CONCEPT NOTE

The Virtually Safe Project is an initiative of Teens Can Code that was established to address and reduce risks related to children and young people's online use, with the goal of spreading nationwide awareness programs on new-age technological crimes, frauds and safeguarding people.

Problem Statement

As of today, there are over 4.66 billion internet users worldwide[1], and 104.4 million Nigerian internet users[2]. The internet has proven to be an instrumental part of societies. It has engineered the digitalization of various aspects of life. Education, communication, commerce, governance, religion and other core areas of human interaction depend on the internet and digital devices to maintain some level of function. It could be said that modern-day socialization can not take place without the internet.

However, the internet is not without dangers, especially for young people. In 2012, mainstream and digital media in Nigeria reverberated with the news of a 24-year-old Cynthia Osokogu who was stalked and murdered by a person she had met on Facebook[3]. Cynthia's story embodies one of the many risks liable to young people online.

Asides from stalking and murder, there are also risks of fraud and cybercrime. For instance, in 2018 approximately 30 million people in Nigeria were victims of cybercrime with an estimated financial loss due to cybercrime at N288 billion[4] ($701.5 million). Other issues such as hacking, cyberbullying, identity theft, stalking, phishing, unsolicited sexual content, sexual grooming, are some of the risks young people are exposed to while online.

There is an increasing need for the knowledge of how to keep safe online. Young people may be adversely incapacitated on how to deal with the dark side of the internet. The primary reason for this is cyber illiteracy. This cyber illiteracy puts everyone at risk, parents can't teach what they don't know about, and then children and young adults who are heavy users of technology become highly vulnerable to cybercrime and this is an issue of serious concern.

Moreso, existing online safety campaigns do not always resonate with young people's lived experiences, they problematise and sometimes criminalise a range of young people's common online practices rather than contextualising those practices within young people's broader online and offline cultures. Over 60% of initiatives that promotes online safety for young people use a parent-centric approach, they promote granular access to monitor and

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[1] https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/

[2] https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-nigeria

[3] https://www.bellanaija.com/2012/08/rip-cynthia-young-nigerian-women-cynthia-udoka-osokogu-murdered-by-facebook-friends-in-lagos/

[4] https://www.iii.org/fact-statistic/facts-statistics-identity-theft-and-cybercrime

restrict young people's interaction with others, they tell young people that they need to care about their online safety to stay safe and on the other hand they take their privacy away for the sake of their online safety, rather than empowering them to grow confidence in their ability to recognise unhealthy online interactions.

Goals and Objectives

Our Mission is to empower online users especially young people with the information they need to keep themselves safe and secure online while encouraging a culture of online responsibility.

Our vision is to champion online safety education and awareness programs in Africa that creates a sense of digital citizenship for all and empowering a more secure virtual space.

Some of the outcomes we envision include:

- Reach 10,000 young people by implementing programs listed in our output programmes.
- Develop a helpline for young people to find mental health support and services
- Establish 30 Online Safety clubs across schools in Nigeria in 2021
- Train 100 teachers to teach online safety and digital citizenship, with at least 20 teachers starting a club.

Key Activities

In ensuring that young people play a key role in helping to create better cyberspace, we have created various projects and campaigns; Set up Online Safety Clubs in 30 schools, Set up a helpline, organise an Online Safety Poster Challenge, organise offline/online workshops on online safety, organise a fuse of yoga and online safety talks for young girls in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, and Online Safety School Tour to reach 300 schools.

S/N	ACTIVITIES
1.	**Call for Volunteers** Nationwide Applications were received from individuals who indicated interest in volunteering for the Virtually Safe project.
2.	**Virtually Safe School Tour** The school tour aims to provide students in 300 schools in Nigeria with knowledge on online safety and digital responsibility.
3.	**Yoga for online safety workshop** The yoga for online safety workshop is a fun and innovative event that infuses yoga exercises and a

	talk on Online Safety for females.
4.	**Virtually Safe Educators Hangout** The Virtually Safe Educators Hangout brings together teachers, school owners and educators together to discuss best practices for the protection and safety of students and young people online.
5.	**Virtually Safe Art Challenge** The Art challenge tasks students to creatively design solutions for online safety. Prizes are available for winners and runner-ups.
6.	**Virtually Safe Debate Tournament** The Virtually Safe Debate Tournament challenges students to defend measures for the eradication of online safety issues for young people.
7.	**Online Safety Helpline** The Online Safety Helpline is a toll-free line that young people can contact to seek professional advice from mental health experts and report issues that they face while online.
8.	**Advocacy for Online Safety** Our advocacy involves demanding the inclusion of online safety education in our national computing curriculum.

Recorded Impact

Since commencement in April, the Virtually Safe Project has:

- Created an online safety consciousness amongst young people: In 4 months, we have directly impacted 126 volunteers, 3344 students, in 9 states, through training and promotion of online safety measures and resources.
- Aided 120 teachers to become more online safety conscious and understand how to help their students and young ones stay safe online,
- Received partnership and support from organizations such as 360 volunteers - for volunteers, Lagos State Ministry of Education Districts 2 & 4 for approvals/access to schools and teachers, CoCreation Hub, and Paradigm Initiative in-kind partnerships (they sent their representatives to speak at some of our events). These organizations are willing to continue supporting the Virtually Safe project whenever the need is required.
- Improved digital citizenship through advocacy and engaging students in schools, and

- Facilitated online safety culture change - helping people to recognise unhealthy and adopt healthy social media norms.

Next steps

The Virtually Safe Project has reached students, volunteers and teachers in 9 states in Nigeria (Lagos, Cross River, Imo, Rivers, Sokoto, Plateau, Kaduna, Borno, and Ondo). In 2022, we intend to replicate the impact in other states of Nigeria. This will involve:

- Virtually Safe School Tour
- Production of Online safety materials and resources
- Establishing Virtually Safe Clubs in schools
- Online and Offline Virtually Safe workshops