

# The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

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**From 'What's your ASLR' to 'Do You Wanna Go Private?'**

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## ABSTRACT

This paper is part of a series examining the role of social networks in the lives of youth living in developing nations. This report focuses on South Africa and presents the results of a quantitative survey conducted on MXit, the most widely used social networking platform in the country. The first section discusses mobile internet use and social networking in the South African context, where computer and broadband internet use is low but access to mobile phones is high. The second section discusses the prevalence of chatting on MXit among adolescents and young people across all demographics in South Africa. The latter sections delve into an understanding of the behaviour of MXit users, including the reasoning behind the customary use of the phrase “*Wots ur ASLR?*” (What is your **A**ge, **S**ex, **L**ocation and **R**ace?). This paper is the beginning of an in-depth understanding of the digital behaviour and risks faced by MXit users, and may be used to inform future research in this regard.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- When asked about what respondents do most at home, the most common response was chatting on MXit (30%).
- Seventy-nine per cent of respondents ask for Age, Sex, Location and Race (ASLR) as opposed to only Age, Sex Location (ASL) when interacting on MXit.
- Users ask “Wots ur ASLR?” for a variety of reasons, including “to know all the info”, for “safety” reasons, and out of habit.
- Twenty six per cent of respondents have experienced insults on MXit. Of those that experienced insults, 28% reported the insults to be race-based. Insults based on location and gender were also common.

## THE DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AND SAFETY PROJECT & THE YOUTH SECTION AT UNICEF

This quantitative study is part of a series produced by the Youth Section at UNICEF New York through its Digital Citizenship and Safety project. The Digital Citizenship and Safety project aims to get a better understanding of the digital landscape in a range of different countries, focusing mainly on developing or emerging economies. The project starts with a data collection phase, during which exploratory, quantitative and qualitative studies are conducted to produce evidence-based communication materials, which will raise awareness on the optimal and safe use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The concept of Digital Citizenship is then advocated at the local government level through advocacy workshops, seminars and conferences, highlighting how to maximize ICTs' opportunities while minimizing their attendant risks.

The Digital Citizenship and Safety project aligns itself within the scope of work conducted by the Youth Section at UNICEF, whose mission is to work with traditional and new technologies including social networking tools, SMS and digital mapping to empower children and young people to play an active role in society.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989) guarantees the right to express views and to be heard (Art.12), freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information (Art.13), the freedom of association and peacefully assembly, and the right to information (Art.17) amongst others. Although drafted before the Internet became ubiquitous, the CRC is highly pertinent when it comes to young people accessing, posting and sharing content online. With the rapid development of ICT in the last decade, these rights should be analyzed and clearly applied to this digital age.

## 1. Introduction

Across the globe, the growing use of mobile phones has opened up many doors in personal learning, networking and communication, media production, activism and economic development. In recent years, the emergence of Internet access on these devices has fostered new opportunities to bridge the digital divide and to close the Internet participation gap between and within countries.

Dubbed “the least wired region in the world” by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), Africa stands to benefit tremendously from the continued dissemination of mobile phones and Internet technologies. The low cost of SIM cards, the availability of cheap handsets and of prepaid subscriptions have enabled many users to access the Internet from their phones. Mobile Internet connections are often priced per megabyte<sup>1</sup>, and small denominations of data can be purchased from a variety of sources, including street vendors and food shops. In this way, users can replenish their phones with as much airtime and/or data that they are able to afford, rather than being restricted by the set cost of a monthly contract. This allows even resource-limited users the opportunity to make calls or access the Internet from their mobile phones.

South Africa is an important case study in the way that mobile phone access and usage has grown rapidly in recent years. From 2005 to 2009, the number of South Africans owning, renting and/or having access to a mobile phone increased by 20 per cent<sup>2</sup>, and the nation now sees 93 per cent mobile penetration among its total population of 49 million<sup>3</sup>. In addition, 39 per cent of urban and 27 per cent of rural phone users aged 16 and older are now accessing the Internet from their mobile phones<sup>4</sup>. This statistic indicates that at least six million South Africans are currently mobile Internet users.<sup>5</sup> As of 2005, mobile phone ownership in South Africa was 5 per cent higher among males than females<sup>6</sup>.

Increased access to mobile Internet has already had a significant effect on South African society. While the last decade saw an explosion of various social networking sites in Western countries, including Facebook, MySpace and Twitter, South Africa saw the creation of predominantly mobile-based applications. MXit (pronounced mix-it) is particularly illustrative of this trend. Created in South Africa in 2004, MXit is a free instant messaging and social networking application for people aged 13 and up<sup>7</sup> that runs on multiple mobile

<sup>1</sup> In South Africa, a megabyte of out-of-bundle data typically costs R2, about \$0.28.

