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and Esther Arinaitwe

Children are increasingly being taught that going online is not just about access, but a responsibility. From classrooms to community programmes, digital citizenship initiatives are reshaping how young people behave on the Internet across the globe.

"Maintaining a positive digital footprint is the responsibility of every citizen," advises Gillian Patricia Atuhaire, a mother of four and executive director of Wema Educationals Uganda, an education and wellbeing organisation dedicated to improving outcomes for children, youth, and caregivers.

She adds that what proves that one is mature enough to be online is their ability to uphold digital etiquette, exercise empathy and be accountable for their online actions.

"As for my children, I am still traditional. I will buy a personal gadget

for all my children when they reach 18. For now, I lend them mine, sit close as they search for what they want and they return my gadget immediately they are done," Atuhaire says.

Atuhaire notes that a good digital citizen should be able to identify and report misinformation, disinformation and abuse.

DIGITAL SPACES RISKS

For this reason, Annet Nanyonjo, 31, a mother of two and resident of Mutungo in Kampala, says: "All parents and caretakers need training and a certain level of exposure to enable them to raise children who are responsible digital citizens."

According to Nanyonjo, children must be made aware of the risks that are in digital spaces, including the risk



Pupil using a digital tablet

of meeting paedophiles – adults who sexually abuse children.

Nanyonjo expresses concern over how some online applications and websites collect large amounts of user data, which children, in most cases, agree to offer without being aware of the consequences.

Raising responsible digital citizens

DON'T JUST CLICK LINKS

On this, Barnabas Joses Arinaitwe, aka Emanzi, a music producer, founder of Mulika Studios in Kiwatule and Information Technology autodidact, cautions against clicking on links without reading details.

"You could click on a link that takes you to a hacker, giving them access to your phone or computer and all your private information, which they can use to impersonate or defraud you or your contacts. If you are a content creator, you risk clicking on a link that sells rights to your property without your knowledge," Arinaitwe warns.

Agnes Nabawesi, a Senior Six student of Crane High School in Entebbe, warns fellow students against clicking on every link.

"Some students have shared

T.H.I.N.K CODE

The Digital Citizenship Code offers vital tips on keeping safe online. A key component of the code is to T.H.I.N.K before posting anything.

The acronym implies that one should ask oneself whether what they want to post is Thoughtful, Helpful, Intelligent, Necessary and Kind. In addition, the code emphasises the need to respect one's own and others' privacy.

personal information without knowing the risks." Nabawesi credited the Vision Group Safety Online campaign, saying it is helping students like her to understand how to use the Internet responsibly.