana officially became an Associate Member of the Caribbean Telecommunications Union. For us, this was not the end of a project. It was the beginning of a new chapter.

Shortly after our accession, Secretary-General Rodney Taylor proposed that French Guiana host the CTU ICT Week 2026 in Cayenne.

For our territory, this proposal represented much more than the organisation of an international conference. It was recognition.

Recognition that French Guiana had demonstrated its commitment to regional cooperation.

Recognition that our territory could contribute to shaping the Caribbean's digital future.

Recognition that new members can also become leaders.

Hosting ICT Week only months after joining the CTU perfectly illustrates the philosophy that has guided my work throughout these thirteen years.

Regional integration should never remain political in theory. It must produce tangible results.

Today, CARICOM, the CTU and ICT Week are no longer separate initiatives.

They form one coherent strategy.

CARICOM provides the political framework for regional integration.

The CTU transforms that political vision into concrete cooperation through telecommunications, digital innovation and cybersecurity.

CTU ICT Week showcases that cooperation by bringing together governments, regulators, international organisations and the private sector in Cayenne.



Regional integration turns political vision into concrete cooperation.

This is precisely how I have always imagined regional diplomacy: transforming ideas into action.

Throughout these thirteen years, I often heard the same question:

"Where are the results?"

It was a fair question, but one that reflected the expectations of short political cycles.

My answer never changed. In the history of nations, thirteen years represent only a brief moment. French Guiana has been looking towards the Caribbean for little more than a decade. In comparison, the relationships between Caribbean nations have been built over generations. Regional integration cannot be achieved overnight. Trust cannot be signed into existence.

It must be built patiently through dialogue, consistency, respect and shared experiences.

Every meeting, every negotiation, every official visit, every memorandum and every partnership contributed another stone to a bridge that simply did not exist before.

Today, those bridges are becoming visible.

As a woman working in diplomacy, digital cooperation and regional development, I have learned that leadership is not always about achieving immediate victories.

Sometimes leadership means believing in a vision long before others can see it.

It means remaining committed despite criticism.

It means accepting that the most meaningful achievements may only become visible years later.

Looking back, I do not see thirteen years of waiting. I see thirteen years of construction.

And that construction is far from over.

French Guiana's story within the Caribbean is only beginning.

I am honoured to have contributed to building these bridges, and I remain convinced that our greatest achievements will continue to come from cooperation, trust and a shared commitment to shaping a more connected, resilient and innovative Caribbean for future generations.

REGIONAL EVENT

CTU ICT Week 2026

French Guiana

20-24 SEPTEMBER 2026 | MERCURE CAYENNE ROYAL AMAZONIA HOTEL | CAYENNE, FRENCH GUIANA

“Advancing Resilience, Inclusion, Cybersecurity and Innovation in Caribbean Digital Development”



Cayenne, French Guiana, hosts CTU ICT Week 2026 from 20 to 24 September.

This September, the Caribbean’s digital community turns its attention to Cayenne, French Guiana, where governments, regulators, technology leaders, development partners, innovators, women and young people will gather for CTU ICT Week 2026. At a pivotal moment for regional and global digital policy, the five-day event will provide an important platform for the Caribbean to strengthen its collective voice, confront emerging challenges and help shape the digital future it wants to create.

FIVE DAYS. ONE REGIONAL VISION.

From 20–24 September 2026, the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU), in collaboration with the Collectivité Territoriale de Guyane, will host CTU ICT Week 2026 – French Guiana at the Mercure Cayenne Royal Amazonia Hotel in Cayenne.

As the CTU’s premier annual event, ICT Week is an important meeting point for the people and institutions helping to shape the Caribbean’s digital future.



Government Ministers and policymakers will meet regulators and public-sector technocrats. Regional and international development partners will engage with technology companies, investors, academia and innovators. Women, young people and civil society will bring perspectives that are essential to building a digital Caribbean that works for everyone.