<sup>2</sup> South African Advertising Research Foundation (2010), “AMPS Mobile Phone Usage Overview”, <<http://www.slideshare.net/rickjoubert/mobile-phone-usuge-overview-mma-south-africa>> (accessed March 10, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> ITU (2009) “Mobile Cellular Subscriptions”, <<http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics>> (accessed May 24, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> World Wide Worx (2011), “Mobility 2011”, <<http://www.worldwideworx.com/2011/02/03/sa-cellphone-users-embrace-internet>> (accessed May 16, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Gillwald A, Esselaar S, Burton P and Stavrou A (2005). “South Africa. In: Towards an African e-Index: Household and Individual ICT Access and Usage across 10 African Countries.” Gillwald A (ed.). The LINK Centre, Wits University School of Public and Development Management.

<sup>7</sup> This age limit is in compliance with the South African Films & Publications Amendment Act 3 of 2009, which sets restrictions on the distribution, exhibition and/or possession of films, publications and new media based on their content and suitability for different age groups.

and computing platforms. MXit allows its users to send and receive text and multimedia messages in one-on-one conversations as well as in public chatrooms. MXit users can also play games, download music, access movie clips and news, and buy and sell goods. With over 44 million registered user accounts in South Africa<sup>8</sup>—55 per cent male and 45 per cent female, with 47 per cent of users aged 18-25, 21 per cent aged 15-17, 5 per cent aged 13-14, and 20 per cent 26 years and older<sup>9</sup>— MXit has become an important part of networking and communication in the lives of South Africans with diverse backgrounds.

### 1.1. MXit: “Wots ur ASLR?”

The MXit platform offers the possibility to connect people in public and private chatrooms. Public chatrooms gather users into close to 90 variously themed “zones,” which divide users based on conversation topic of choice, age, location, etc. Users in public chatrooms are identifiable only by nickname, as no profile picture, age, or location is displayed. From the group chatrooms, users also have the option to “go private” with another user, should they wish to continue a conversation one-on-one. Even in a private chatroom, no further personal information appears about either user; rather, personal profile details—including first and last name, gender, date of birth, and a picture selected by the user— are only visible when users exchange MXit ID details in order to add one another as a ‘buddy.’

Without access to each other’s personal information, users introduced the practice of asking “*Wots ur ASLR?*” (What is your **A**ge, **S**ex, **L**ocation and **R**ace?) This is a question typed by millions of adolescents and young people as they make their introductions in MXit chatrooms. After a conversation takes off, users may ask each other the question, “*Do You Wanna Go Private?*” and then either ‘drift’ to a private chatroom, or add each other as “buddies”

The popularity of “*Wots ur ASLR?*” as a chatroom introduction begs questioning into the significance of each of these four criteria (age, sex, location and race) as determinants of desirable conversation partners. Even though the ASLR responses may seem basic, users may be using them to make deeper assumptions about one another’s identities. Knowledge of a user’s location, for example, may be useful in determining whether or not the chatter lives in the vicinity, perhaps because some chat with the intention of eventually meeting offline. However, users may also use the location response to make assumptions about background and ethnicity<sup>10</sup>. This is particularly true in South Africa, where spatial segregation is stark. Khayelitsha Township in Cape Town is comprised of about 90 per cent Black Africans<sup>11</sup>, while the bordering township of Mitchell’s Plain is over 84 per cent

<sup>8</sup> This figure includes any and all clone accounts on MXit.

<sup>9</sup> Figures as of June 2011 as the average for one year; MXit (2011). Demographics Report: South Africa Platform Demographics.

<sup>10</sup> Throughout this publication, race and ethnicity are used synonymously.

<sup>11</sup> Khayelitsha Community Trust (2009). Annual Report. Bellville: KCT.

Coloured<sup>12</sup>. That neighbourhoods, districts and sometimes provinces tend to be made up primarily of one ethnic group makes it easy for people to make assumptions about one's ethnicity from where they live.

Similarly, there are various ways that a user may interpret another's **Race** response. While it may simply provide an indication of physical appearance, or reflect some users' preference to speak to others in their same ethnic group, this response may also convey what language to speak, slang to use, or other indications of a user's 'culture'.

As MXit and other digital media outlets gain popularity, it is increasingly important to understand the ways in which people, particularly vulnerable populations, such as adolescents and young people, are utilizing them. Thus, the present study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the digital behaviour of South African adolescents and young people on MXit. Who is using the platform? Are both urban and rural South Africans connecting? What are users conversing about, and with whom? Are users being targeted with cyberbullying?

