



MINISTRY  
COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

*From the desk of*

Deputy Minister Pinky Kekana

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Keynote Address

Web Rangers Open Day

Virtual Summit : 4pm

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Good Afternoon to all the Web Rangers partners represented here today. I recognise our partners as follows:

- Google Africa and South Africa
- MTN
- Facebook
- Film & Publications Board
- The Department of Communications & Digital Technologies
- The team from Media Matters
- The Web Rangers class of 2020
- Ladies & gentlemen, and those who are mums and dads, I greet you as a parent first

The 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 2019, was an important day in South Africa when President Cyril Ramaphosa passed the Films and Publications Amendment Act. The law was passed to protect children from disturbing and harmful content. Importantly, it assists in providing regulatory certainty on the mandate of the FPB for distributors of films and games online, and on traditional platforms of content distribution.

Almost a third of South Africa's population is under the age of 15, at about 28.8%, according to a Stats SA 2019 population estimate report. This means that our country has a very young population, with large numbers of potential internet users under the age of 20, opening us up, to much risk, making the mandate, extremely critical, in terms of the Constitution.

So, today, as a government representative, I greet you as a parent first. Our President has made us the custodians of these laws and given us mandates - I trust that we are using these to make an extra effort during Covid-19, when online content consumption has increased dramatically, and all forms of abuse and mental illness are on the increase.

You can imagine that in the world of internet use and security, school learners are our biggest concern, as their increasing interaction, added to limited knowledge of the online world, and being generally oblivious to the risks and responsibilities of digital citizenship, makes them an easy target. I believe that

our biggest responsibility is to protect our children first and foremost, while also teaching them of the risks and threats they face.

Online safety and security, follow on from Digital citizenship and Digital Literacy, and both of these critical factors don't get enough attention, when we talk 4IR.

Practicing safe and responsible behaviour, with the legal use of technology is so crucial to our online existence and digital footprint. A good digital citizen is someone who understands the rights and responsibilities that come with having access to the internet, being online, and it is also someone who uses technology in a positive and impactful way. A focus on digital citizenship is crucial to our existence in an integrated world of IoT.

Digital literacy, in today's world, is equally, a skill and tool, like traditional school subjects, and at some point will bypass even this in importance and value. It is a critical skill, and the global pandemic has shown us that is a critical skill we all need, and in a world where disinformation spreads more rapidly than the truth, developing our digital literacy, becomes a determinant in how quickly and how well we adapt to the world, that is going to technologically evolve even more rapidly over the next 2-3 years.

Which brings me to my next point.

One of the things that stands out for me about one of Web Rangers' programme objectives: "Empower participants to take ownership of their digital footprint".

It's an extremely powerful statement.

It's powerful because it forces us to analyse and take accountability, yet I KNOW that people don't really think about their digital footprint, in a world of always-on. Navigating this world is becoming increasingly overwhelming, for young and old alike. The 'Covid-effect' on the world has meant that the online world has become our point of reliance, and as our world evolves fully towards the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution's spiral, I want to challenge all the partners of the Web Rangers programme, to develop the trajectory of its reach with a target to impact the length and breadth of our nation.

I challenge you to ensure a programme that yields meta data results that becomes a benchmark. Results that we can use to participate in global activities and showcase South Africa's adeptness in Digital literacy, digital citizenship, online safety, cybersecurity and more.

My last challenge for this coming year, is in addressing the closing of the digital divide, impacting as many children as possible. Next year, I want us to have answered the question, "How did we make a positive impact on South Africa's digital divide, for our country's poorest of the poor?"

I hope that we can stand here next year in our Heritage month, remembering today as an inspiration to make the biggest impact yet – bigger than we have had in previous years. The time has come for us to scale and grow this programme, beyond what we have come to know it to be. For instance, it is past the time for it to be part of the Life Orientation curriculum, and this target I cede to all of you, to meet over the next 12 months.

Today, we stand at the cusp of a new normal. A time in history, when we will have the opportunity to do things better and with more mindfulness than ever before, as we forge new paths or develop existing ones to be stronger. Let technology and the role of the internet in the lives of our children, continuously be that thing that we consistently get better at, because quite frankly, it's an area where our work will never be quite done, so we need to normalise the consistent improvement and scaling of it.

Our children are not just our future, they are our legacy. We are, because of who came before us, and so shall they be, because of what we do for them today.

I thank you.