At the centre of these conversations is one fundamental question: How can the Caribbean harness technology not simply to become more digital, but to become more resilient, inclusive, secure, innovative and globally competitive?

A THEME FOR THE CARIBBEAN WE ARE BUILDING

Digital transformation is accelerating. Artificial intelligence is changing how organisations work and how governments deliver services. Data is becoming an increasingly valuable strategic resource. Digital platforms are reshaping economies. Cybersecurity has moved from the technology department to the national policy agenda. Emerging technologies are transforming jobs, skills, investment and competitiveness.

For the Caribbean, technological progress must also be viewed through a distinctly regional lens. Our countries continue to confront climate vulnerability and the need for resilient infrastructure. Digital inequality remains an obstacle to full participation in increasingly connected economies. Cyber threats continue to evolve. Governments must modernise public services while ensuring that citizens are not left behind.

Innovation must be accompanied by inclusion. Connectivity must be meaningful. Digitalisation must be secure. Infrastructure must be resilient. Technology policy must ultimately contribute to sustainable economic and social development.

WHY FRENCH GUIANA?

Hosting ICT Week in French Guiana creates an opportunity to spotlight a territory with a distinctive position within the Caribbean and wider global digital ecosystem.

For five days, French Guiana will serve not merely as the location for regional dialogue, but as part of

the conversation itself. The event will showcase its strategic potential and role in the Caribbean's evolving digital landscape while creating opportunities for greater engagement between French Guiana and stakeholders from across the region.

The Caribbean's digital strength lies not only in the progress of individual territories, but in the connections we build among them.

REGIONAL VOICE. GLOBAL IMPACT. | THE ROAD TO PP-26

ICT Week 2026 arrives at an especially important point on the international telecommunications calendar. The event will serve as a strategic prelude to the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2026 (PP-26).

For Caribbean governments, this creates an opportunity to look beyond individual national priorities and consider how the region can engage more effectively and cohesively within the global ICT agenda.

Small states participating individually in global policy discussions may have limited influence. When countries identify common priorities, exchange perspectives and coordinate positions, their collective voice becomes considerably stronger.

ICT Week will provide an important space for Caribbean governments and stakeholders to examine emerging international issues, strengthen regional dialogue and consider the region's positioning ahead of PP-26.

LEADERSHIP AT THE CENTRE

An important feature of ICT Week remains the CTU's statutory meetings. These meetings provide the governance framework through which CTU members oversee the strategic and operational effectiveness of the organisation and guide its future direction.

Beyond institutional governance, the 24th Strategic ICT Ministerial Seminar will provide a high-level forum for identifying technological trends and facilitating dialogue on regional ICT priorities and policy strategies.



Women, young people and civil society bring perspectives essential to a digital Caribbean that works for everyone.

At a time when Ministers must make decisions spanning artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, connectivity, investment, digital government and workforce development, opportunities for informed Regional voice. Global impact. An opportunity to move from simply participating in global conversations to helping shape them.

THE NEXT GENERATION HAS A SEAT AT THE TABLE

Youth participation is equally important. The technologies being discussed today will define much of the world in which Caribbean young people will study, work, build businesses and lead. Their involvement cannot begin after policies have already been written.



Innovation capable of creating businesses, employment, investment and sustainable growth.

ICT Week provides opportunities for young people and youth networks to engage with policymakers, industry leaders and other stakeholders and bring their perspectives into regional digital-development discussions. The objective is not simply to prepare young Caribbean people for the future. It is to give them opportunities to help create it.

FROM CAYENNE TO THE WORLD

By the time CTU ICT Week 2026 concludes on 24 September, the measure of its success will extend beyond the number of presentations delivered or delegates attending. Its greater value will lie in what happens next.

Do regional conversations translate into stronger policies? Do new partnerships emerge? Do governments leave better prepared for PP-26? Do innovators gain meaningful connections? Are women and young people more deeply engaged? Does the region move closer to universal meaningful connectivity? Is the Caribbean better prepared to manage the opportunities and risks associated with AI and emerging technologies? Does the region speak with a stronger collective voice on the global stage?