## 1.2. Objective

The objective of the study is to **understand the digital behaviour of South African adolescents and young people when making introductions with other users on MXit.**

## 1.3. Methodology

*Pilot survey:* The final survey was developed out of a pilot questionnaire conducted on the MXit platform from September 9-16, 2010. On September 11-13, 63,000 randomly sampled male and female MXit users<sup>13</sup> of all ages were shown a five second full screen five second advertisement, entitled "Wotz yr ASL? Help UNICEF understand what makes you tick," which included the UNICEF Logo and the phrase, "UNICEF United For Children", encouraging users to participate in the survey. The ads were discontinued on day three after the required number of users had responded to take the survey. The survey was posted on the site for the full eight days, so that users could access it at any point. Users had the option to press "5" and start the survey or decline and exit the survey when the ad appeared on their screens.<sup>14</sup> Each user could only take the survey once. The ad and the survey were programmed to be accessible to all MXit compatible phones. Please see Annex II for the splash screen.

<sup>12</sup> Statistics South Africa (2001). Census 2001.

<<http://www.statssa.gov.za/census01/html/C2001publications.asp>> (accessed June 2, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> MXit users who have active accounts.

<sup>14</sup> 63.28% and 71.81% non-response rate for pilot and final survey respectively.

The sample size of the pilot survey was 23,136 (N= 23,136), with a 99% confidence interval and less than 1% margin of error. A limitation must be noted with regards to the representativeness of the sample to the entire population of MXit users, as there was a high non-response rate at 63.28 per cent. Thus, a response bias is possible in both the pilot and final surveys. Users had no incentive to enter into the survey (no phone credits or possibility of winning gifts). The questionnaire consisted of a combination of closed and open-ended questions. The use of open-ended questions in the pilot survey allowed for the organic creation of response categories and proper synthesis of the final questionnaire through analysis of the results and sample frame testing.

*Final survey:* An eight-day quantitative and cross-sectional survey entitled “Wanna Go Private?” was launched from April 5-12, 2011 on the MXit platform.

On April 5, 7, and 9, 91,800 randomly sampled male and female MXit users<sup>15</sup> of all ages were shown the five second full screen advertisement entitled “Wanna go Private? Have your Say,” with the UNICEF Logo on the ad. As with the pilot survey, the ad was shown once a day for three days for each user. The survey remained posted and accessible to users as a post on the site for the full duration of eight days. The ad and the survey were programmed to be accessible to all MXit compatible phones. The survey was presented in simplified English for optimal sample size responses. Please see Annex II for the splash screen.

The study design was cross-sectional and quantitative, aimed at collecting measurable information such as age, frequency of being insulted on MXit, and measurement of use of ASLR versus ASL. The survey was administered 24 hours per day for eight days to limit any response bias regarding who would be on MXit at a certain time of day, and to better ensure a representative sample of users. The survey could only be completed once by any given user, and the user was free to exit the survey at any point.

The sample size of the final survey was 25,876 (N= 25,876), well over the requirement of 650 needed to achieve a 99% confidence interval and less than 1% margin of error, for a representative sample of 38.1 million MXit users<sup>16</sup>. It is possible that the survey sample is not representative of the entire population of MXit users, since 71.8 per cent chose not to take the survey. However, it was impossible to gauge whether some groups of MXit users were more likely than others to take the survey.

Five questions in the survey were closed-ended, where response categories were provided and the user could pick only one answer. These categories were created based on testing in the pilot phase of the project. Five questions were open-ended, where the user could input any response to the question. Two questions were a combination of open and closed-ended, where response categories were provided along with the option for the user to pick “Other,” and input any response. See Annex I for survey questions.

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<sup>15</sup> MXit users who have active accounts.

<sup>16</sup> At the time of the survey, total amount of MXit users = 38.1 million.



The users had option to skip questions, and to quit the survey at any point. As such, each question has a different total number of responses. Furthermore, when given an option to input open-ended answers, the responses were often unclear. These answers were coded as “Null” and taken out in all calculations.

For the question of user location, open-ended responses were later manually coded as urban or rural, based on definitions of urban and rural specified by the Government of South Africa. Although the use of open-ended responses allowed the users to enter very specific locations in many cases, it also led to limitations. An urban location by definition could still have several pockets of semi-urban or rural neighbourhoods within it, and vice versa for rural locations. It is therefore hard to know where the user truly resides. For example, Cape Town is by definition an urban city, but parts of Cape Town are semi-urban with a less dense population, low GDP per capita, and/or inferior infrastructure which pose a much different environmental challenge to a user accessing and using social networks, as compared to another user who is in a metropolitan section of the same city.

*Working group:* UNICEF, in partnership with Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University, established a working group composed of experts from MXit Lifestyle, Education Impact, and Centre for Film and Media Studies at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. The experts gathered five times in order to design survey questions, analyse results, and provide comments and feedback. For details on the members of the working group, please see Annex IV.

*Ethical Considerations:* Permission to conduct the survey was granted by MXit, and all questionnaire components were cleared before survey implementation. No technical restrictions were put in place, hindering the progress of the users’ navigation through MXit – which forced the MXit user to participate in the survey. The MXit users had the ability to choose to either ignore, or opt in to participate in the survey – and were free to leave the survey at any point. A brief description of the study’s purpose was provided to each of the respondents at the start of the survey. No personal identifying information was collected during the survey, ensuring confidentiality. Consent was implied in the completion and submission of the questionnaire.

