SAFER INTERNET DAY 2014 - Let's create a better internet together

Safer Internet Day (SID) is organised by the joint Insafe/INHOPE network, with the support of the European Commission* each February to promote safer and more responsible use of online technology and mobile devices, especially among children and young people. In Uganda, the Internet Society Uganda Chapter hosts the Safer Internet Awareness Centre with the aim of raising awareness of Child online safety issues in Uganda.

There is an increasing trend in the use and popularity of social media tools Facebook, youtube, twitter and myspace in Uganda. According to Social Bakers (a website monitoring Facebook traffic), 3.1% of children aged between 13-15 years old and 6.1% aged 16 -17 years are using Facebook in Uganda. Child online safety is provided for in the Computer Misuse Act, 2011, which proposes tough measures for anyone who indulges in child pornography using a computer, persons who indulge in cyber harassment, offensive communication and cyber stalking. However, the Act only points to one aspect of Child Online safety – child pornography. The rest of the offences are generalized, which leaves perpetuators to prey on children both online and offline. Uganda. Given this background, it's therefore important to promote child online safety in Uganda by placing emphasis on not only creating a 'safer' internet but also creating a better internet for children online.

This year's Safer Internet Day theme looks at the responsibility that we must all take in making the internet a better place. Whether we are children or young people, parents or carers, educators or social care workers, or indeed industry, decision makers or politicians, we all have a role to play. Better internet can mean many things to many people, but the main aim is to foster the positive and eliminate the negative online. We can contribute to these aims in many ways, regardless of who we are. For example:

Children and young people can help to foster the positive by being kind and respectful to others online, by protecting their online reputations (and those of others), and by seeking out positive opportunities to create, engage and share online. They can help to eliminate the negative by being 'helpful bystanders': supporting peers if they encounter issues online, taking a stand against cyberbullying, and reporting any inappropriate or illegal content they find. Above all, children and young people should be encouraged to take their stand as digital citizens of the future participating in debates on internet governance and legislation, and making their voices heard.

Parents and carers can help to foster the positive by maintaining an open and honest dialogue with their children about their online lives, by supporting them with their personal development online and helping them to deal with any concerns or issues, seeking out positive opportunities to share with their children online, and helping their children to find and use good quality digital resources. They can help to eliminate the negative by monitoring and supporting their child's online activity (as appropriate to their age), by modeling positive online behaviours themselves, and by also reporting any inappropriate or illegal content they find.

Educators and social care workers can help to foster the positive by equipping children and young people with the digital literacy skills they require for today's world, and giving them opportunities to use – and create – positive content online. They can help to eliminate the negative by supporting youngsters if they encounter problems online, and by giving them the confidence and skills to seek help from others.

Industry has a role to play by creating - and promoting positive content and services online, developing ethical and transparent policies, and protecting our data. They can help to eliminate the negative by making systems and services more secure by design, by being more responsive to user concerns, and by providing quick and easy access to support if things do go wrong.

Decision makers and politicians need to provide the culture in which all of the above can function and thrive for example, by ensuring that there are opportunities in the curriculum for children to learn and teachers to teach about online safety, ensuring that parents and carers have access to appropriate information and sources of support, and that industry are encouraged to self regulate their content and services. They must also take the lead in governance and legislation, and ultimately ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people through effective child protection strategies for the online world.

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Find out more about Safer Internet Day at: www.saferinternetday.org
Follow global celebrations on Facebook: www.facebook.com/SaferInternetDay
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About the Internet Society Uganda

The Internet Society is a global organisation with over 100 organisational and more than 44,000 individual members in over 80 Chapters around the world. The organisation attracts individual and organisation members bound by a common stake in maintaining the viability and global scaling of the internet. ISOC – Uganda chapter therefore seeks to promote open development, evolution, and use of the Internet for the benefit of all urban and rural communities while working with different like –minded institutions Uganda.

Contact Us
Plot 10 Kenneth Dale Drive, Kamyokya
P.O. Box 32330, Kampala
Email: info@internetsociety.ug
Website: www.internetsociety.ug