The Caribbean's digital future will not be determined by technology alone. It will be determined by the choices governments make, the policies the region develops, the partnerships it builds, the talent it cultivates and its willingness to collaborate across borders.

7 Conversations Shaping Our Digital Future

01

DIGITAL RESILIENCE

For a climate-vulnerable region, resilience must be embedded into digital development. The Caribbean's digital systems must be able to withstand disruption, recover quickly and continue supporting communities when they are needed most.

03

AI, DATA GOVERNANCE & DIGITAL POLICY LEADERSHIP

For Caribbean governments, the challenge is not simply whether AI will be adopted, but how it will be governed, how data will be managed and how policy can encourage innovation while responding to emerging risks.

05

DIGITAL GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC SERVICE TRANSFORMATION

Digital government can make public services faster, more accessible and more responsive. Transformation requires governments to rethink how services are designed and delivered and how technology can improve the relationship between institutions and citizens.

07

REGIONAL INTEGRATION & GLOBAL POSITIONING

Regional integration creates opportunities to share expertise, coordinate approaches, expand markets and strengthen the Caribbean's influence internationally, particularly as PP-26 approaches.

02

UNIVERSAL MEANINGFUL CONNECTIVITY & DIGITAL INCLUSION

Being technically connected is not always the same as being meaningfully connected. People need affordable access, appropriate devices, digital skills and services relevant to their lives. Digital transformation can only fulfil its promise when its benefits are accessible to everyone.

04

DIGITAL ECONOMY, INNOVATION & INVESTMENT

Entrepreneurs and innovators need environments in which ideas can move from concept to viable businesses. The objective is innovation capable of creating businesses, employment, investment and sustainable economic growth.

06

SKILLS, JOBS & THE FUTURE WORKFORCE

AI, automation, cybersecurity and data science are creating new professions while transforming existing ones. The Caribbean must prepare the people who will build, manage, secure and govern the technologies of the future.

CTU ICT Week 2026 – French Guiana: an opportunity to turn regional dialogue into regional action – and regional action into global influence.

22ND
SEPTEMBER
2026



Collectivité Territoriale de Guyane and the
Caribbean Telecommunications Union



ADVANCING RESILIENCE, INCLUSION, CYBERSECURITY AND
INNOVATION IN CARIBBEAN DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT



2nd CTU NETWORK OF WOMEN LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

WOMEN LEADING RESILIENT, INCLUSIVE AND
INNOVATIVE CARIBBEAN DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

#CTUICTEWEEK2026

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TIME	ITEM	DETAILS
09:00	WELCOME & INTRODUCTION	Ms. Francola John Stakeholder Engagement Specialist; and Coordinator, CTU Network of Women
09:05	OPENING REMARKS	Dr. Maria Myers-Hamilton Managing Director, Spectrum Management Authority, Jamaica and Chair of CTU Network of Women
09:15	ADDRESS	Hon. Marie Lucienne Rattier, Territorial Councillor, Collectivité Territoriale de Guyane
09:25	KEYNOTE ADDRESS	Ms. Sophie Maddens, Chief - Digital Knowledge Society Department ITU
09:40	FEATURE ADDRESS WOMEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF CARIBBEAN DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION	★ FEATURE SPEAKER ★ HER WORSHIP SANDRA TROCHIMARA Mayor of the City of Cayenne
10:00	COFFEE BREAK & GROUP PHOTO	

10:15

PANEL 1: WOMEN SHAPING THE CARIBBEAN'S DIGITAL FUTURE: LEADERSHIP, POLICY AND GLOBAL INFLUENCE

KEY DISCUSSION AREAS:

- ✓ Women at the decision-making table: How do we move beyond participation towards meaningful leadership and influence in ICT policy?
- ✓ Resilience and digital trust: What role do women and girls play in an era of cybersecurity threats, climate vulnerability and rapid technological change?
- ✓ Regional and International collaboration: How can networks such as CTU-NoW create stronger partnerships among women policymakers, regulators and industry leaders? (CITEL, ITU, ATU etc.)