*Data Analysis:* The data mining and analyses were carried out with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Access databases were stored with queries, which were later used to update excel presentations through OLAP connections.

*Limitations:* Since the survey sample is comprised entirely of MXit users, results may not be generalized to the social networking population of South African adolescents and young people as a whole. It is also important to note that in working with a group of stakeholders from diverse professional backgrounds, the content of the survey had to reflect the interests of all actors in a limited number of questions. As such, the original intention of UNICEF to probe primarily into questions of user protection on MXit was at times challenged.

The original proposal was to utilize the full raw data with the identification key (could be dummy or invented in this case) for each data point and conduct multiple analyses of variance (MANOVA), multiple regression analyses with stepwise method, cross-tabulations, and chi-square tests. These tests would identify the differences between groups (independent variables) using multiple dependent variables, and therefore would test the differences between categorical groups or independent variables (e.g., gender, age, race) on dependent variables (e.g. frequency of talking to strangers, likeliness of being cyberbullied online). Due to third party MXit policies on anonymity and user confidentiality, this was a contested point and therefore the raw data was released for both pilot and final surveys in the aggregated form instead of as individual responses. This precluded more detailed statistical analysis and limited the use of data to descriptive statistics. To mitigate this limitation, the pilot and final surveys included open-ended questions, in order to gather as much of information as possible from the responses. Some such variables included details about an insult faced online, online and offline behaviour, and subjects of MXit conversations.

Due to the nature of the MXit platform and mobile phones from which the survey was implemented, the decision was made to include a limited number of questions in the final survey. A shorter, more concise survey was deemed most appropriate for the small screen of most mobile phones, and was presented in response to the risk that users would have to scroll too much to see the survey, or get bored and not complete it. The latter is a common problem for online surveys.

Based on MXit's experience with surveys, new users often have difficulty in accessing surveys on the platform, even with the instructions posted on the ad. This poses a limitation in sampling both experienced and inexperienced MXit users.

## 2. Results and Discussion

### 2.1. Demographics of survey respondents

The majority (53 per cent) of survey respondents are 18-to 24-years old, while 32 per cent fall between 15-to 17-years and 8.5 per cent are reportedly 24 years and older. While the minimum age on MXit is 13 years, results show that a small percentage of survey respondents did report their age to be 10- to 14-years old (6 per cent), while a very small number stated their age as 5-to 9-years old (less than 1 per cent). MXit figures are similar, with 47 per cent of users aged 18-25, 19 per cent aged 15-17, 4 per cent aged 13-14, 0.05 per cent aged 0-12, and 29 per cent 25 years and older.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Figures as of February 2011 as the average for one year; MXit (2011). Demographics Report: South Africa Platform Demographics.

About 44 per cent of the respondents reported that they are currently in high school, while 17.7 per cent are currently attending or have graduated from university.

Almost 60 per cent of the survey respondents are female, while the general MXit user average is 45 per cent female and 55 per cent male<sup>18</sup>. The difference could be based on a variety of confounding factors, including (but not limited to) the possibilities that more female users logged into MXit on the days when the survey was launched, that females were more responsive to the particular splash ad, or that females are more likely to do MXit surveys in general.

Survey respondents hailed from all nine provinces of South Africa.<sup>19</sup> Gauteng, the most populous province, was the most popular response (31 per cent), followed by the Western Cape (21 per cent), and KwaZulu-Natal (16 per cent). Unsurprisingly, these three provinces house the three most populated cities in South Africa—Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban, respectively. Ten per cent of respondents hail from the Eastern Cape, one of the poorest provinces of South Africa, where rural life is predominant.

Across all provinces, 91 per cent of respondents live in urban areas<sup>20</sup> and 9 per cent in rural areas.<sup>21</sup> Thus, while there is still a significant digital divide, MXit does have a presence in rural areas. Although we cannot determine from this cross-sectional statistic whether MXit's rural penetration is expanding since previous data does not exist with which to compare it, a recent study points to a trend towards increasing access to and usage of mobile technologies in rural South Africa<sup>22</sup>. As such, it is likely that the digital divide with regards to mobile phone and MXit use will decrease in the coming years.

The majority of the respondents identified themselves as Black (55 per cent), followed by Coloured (23 per cent), White (14 per cent), Indian (7 per cent), and Other (1 per cent).

## 2.2. Chatting on MXit

When asked about what respondents do most at home, the most common response was chatting on MXit (30 per cent). This response was cited almost twice as frequently as the second most common activity, watching television and movies (16 per cent). Other responses included schoolwork (13.5 per cent), hanging out with friends (12 per cent), and playing computer games (4 per cent). That chatting on MXit was much more commonly cited as the activity one does most at home as compared to other responses such as reading

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Based on user responses which could not be verified against MXit user registration database due to confidentiality reasons.

