

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Caribbean Partners Forum

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Session II: Youth in Motion: Building Young People's Future in Small Island
Developing States

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"Priorities for Youth Development"

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Intelligence

I want to highlight 2 issues which I suggest should be escalated for
priority attention.

1. The first, is that youth unemployment levels, which are already
too high, are going to worsen at an alarming rate in another decade
or less because of the labour disruptions which will result from
exponential technologies, particularly artificial intelligence and
robotics.

One of the options available to unemployed youth today is the
prospect of exporting their labour to work in industries such as
trucking, shipping, hospitality, health care, business and
agriculture. With increased automation, many of those jobs are
either going to disappear, or be devalued in order to compete with
cheap machinery. Next door in the USA, it is projected that 47% of

all current jobs could be replaced by computers (McKinsey says it will be 73 million jobs); By 2030, it has been projected that 800 million jobs will be lost worldwide. In the case of Jamaica, the projection is 400,000 jobs. One projection I have seen for Barbados, puts the estimate at 50% of manufacturing jobs, 73% in Food Service & Hotels, 53% in retail and 66% in Finance & Insurance.

To illustrate the point, in May 2016, Ed Rensi, the former CEO at McDonalds said, “If you look at the robotic devices that are coming into the restaurant industry, it is cheaper to buy a thirty-five thousand dollar (\$35,000) robotic arm than it is to hire an employee who is inefficient making fifteen dollars (\$15) an hour bagging French fries”

It is not just low-skilled jobs that are at risk. In 2000, Goldman Sachs had 600 equity traders. By 2017 there were 2, supported by 200 computer engineers.

The good news is that some high-skilled jobs are safe, for now. These include engineers, healthcare providers, educators and some low skilled jobs such as plumbing, gardening and elder care providers.

The other good news is that nearly half of work activities by 2030 will require new creative and interpersonal skills (Caribbean youth could have a natural advantage there) but those jobs will also require technological and cognitive skills, areas in which we have much work to do. The further good news is that only a handful of

countries (e.g. South Korea, Germany and Singapore) have undertaken initiatives such as curriculum reform, lifelong learning, occupational training and workplace flexibility, so we can catch-up if we work hard.

It is therefore of the utmost importance that our youths be sensitized to these realities and be engaged about them, at the earliest age practicable, in order to shape their educational, personal development and career paths.

2. The second point is that although Millennials and Generation Z are born wired for the digital age, the Deloitte Millennial Survey 2018 has produced a counter-intuitive finding, which is that they are unprepared for the fourth industrial revolution. Millennials and Generation Z say they are not confident in their skills and knowledge or optimistic about their readiness. So, we must be careful not to mistake comfort with devices and social media engagement with digital-age capacity or confidence.

In this regard, Digital Literacy must get urgent, priority attention. Only a digitally-literate child will be able to use the empowering and liberating potential of technological innovation to create and share information for knowledge building, learning and personal development, rather than banal and excessively wasteful use.

Clearly, digital literacy requires partnerships in the areas of curriculum development, personal development training, audio-visual content development and broad engagement with youth.

There is need for leadership in some areas. So, for example, the Broadcasting Commission has recommended to government that it be given a specific legislative mandate for the promotion of digital literacy, as obtains with OFCOM for the UK.

What New Possibilities do ICTs offer to engage with young people in the Caribbean?

Our youth adapt easily to technology and access is improving throughout the Caribbean. What we need is more enlightened access, meaning engaging with youth on how to leverage technology for their personal as well as community development.

The Broadcasting Commission has been thinking deeply about its methods for youth engagement in a digital society. Let me share with you, six initiatives as examples of what we are doing.

1. **VDLA**: We are collaborating with the UNESCO Caribbean Office to establish a Virtual Digital Literacy Academy – an open education platform dedicated to media and digital literacy for Jamaica and the Caribbean. The content will be gamified and video-centric (which is important for youth engagement).

We welcome additional partners who can help with funding because the content and platform development is costly, estimated at US\$2M over three years.

2. **Get Safe Online JA** - As a fore-runner to the Academy, we have collaborated with the UK's leading source for information on online safety, to launch **getsafeonline.org.jm**, a resource which is dedicated to helping citizens, particularly the youth, keep themselves and their devices safe on the internet by providing free, impartial, expert and practical advice.

We are currently Jamaicanising the content.

3. **TECH Companies:**

-Apart from those initiatives we are forging relations with global tech and social media operators such as Google which has recognized Broadcasting Commission as a **Trusted Flagger for content on YouTube.**

We will be training youth monitors to flag potentially harmful content on YouTube. But it also a resource for Jamaican youth to engage with a local entity about any concerns they have with YouTube content.

4. **Schools' Outreach** - We also conduct a Schools' Outreach Programme in which we use cutting-edge, high production value, audio-visual content to engage children on the digital economy and society, particularly the challenges and opportunities of the digital age; and the importance of managing their digital selves. We are now thinking about integrating augmented and virtual reality technology to enhance the engagement.

5. **Use of Social Media Platforms**: We are also heavily into the use of social media platforms to push our messages and are creating online-specific content. One of our ads on Fake News, “Pinchy Dead” won a gold medal in the 2018 MUSE International Awards and in 2019 the Chairperson of UNESCO's Information For All Programme issued a Communique to representatives of UNESCO member states in which she referenced our work in Jamaica on digital literacy as a global model.

We are open to collaborating with partners on these initiatives and others that you might be working on.

What potentials do you see for youth employment using AI?

6. **AI Conference**: This is a topic which will be discussed at a Caribbean Conference on Artificial Intelligence in February 2020, to be hosted jointly by the Broadcasting Commission and UNESCO. We will be focusing on the new skills that are required to invent the future. We welcome partners who want to join in that conference.

7. We don't know the new jobs which will be created by exponential technologies in the future. But for the immediate future, I see employment opportunities in some specific areas:

-Agriculture: New technologies like AI are creating new employment in agriculture and can attract youth to move back to rural and farming areas. Promising examples are AI enabled precision farming to improve yield and produce higher quality crops. Dairy farming is also benefitting for AI. Motion sensors and

AI can be used to monitor cows and I have heard of a farm being operated by one farmer who uses AI even to milk the cows.

-**LAW**: There are new legal issues to address including machine rights, liability for intelligent and autonomous systems, governance for AI including AI and ethics.

-**Psychiatry**: With all the social disruptions, I am sure we will need psychiatrists and psychologists.

-**Jobs requiring key skills**: There will be opportunities in any field which requires Critical Thinking, Complex Problem Solving and Creativity. I want to underscore the latter and caution against a too clinical focus on STEM, because Creativity is predicted to become a key skill in the future.

As the World Economic Forum observed, 'With the avalanche of new products, new technologies and new ways of working, employees are going to have to become more creative in order to benefit from these changes. 'Robots may help us get to where we want to be faster, but they can't be as creative as humans (yet).'