11:15

PANEL 2: FROM PARTICIPATION TO LEADERSHIP: BUILDING THE CARIBBEAN'S FUTURE DIGITAL WORKFORCE

KEY DISCUSSION AREAS:

- ✓ What skills will women need to compete and lead in an AI-driven economy?
- ✓ Developing women entrepreneurs and technology founders.
- ✓ Engaging girls and young women early enough to develop a sustainable ICT/STEM talent pipeline.
- ✓ Creating opportunities for women from rural, remote and underserved communities.

12:15



WRAP UP AND NEXT STEPS

Dr. Maria Myers-Hamilton
Chairwoman – CTU-NoW

12:30



END OF CTU-NoW LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

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LEADERSHIP LESSON

If Cybersecurity *Taught Me One Leadership Lesson:* *Stop Waiting to Feel Ready*

BY CANDICE BURKE — HEAD OF CYBERSECURITY STRATEGY & GROWTH PARTNERSHIPS, FUJITSU

What if the confidence you're waiting for only comes after you take the first step?

What if you're not supposed to feel ready?

For much of my career, I believed I needed to feel ready before I could lead. I thought confidence came from having all the answers, all the experience, and all the certainty.

As I reflect on my journey, I realize cybersecurity taught me the exact opposite.

To be honest, the most important lesson cybersecurity has taught me isn't about technology, threats, or risk.

It's about learning to trust myself.

Cybersecurity is a profession defined by uncertainty. Every day brings new threats, new risks, and new decisions. Rarely do we have perfect information. Instead, we assess what we know, understand the risks, and make the best decision we can.

Over time, I've come to realize that leadership is much the same.

My career has taken me through sales, business development, technology, and cybersecurity across regional and global organizations over the past 15 years, ultimately leading to my current role as Head of Cybersecurity Strategy & Growth Partnerships at Fujitsu.



Along the way, I've often stepped into unfamiliar situations that challenged me to learn, grow, and stretch beyond my comfort zone. I've navigated complex projects, aggressive timelines, cybersecurity incidents, implementation challenges, and the realities of leading both business and technical teams.

Like many leaders, I've also faced moments when issues land on your desk that leave you asking:

"What happened? How did this happen? And what do we do next?"

Those experiences taught me that leadership isn't about always having the answers. It's about remaining calm in uncertainty, trusting your judgment, and making the best decision possible with the information available.

What I learned is simple:

Confidence doesn't always come before action. Sometimes confidence is created by taking the step. The truth is that many of us spend far too much time waiting for the perfect moment, the perfect level of experience, or the certainty that we're ready.

Early in my career, I believed I needed to know everything before I could contribute meaningfully. Cybersecurity quickly taught me otherwise.

Expertise isn't about having all the answers. It's about asking the right questions, listening carefully, connecting technical risk to business outcomes, and having the confidence to say:

"This is what I believe, and here's why."

Like many women in cybersecurity and technology, there were moments when I felt I had more to prove. Over time, I learned that confidence doesn't come from proving yourself to everyone around you.

It comes from recognizing the value of your own experience, perspective, and contributions, and leaning into that unapologetically.

That realization changed how I viewed both leadership and myself.

Cybersecurity has also taught me to become comfortable with uncertainty.

Instead of asking:

Am I ready? Do I know enough? What if I fail?

I learned to ask:

What information do I have? What do I believe?

What is the next best decision?

More often than not, that's enough to move forward. That mindset has been particularly valuable during moments when I found myself as one of the few women in the room. Today, I don't see that as a challenge. I see it as an opportunity to bring a unique perspective to conversations about technology, resilience, trust, and business growth.

Representation matters.

But confidence matters too.

And as women leaders, we must learn to believe in ourselves before we expect others to believe in us.