<sup>20</sup> See Definition section Annex III.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> World Wide Worx 2011.

(8 per cent) and talking to relatives (4 per cent), points to the importance of MXit in the lives of its users.

When asked whether they talk to strangers on MXit, 42 per cent stated they do so every day and 33 per cent do so at least once a week. The high frequency with which MXit users are interacting with strangers raises questions about the extent to which they may be sharing personal information with those strangers and/or meeting them offline.

In response to the question of what they do most on MXit, 68 per cent of respondents specify that they are most often talking to family and friends, while 16 per cent per cent of respondents mostly talk to strangers/new friends. In addition, 11 per cent of respondents reported that they chat on MXit in order to get a girlfriend, while 5 per cent of respondents do so to get a boyfriend. It is not clear whether these attempts at forming a relationship are undertaken with acquaintances or strangers. The most common topic of discussion while on MXit for many of the respondents is love life and dating (46 per cent), while 22 per cent of the users reported that they are most often gossiping with friends and family. Nineteen per cent spend most time talking about entertainment topics like music, sports, fashion, and games. Other responses include school related topics (7 per cent), politics and global issues (3 per cent), and religion (less than 1 per cent). In general, pursuing and/or discussing romantic relationships with strangers and with acquaintances are prevalent on MXit.

### 2.3. Cyberbullying: threat to South African adolescents and young people

The CRC, and its Optional Protocols, guarantees the child the protection from all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse. General Comment no. 13 of the CRC Committee ‘The Right of the Child to Freedom from All Forms of Violence’ outlines some of the child protection risks in relation to information and communication technologies (ICTs). This includes children as users of ICTs: “As children in contact with others through ICT, children may be bullied, harassed or stalked (child “luring”) and/or coerced, tricked or persuaded into meeting strangers off-line, being “groomed” for involvement in sexual activities and/or providing personal information.”<sup>23</sup> Even though bullying is a phenomenon that existed well before the creation of the World Wide Web, Internet, in addition to mobile phones, has magnified the problem by creating a new venue through which bullying can be executed. When perpetrated online, cyberbullying is eased by the apparent anonymity and distance from the victim.

Similar to the results of the pilot, 26 per cent of the respondents reportedly experienced insults on MXit. Of those that experienced insults, 28 per cent reported the insults to be race-based. That race-based insults were the most common form of insult experienced is

<sup>23</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child CRC/C/GC/13 , Fifty-sixth session, Geneva, 17 January - 4 February 2011

unsurprising, given the pervading legacy of race separation and racism in South Africa since the end of apartheid in 1994.

Interestingly, insults based on location (18 per cent) were second most common. This may be due to the correlation that can often be drawn between location and ethnicity in parts of South Africa, as previously discussed. Thus, judgments based on location may be tied to ethnicity-, class- or religion-based stereotypes.

Also cited were insults based on gender (16 per cent), closely followed by insults based on language (13 per cent). It is difficult to determine the reason for the prevalence of language-based insults, but it is interesting to note that South Africa has 11 official languages. Additionally, many of the languages spoken in South Africa are intrinsically linked to an ethnic group and to particular regions. For example, Zulu is a language spoken by Black South Africans mainly in the East of South Africa. Considering the close linkage between language, ethnic group and location, insults based on language could be interpreted as an extension of race- and location- based insults.

Insults as a result of a refusal to adhere to sexually suggestive solicitations, as well as insults based on physical features, were fairly infrequent (both at 5 per cent), although the former was predominantly aimed at females, while the latter was split between genders. There were also a very small number of users who faced insults due to their refusal to share private information such as pictures or phone numbers (2 per cent).

#### 2.4. “Wots ur ASLR” – Why do you ask?

Seventy-nine per cent of respondents reportedly ask for Age, Sex, Location and Race (ASLR), as opposed to only Age, Sex, Location (ASL), when interacting on MXit.

Of those who stated that they request ASLR instead of ASL, 27 per cent reported that they do so in order to “know all the info.” This result shows that respondents consider the question ASLR as more complete than ASL, as the ethnicity criterion provides the additional piece of information to make the introduction complete. Interestingly, only 5 per cent of respondents indicated that they ask ASLR in order to “know the race” of their counterpart. The distinction between these two categories may reveal discrepancies in how survey respondents understood this particular question, whether they were indicating the importance of asking ASLR generally, or the importance of adding the R component specifically. Either way, these responses indicate the desire of many users to be aware of another chatter’s ethnicity as they would in a face-to-face interaction.

