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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WORLD WIDE WEB – PROTAGONIST OR ANTAGONIST: ARE YOUR CHILDREN SAFE ONLINE

06 February 2010, Centurion. When a Pretoria teenager killed herself last year because of the online bullying she was experiencing, it brought to bear the daily suffering young children endure online. While our children stand to gain immensely and the internet has opened up to them a whole new world we could never imagine, as parents and caregivers, we should sit up and ponder whether unsupervised online consumption is not ensnaring our children into a tangled web of deceit.

With the rapid rise of digital technology and the ease of access to the World Wide Web, there is an escalation in recent times of children being exposed to harmful content and falling victim to predators online. Education and advocacy remain the number one form of prevention for this growing social problem.

The Film and Publication Board (FPB) will be participating in the international Safer Internet Day (SID) on the 11 February 2020 with the theme **“TOGETHER FOR A SAFER INTERNET”**. The objective is to encourage safe and positive use of digital technology amongst children and to engage them through conversation on how to create a positive digital footprint and protect their online presence. FPB encourages learners and their caregivers to prioritise balancing the right to access to information with a responsibility to engage responsibly online.



SID is celebrated in approximately 140 countries around the globe on the second Tuesday of February annually, to raise awareness of emerging online social ills such as cyber bullying, cybermisogyny and the dissemination of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) (child pornography). FPB as an affiliate member to the international SID campaign, will be leading SID activities in South Africa in collaboration with the Department of Communication and Digital Technologies, Google, Media Monitoring South Africa, Facebook, .ZADNA, Diana Schwartz Attorneys and South African Police Services.

“The FPB has a responsibility to protect children from early exposure to harmful content, thus the organisation needs to play a leading role in creating awareness around the dangers of the internet, as much as it is incumbent on us to encourage the use of the digital space as an empowering tool”, says Ms Abongile Mashele, Acting Chief Executive Officer.

She further states: “The amendment of the Films and Publications Act in 2019 will provide a broader mandate for regulation of content in the online space. This is one advancement that will allow the FPB to play a more effective role in advising and protecting consumers.”

According to a study conducted by the South African College of Applied Psychology, South Africa has the fourth highest rate of cyber bullying in the world. It also states that 24% of South African teens have experienced cyberbullying first-hand and 84% know someone who has been a victim. Other pertinent statistic paints a picture of the growth of the cyber world and its impact on the “offline” world:

- 43.2 million people in South Africa will be mobile internet subscribers by 2022
- Internet-based gaming predicted to grow by 35.7% in 2020
- 22% of people with broadband access in South Africa spend more than 5 hours on the internet per day
- Internet usage is more popular than television and radio
- Some parents/caregivers do not monitor their children’s online footprint or filter the content they are exposed to



- 80% of school children are dependent on mobile devices (Cell phone addiction in South Africa YRU – Bureau for Market Research – UNISA)
- 70% checked their phones as soon as they woke up (Cell phone addiction in South Africa YRU – Bureau for Market Research – UNISA)
- 60% said “I could not live without my cell phone” (Cell phone addiction in South Africa YRU – Bureau for Market Research – UNISA)

Educators and parents will be present during FPB’s SID 2020 campaign, to learn the risks associated with the internet, especially premature exposure of children to adult content that proliferates online. Children are growing up in a connected, digitalised society where they are exposed to technology before they can understand the risks associated with their online activities.

iPads, laptops, smartphones, and portable gaming devices are great technologies for performing specific tasks, accessing valuable information or providing a source of entertainment. For parents, teachers and guardians these devices serve as a means of communication and are viewed as merely new technologies of our time. For our children raised in the electronic era, familiarity with these advanced gadgets breed a false feeling of safety and privacy, yet experience has shown that this is contrary.

We invite members of the media to join us in the SID 2020 campaign:

Date: 11 February 2020

Venue: Orion Hotel, Rustenburg, North West Province

Time: 09H00 – 13h00

Please contact Manala Botolo on 082 860 6748 or email manala.botolo@fpb.org.za to arrange media access to the activities.



For media enquiries please contact:

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Editor's Notes

The Film and Publication Board (FPB) is the regulator of the creation, production, possession and distribution of films, games, certain publications, and more recently certain online content. This is done to provide consumer advice to enable adults to make informed viewing, reading and gaming choices for themselves and children in their care; to protect children from exposure to disturbing and harmful material and from premature exposure to adult experiences, and to make the use of children in, and the exposure of children to pornography, punishable.

Paramount to the mandate of the FPB is the protection of children. Protecting children under the Act is a proportional balancing of the rights afforded in the South African Constitution and Bill of Rights against the right of the child. The protection of children as enshrined in the Constitution and Bill of Rights includes physical, mental, emotional, spiritual or moral harm to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation. It further ensures that children's best interest is of paramount importance in every matter concerning a child.



Film and Publication Board™