When women see other women leading, they begin to see leadership as something they can pursue for themselves.

So my advice to women exploring leadership is simple:

- Stop waiting to feel ready.
- Keep learning.
- Ask questions. It's okay to say, "I don't know. Help me understand."
- Build relationships.
- Find mentors.
- And when the opportunity comes, take the step.

“Stop waiting to feel ready.”

You will never know everything, and that’s okay.

Looking back, cybersecurity has taught me resilience, curiosity, and the ability to make decisions when there isn’t a perfect answer.

Most importantly, it has taught me to trust myself. As I begin this new chapter leading Cybersecurity Strategy & Growth Partnerships at Fujitsu, I carry those lessons with me every day.

Because sometimes the biggest lesson cybersecurity teaches us isn’t how to protect a system.

It’s how to trust our judgment, protect our confidence, and refuse to let self-doubt become the firewall between who we are today and who we are capable of becoming.



BUILD THE DIGITAL FUTURE

Building a Community *of Leaders*

BY SHANEA LEWIS, POLICY
ANALYST, CTU



This is where programmes such as the United States Telecommunications Training Institute and Global Cybersecurity Forum (USTTI-GCF) "Empowering Women to Leadership in Cyber" initiative make such an impactful contribution.

My cohort, the fifth to run under the programme, brought together women from the Caribbean,

Small Island Developing States are becoming increasingly dependent on digital infrastructure to deliver government services, conduct business, connect citizens and participate in the global economy. This growing dependence brings into sharp focus the importance of protecting our networks, information systems, critical infrastructure and citizens. The implication is that building cyber resilience requires more than technology alone. We need people who understand technology, policy, governance and international cooperation, and who can translate that understanding into effective leadership.

Africa, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. While learning about leadership, we also learned about each other's cultures and cybersecurity realities and came to realise that although no two situations were identical, we had far more in common than what set us apart. What made this programme distinctive was its multifaceted approach to leadership and cybersecurity.

It was designed around the understanding that technical skills alone do not build a career in cybersecurity, a point borne out by the composition of the cohort itself, which included engineers, regulators, government officials, communications specialists, policy advisors, data specialists and consultants.

As a Policy Analyst in the Caribbean Telecommunications Union's Regional Policy Development Unit, where my portfolio spans spectrum management, Internet governance, artificial intelligence, ICT accessibility and digital inclusion, I see the opportunity to have joined the USTTI-GCF "Empowering Women to Leadership in Cyber" programme not simply as a personal achievement, but as a contribution to institutional and regional capacity building.

Our leadership sessions were anchored around six interlocking competencies, treated as disciplines in their own right rather than add-ons to "real" cybersecurity work, with practical sessions built around tools that helped us define our own next steps. We did not shy away from uncomfortable conversations about the barriers to leadership and the self-doubt that so often accompanies it: the glass cliff, where a woman is handed leadership precisely when a role is riskiest and success is least expected; the disorienting experience of being the only woman in the room; and the familiar feeling of doubting your own competence while others, often genuinely less qualified, remain confidently unbothered.

Cybersecurity decisions now influence how societies function. Decisions about data protection, artificial intelligence, critical infrastructure, digital identity, online safety and emerging technology will shape the Caribbean's digital future. Women therefore need to be present not only within the cybersecurity workforce, but also at the tables where strategies, policies and investments are determined. International programmes such as the USTTI-GCF initiative can develop individual leaders, but regional mechanisms are also needed to create the environment in which those leaders collaborate, mentor others and contribute to Caribbean digital development. One such mechanism is the now-annual CTU Network of Women Seminar. This can be the start of more such regional mechanisms, ones that empower women to take that step toward

leadership, with the support of the women already there.

I see great value in participants returning from international programmes not just with certificates, but with relationships, ideas and a sense of responsibility to share what they have learned. Internally at the CTU, our 2026 intern cohort was introduced to cybersecurity, made aware of the current state of cyber threats in the region and went on to make notable contributions to a consultation on cybersecurity. They were encouraged to speak at fora and lead conversations, ultimately preparing them to moderate a panel at a regional forum.