Thirteen per cent of the respondents stated that they ask for ASLR instead of ASL for “safety” reasons. While it is not possible to decisively derive from the survey what particular component in ASLR adds most value in feeling safe, one must consider that the only difference between asking for ASL and asking for ASLR is, of course, the R. Again, whether or not respondents have internalized this distinction when taking the survey is

unclear. According to the open-ended “other” category, however, many respondents did clearly link the knowledge of ethnicity to the feeling of safety. Further research is needed to determine the nature of these feelings of safety, as they are linked to race in particular or ASLR in general.

Almost 4 per cent of respondents indicated that they ask for ASLR because they “prefer talking to certain races.” This result can be interpreted in various manners. For instance, one could see it as correlated with language preference: a subject wanting to speak a certain language will look for a counterpart within the ethnic group that tends to speak that language. It can also be tied to notions of cultural similarity, or preferences in physical appearance.

A very interesting category, organically created by the respondents’ open-ended responses during the pilot survey, was that users ask ASLR in order to “avoid racism.” About 3 per cent of respondents selected this response in the final survey. This points to the possibility that the MXit user, aware of the possibility of being bullied over his or her ethnicity, protects him or herself by avoiding conversations with certain other ethnic groups.

Responses to the pilot survey also led to the establishment of the category that users ask ASLR in order to “avoid being racist.” Three per cent of respondents selected this category in the final survey. While the full meaning of this response necessitates further qualitative research, it may imply that some users want to know their counterpart’s race in order to avoid making potentially offensive race-based comments or jokes.

Ten per cent of users ask for ASLR to make conversation, while 9 per cent ask out of habit. Thus, many ask for ASLR simply because they are used to it and see others doing the same.

Seven per cent of the survey respondents ask for ASLR in order to get a mental picture of their counterpart. Since there is no profile picture in public or private chatrooms, ASLR becomes an important tool in gaining an idea of the other’s appearance, a desire that may be tied to the common intention of the MXit user to flirt or forge romantic relationships with other users.

In about 6 per cent of cases, respondents ask ASLR of another user in order “to meet them one day”. Thus, for more than 1,200 respondents, corresponding on MXit comes with the potential to eventually meet users in person. Whether or not these users understand the risks of such meetings is unclear; qualitative research will enable a better understanding of the perceptions of such risks by young MXit users.

Other responses to this question include the opportunity to “learn about other cultures” (6 per cent), and “to know what language to speak” (5 per cent). The former reflects a desire on the part of some users to interact with chatters whose ASLR differs from theirs. The latter response is logical given the diversity of languages spoken in South Africa and on MXit.

While seemingly simple, the question of “Wots ur ASLR?” has a wide array of meanings across users. In general, however, it is clear that ASLR is perceived by many users to be a necessary introduction to a conversation on MXit.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study begins to fill an important gap in knowledge about the digital behaviour of adolescents and young people in South Africa. MXit is the most widely used platform for online socialization by adolescents and young people in South Africa, and therefore serves as an appropriate venue in which to begin this exploration. The results from this study may act as a foundation for any future qualitative or quantitative research in the area of digital behaviour in South Africa.


Results from the survey begin to demonstrate the importance of the MXit platform in the lives of many of its users. It also reveals the high frequency with which MXit users are interacting with strangers, chatting with the intention of finding a romantic relationship, and/or talking about their love lives and dating with other users. The results additionally point to the high value placed on knowing a user’s ASLR, whether for “safety reasons,” or due to a certain racial preference.

It is important to note that the term “cyberbullying” was not used in the survey. Even though the survey was in the English language, the term is not universally understood. Instead, the question was framed as, “*Have you ever been insulted on MXit by others? If yes, what was the insult about?*” The decision to leave a question open-ended for those who reported to have been insulted was strategically made in order to ensure that the question was properly understood.

Further research is needed in order to gain a thorough understanding of young people and adolescents’ digital behaviour, as well as the attendant risks of engaging with digital media such as MXit. Specific research areas include:

- More information on the socioeconomic backgrounds of MXit users, particularly those from rural areas
- The current state of the gender digital divide in South Africa
- The current state of the urban/rural participation gap in South Africa
- The extent to which MXit users share personal information with other users
- The frequency with which users meet strangers from MXit offline

### Annex I: Questionnaire





Question	Categories
1. Age? (open-ended)	05-09
	10-14
	15-17
	18-24
	24+

2. Gender? (closed-ended)	Female
	Male

3. What village, town, or city do you live in? (open-ended)	Categories created from results
	Eastern Cape
	Free State
	Gauteng
	KwaZulu-Natal
	Limpopo
	Mpumalanga
	North West
	Northern Cape
Western Cape	
	Urban/Rural divisions by districts, cities, townships, village level

4. What is your race? (closed-ended)	Black
	Coloured
	Indian
	Other
	White

<p>5. What Grade are you in right now, or what was the highest level of education you completed? (closed-ended)</p>	
	Primary School (Grade 1-7)
	Grade 8
	Grade 9
	Grade 10
	Grade 11
	Grade 12 (will not go to college or university)
	Grade 12 (admitted to go to college or university)
	Some college or university but no degree
	College or University degree
Not in school	

