

Facebook Africa, Digify Africa launch online safety programme for SA youth

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Facebook Africa and Digify Africa have partnered to launch an online safety programme called *Ilizwe Lam*, Xhosa for *my world*.

The launch event took place this morning at Facebook's local office in Bryanston, where Emilar Gandhi, public policy manager for the SADC region for Facebook, and Qhakaza Mthembu, head of strategy at Digify Africa, spoke about online safety in relation to the youth and how the programme seeks to address this.



Emilar Gandhi, public policy manager for the SADC region for Facebook | Photo: Jessica Tennant

The programme will roll out to 1,000 young people between the ages of 13 to 18 in schools and other youth organisations over the next 12 weeks with the online campaign, and training sessions. It will train students in understanding how they can stay safe online, provide practical tips and guides, whilst creating a number of youth ambassadors to provide peer-to-peer support. It's really about creating a safe space where young people can talk to each other and share their experiences.

"We take the safety and protection of information of all the people that use our platforms very seriously and this programme shows that we work through partnerships, be it with NGOs, social enterprises, with government and also with fellow tech companies," says Emilar.



Qhakaza Mthembu, head of strategy at Digify Africa.

Mthembu comments:

“ What’s really important for us is to make sure that young people are safe when they go online to access all the opportunities that are available, which is why we’re really excited to be launching this programme today in partnership with Facebook: Ilizwe Lam – my thoughts, my world, my intellect. ”

“We also know that how the youth use social media is different to how us adults use social media, and that is why we believe a programme like this is so important,” says Gandhi. This is why they included the youth in the development phase. Mthembu explains: “With all our programmes, we know that in order to make the training as compelling and effective as possible, we need to work with the target market in order to co-create the campaigns and curriculum, and we’ve done exactly that with this programme.

“We’ve spent quite a lot of time with groups of young people, listening to them and really trying to understand what life is like for them online and the challenges that they face, in order to make sure that the curriculum that we are designing speaks directly to their problems.”

“ Jamie and Nqobile are part of the youth panel who helped us co-create the [#IlizweLam](#) programme. They share what they have learnt so far. pic.twitter.com/R6JC06Izlx— BlackGold (@Qhakaza) [April 25, 2018](#) ”

I interviewed Ghandi to find out more...

■ **Why did Facebook decide to launch a youth-focused online safety programme?**

Africa is important to Facebook, Facebook cares about South Africa (and Africa) and is invested in genuinely supporting communities, like our youth, about being safe online.

We know that online safety is important, especially among our youth who now live most of their lives online, so we want to be able to provide them with the tools of doing so safely.

■ **And why did you decide to partner with Digify Africa?**

We work with partners such as Digify Africa with the aim of raising awareness of emerging online issues and helping to explore ways to make the internet safer for all.

“ We're excited to launch our brand new programme, [#IlizweLam](#), an internet safety campaign we are rolling out to 1000 young people in partnership with [@Facebook](#). These are just some of the amazing people working behind the scenes. [pic.twitter.com/IFjGKpdYb](#)— LiveMagSA (@LiveMagSA) [April 25, 2018](#) ”

📊 **How does it work?**

Over the next two months, our programme aims to train 1,000 13-to-18-year-olds across the country on the positives and negatives of the internet and keeping themselves safe online, made up of:

- Four-hour training sessions per youth club/high school
- Across eight youth clubs and 50-70 high schools across South Africa

We know that people will only come to Facebook if it's a safe place to connect and share with the people they care about. That's why we have the Safety Centre and a set of community standards that we enforce.

The programme will provide fun and interaction, with the sessions encouraging peer-to-peer discussions, which we see as key, as well as exploring real-life challenges and how to ensure youths are staying safe online.

We're also creating youth ambassadors in high schools and youth clubs to help drive the safety message back in their respective schools or clubs.

We are always interested to listen and learn from our partners, interested schools and youth groups on how we can better educate people about being safe online.

📊 **What are your top tips to manage one's online safety:**

- Be your authentic self
- Choose your friends wisely
- Set strong passwords
- Know your audience
- Report abusive content
- Manage your location privacy
- Securely log in and log out
- Be aware of scams
- Regularly review your privacy settings
- Regularly check your security settings

📊 **How should one go about deciding what to share online?**

Most of the time, sharing is good. But if we aren't thoughtful about how we share, we run the risk of hurting ourselves or someone else. Also, remember that the things you share with your friends can end up being shared with others.

📊 **Why has online safety become so important in this day and age? Is it often overlooked and if so, why do you think that is?**

As an open platform for ideas and a place where self-expression, connection and sharing is encouraged, safety is at the centre of how we build our products.

“ Protecting the privacy and safety of the people who use Facebook is at the heart of everything we do and that is why such partnerships with Digify Africa are so important to us – not only to educate the youth on the tools that we have in place but also to create open conversations. ”

People come to Facebook to share their stories, see the world through the eyes of others and connect with friends and family. Our mission is to give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together.

■ Why do you believe Ilizwe Lam will challenge any naïve mindsets about this? What is the desired outcome?

The launch of Ilizwe Lam highlights our commitment to youth safety and education, building on similar global programmes with a local focus.

We know that online safety is important, especially among our youth who now live most of their lives online, so we want to be able to provide them with the tools in doing so safely.

Increasing awareness and ensuring that young people feel empowered is important and something we're committed to.

For more info, visit [@ilizwelam](#) on Facebook and make sure to update your [privacy settings](#) if you haven't in a while...

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