As the USTTI-GCF programme continues to expand its cohorts, the Caribbean needs to take an active interest and seize this training opportunity to strengthen women's leadership in cybersecurity across the region. Doing so secures an essential component of global cyber resilience and ensures the region is not left behind.

Cybersecurity threats do not recognise national borders, and neither should our efforts to develop the people capable of responding to them. By connecting Caribbean professionals with global expertise and strengthening regional networks for women in ICT, we create something much larger than a training opportunity, we build a community of leaders equipped to help shape a safer and more resilient digital Caribbean. The value of that community should never be understated. It is a reminder that cybersecurity capacity is, ultimately, human capacity. When we invest in women to lead, share knowledge and bring others forward with them, we strengthen not only individual careers and institutions, but the digital future of the Caribbean itself.



SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER 2026

Q3 – Q4 Calendar of ICT Events

#	EVENT	2026	LOCATION
1	ITU 7th World Telecommunication/Information and Communication Technology Policy Forum (WTPF 26)	2nd – 4th September	The Bahamas
2	21st World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Symposium (WTIS)	7th – 9th September	Geneva
3	OAS CITEI 49th Meeting of PCC. I Telecommunications & ICT	7th – 11th September	Paraguay
4	17th Meeting of the Expert Group on Telecommunication/ICT Indicators (EGTI) and 14th Meeting of the Expert Group on ICT Household Indicators (EGH)	10th – 12th September	Geneva
5	CTU 2026 4th International ICT Forecast and Preparatory Meeting	14th September	Virtual
6	CTU ICT Week 2026 French Guiana	20th – 24th September	French Guiana
7	Global ITU/WMO Seminar: Use of Radio Spectrum for weather, climate, water and related environmental activities	28th – 30th September	Geneva
8	ICANN 87 (AGM)	17th – 22nd October	Bali, Indonesia
9	LACNIC 46	19th – 22nd October	Argentina
10	ARIN 58	22nd – 23rd October	Miami, USA
11	Spectrum Management Task Force and Workshop	4th – 5th November	Virtual
12	Final meeting of the 2026 session of the ITU Council	7th November	Doha, Qatar
13	2026 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference	9th – 27th November	Qatar, Doha
14	OAS CITEI 48th Meeting of PCC. II Radiocommunications	30th November – 4th December	Columbia
15	2nd Inter-regional Information Session on WRC-27 Preparation (IRIS)	2nd – 4th December	Geneva
16	ITU World Radiocommunication Seminar 2026 (WRS-26)	7th – 11th December	Geneva
17	Connected Caribbean Summit	8th – 10th December	Antigua and Barbuda
18	21st United Nations Internet Governance Forum (UNIGF)	14th – 18th December	Nairobi, Kenya

VISION OF CTU NETWORK OF WOMEN

To lead the charge in creating a strong community of Caribbean Women in ICT to drive profound and impactful transformation across the region. We envision women being equally represented and actively shaping the industry's future.

MISSION OF THE CTU NETWORK OF WOMEN

Our mission is to cultivate a supportive and collaborative community that empowers and advances Caribbean Women in ICT and STEM. Through networking, mentoring and professional development opportunities, we strive to promote gender equality, equity and parity by amplifying women's voices, and driving positive change in the

OBJECTIVES OF IN THE K-NOW

The Caribbean has a staggering record of influential 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 Network of Women is available to fill this gap. At the same time, CTU In the k-NoW provides information on key supporting resources with a Caribbean focus.

Women are a key CTU Stakeholder group. We engage them through In the k-NoW to share updates, inform on

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Each issue reaches a high-level readership of government ministries, telecommunication regulators, private sector leaders, academic institutions and international development agencies.

The official publication of the CTU Network of Women (CTU-NOW)

WHY CHOOSE US?

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