<p>6. What do you do MOST on MXit? (open-ended)</p>	<b>Categories created from results</b>
	All of the above
	Chat to make a boyfriend
	Chat to make a girlfriend
	Chat with Friends and Family
	Chat with New Friends/Strangers

<p>7. Have you ever been insulted on MXit by others? If yes, what was the insult about? (open-ended)</p>	<b>Categories created from results</b>
	Age
	Didn't share picture or private info
	Gender
	Language
	Location
	No, never
	Physical
	Race
	Rejecting or Ignoring Others
	Sexually Suggestive Solicitation
	Trait of character

8. Have you ever talked online to people you have never met? <i>(closed-ended)</i>	
	No, Never
	Yes, 1-2 days in a week
	Yes, 3-5 days in a week
	Yes, everyday

9. What activity do you do MOST at home? <i>(open-ended)</i>	<b>Categories created from results</b>
	All of the above
	Chat on MXit
	Exercise and Dance
	Facebook
	Hang out with friends
	Housework/Help at Home
	Listen to Music
	Play computer games
	Play video games
	Read books or comics
	Schoolwork
	Sleep
	Talk to relatives
	Television and Movies
Use Internet	
Work	
Write, Play Music, and Arts	

10. Do you use MXit's chatrooms? How much do you use it? <i>(closed-ended)</i>	
	No, I never use it
	Yes, I use it 1-2 days in a week
	Yes, I use it 3-5 days in a week
	Yes, I use it everyday

<b>11. What do you talk about MOST in MXit chatrooms?</b> <i>(open-ended)</i>	<b>Categories created from results</b>
	All of the above
	Entertainment (Music, Sports, Games)
	Gossip and friends and family
	Love life, sexuality and dating
	Politics and Global Issues
	Religion
	School or Schoolwork

<b>12. In chatrooms, what is the most important reason for you to ask for the ASLR of someone instead of ASL?</b> <i>(open-ended)</i>	<b>Categories created from results</b>
	Because everyone understands it better
	For safety reason
	I don't ask for ASLR
	I prefer talking to certain races
	It's a habit!
	To avoid being racist
	To avoid racism
	To get a mental picture
	To know all the info
	To know the race
	To know what language to speak
	To learn about other cultures
	To make conversation
To meet them one day	

Annex II: UNICEF Survey on Mxit- Advertisement Splash Screen



### Annex III: Glossary

**Access:** The right, opportunity, and/or means of finding, using or retrieving information. (Source: International Standard ISO/TR15489-1, Clause 3.1)

**Adolescent:** Males and females aged 10-19 years. (Source: United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), “The State of the World’s Children 2011”, <[http://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/pdfs/SOWC-2011-Main-Report\\_EN\\_02092011.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/pdfs/SOWC-2011-Main-Report_EN_02092011.pdf)>).

**Apartheid:** A system of institutionalized racial segregation and discrimination for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group over another. In South Africa it was a system of legal racial segregation enforced by the National Party government between 1948 and 1994, during which time the rights of the majority 'non-white' inhabitants of South Africa were curtailed and minority rule by white people was maintained. (Source: United Nations (30 November 2006). "International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of *Apartheid*", <<http://web.archive.org/web/20061001200717/http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/11.htm>>.)

**ASL:** Term commonly used in public chatrooms to make introductions with strangers, standing for “Age, Sex, Location”.

**ASLR:** Term commonly used in Mxit public chatrooms to make introductions with strangers, standing for “Age, Sex, Location, Race”.

**Broadband:** A transmission capacity with sufficient bandwidth to permit combined provision of voice, data and video, with no lower limit. Broadband is implemented mainly through ADSL, cable modem or wireless LAN (WLAN) services. (Source: ITU <[http://www.itu.int/wsis/tunis/newsroom/stats/The\\_Portable\\_Internet\\_2004.pdf](http://www.itu.int/wsis/tunis/newsroom/stats/The_Portable_Internet_2004.pdf)>).

**Chatroom:** An online discussion forum. Everyone who is logged into a chatroom sees what everyone else is typing, although two people can decide to break off and have a private chat. (Source: PC Magazine, <[http://www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia\\_term/0,2542,t=chat+room&i=39614,00.asp](http://www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia_term/0,2542,t=chat+room&i=39614,00.asp)>).

**Coloured:** The term coloured is an apartheid designation to refer to people of mixed race origin, resulting from slavery at the Cape and reflecting the cultural influences of North Africa, indigenous groups, Malay, Italian, British and Dutch. (Source: Erasmus, Zimitri, Re-imagining Coloured identities in post-apartheid South Africa, in Coloured by history, shaped by place: perspectives on Coloured identities in Cape Town; edited by Zimitri Erasmus, pg. 13-28. Cape Town: Kwela Books; Maroelana: 2001).

