

Women'sNet/Girls'Net launches new campaign

A new campaign was launched in Johannesburg, South Africa on Friday, 15 May 2009 that aims to ensure that young people use their cellphones and the Internet for positive self expression. The campaign was launched by Girls'Net, a daughter project of Women'sNet.

Says Faith Nkomo of Girls'Net: "80% of young people have access to a cellphone - we must be acting to make sure we take advantage of this tool to help young people access opportunities and create positive social spaces to interact in."

The campaign aims to undertake public education on safe use of mobile social networks, engage with educators and learners on safe and responsible use, and plans to work with service providers, partners and stakeholders on making cyberspace a safe space. "Why should cyber space be any different to our streets and homes - where violence against women and girls is commonplace?" asked Sally-Jean Shackleton, Women'sNet director, "Our activism must be as present in cyber space as it is in the streets...We must challenge sexism, address harassment and help young people to engage about the issues relevant to them."

Also at the launch was NGO Love Life's Duncan Harling who talked about a new mobile social network initiated by the organisation, MYMsta. Harling emphasised the responsibility of adults to protect and enable young people to use technology for their own development. Goodness Zulu from the Film and Publications Board, talked about the Board's Pro-Child website and the work they do on preventing and addressing child pornography. She noted that sometimes children, unknowingly, produce porn themselves "taking explicit pictures of themselves," and, she said, parents' ignorance of technology is stopping them from getting involved.

William Bird from Media Monitoring Africa presented that organisations' work with children and media "while children are 40% of the population they feature in a mere 6% of news coverage," he said, and this was reduced to 0.08% during the recent national elections.

The campaign launch concluded with a session on planning campaign activities and identifying potential partners. For more information email or call us on +27 (11) 429 0000.