**Connectivity:** The ability to access the Internet and utilize online resources. (Source: Center for International Development at Harvard University, Information Technologies Group, <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/readinessguide/glossary.html>).

**Cyberbullying:** Willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices (Source: Center for International Development at Harvard University, Information Technologies Group, <[http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/RAB\\_Lit\\_Review\\_121808\\_0.pdf](http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/RAB_Lit_Review_121808_0.pdf)>).

**Developing Nations:** According to the World Bank classification, countries with low or middle levels of GNP per capita. Several countries with transition economies are sometimes grouped with developing countries based on their low or middle levels of per capita income, and sometimes with developed countries based on their high industrialization. (Source: "Glossary", The World Bank Group, <<http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/english/beyond/global/glossary.html>>).

**District:** *See Province.*

**Digital Behaviour:** The process whereby an individual behaves and interacts with other users online and in groups.

**Digital divide:** The gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard to their opportunities to access information and communications technologies (ICTs) as well as to use the Internet. (Source: Patricia, J.P, (2003) 'E-government, E-Asean Task force, UNDP-APDIP', <<http://www.apdip.net/publications/iespprimers/eprimer-egov.pdf>>)

**Digital Literacy:** The interest, attitude and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital technology and communication tools to access, manage, integrate and evaluate information, construct new knowledge, and communicate with others in order to participate effectively in society. (Source: Lennon, M., Kirsch, I., Von Davier, M., Wagner, M. and Yamamoto, K. (2003), "Feasibility Study For the PISA ICT Literacy Assessment", Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) <<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/35/13/33699866.pdf>>).

**Digital Media:** Digitized content that can be transmitted over the internet or computer networks. This can include text, audio, video, and graphics. News from a TV network, newspaper, magazine, etc. that is presented on a website or blog can fall into this category. (Source: Penn State University, "The Fourth Amendment Relating to Technology", <<https://wikispaces.psu.edu/display/IST432SP11Team14/Definition+of+Digital+Media>>).

**E-mail (electronic mail)** - A computer-based form of sending and receiving messages via the Internet. Users may have their own e-mail account or use a shared account. (Source: Center for International Development at Harvard University, Information Technologies Group, <<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/readinessguide/glossary.html>>).

**Emerging Economies/Emerging Markets:** Developing countries' financial markets that are less than fully developed, but are nonetheless broadly accessible to foreign investors. (Source: International Monetary Fund (IMF): Global Financial Stability Report 2004).

**Ethnicity:** A group of people denoted based on ethnic nationality (i.e., country or area of origin, as distinct from citizenship or country of legal nationality), race, colour, language, religion, customs of dress or eating, tribe or various combinations of these characteristics. (Source: United Nations Statistics Division, <<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/popchar/popcharmehods.htm>>).

**Fixed broadband Internet subscribers:** The number of broadband Internet subscribers with a digital subscriber line, cable modem, or other high-speed technology. (Source: ITU, <<http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict>>).

**Gender:** Classification based on the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female, and the relationships between women and men, and girls and boys, (Source: UN Women, <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>>).

**Gender Equality:** A condition under which women and men have equal opportunities to realize their full human rights and to contribute to, and benefit from, economic, social, cultural and political development. (Source: UN Women, <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>>).

**Gross Development:** The value of all final goods and services produced in a country in one year. (Source: World Bank, "Glossary", <<http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/english/beyond/global/glossary.html#34>>).

**Information and communication technologies (ICTs)** - The building blocks of the Networked World. ICTs include telecommunications technologies, such as telephony, cable, satellite and radio, as well as digital technologies, such as computers, information networks and software. (Source: Center for International Development at Harvard University, Information Technologies Group, <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/readinessguide/glossary.html>).

**Internet:** A linked global network of computers in which users at one computer can get information from other computers in the network. (Source: ITU <[http://www.itu.int/wsis/tunis/newsroom/stats/The\\_Portable\\_Internet\\_2004.pdf](http://www.itu.int/wsis/tunis/newsroom/stats/The_Portable_Internet_2004.pdf)>).

**Internet subscribers:** People who pay for access to the Internet (dial up, leased line, and fixed broadband). The number of subscribers includes those who pay for Internet use, pay via the cost of their telephone call, pay in advance for a given amount of time (prepaid), and/or pay for a subscription (either flat-rate or volume-per-usage based). (Source: ITU <<http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict>>).



**Internet users:** Subscribers who pay for Internet access (dial-up, leased line, and fixed broadband) and people who access to the worldwide computer network without paying directly, either as the member of a household, or from work or school. The number of Internet users will always be much larger than the number of subscribers, typically by a factor of 2–3 in developed countries, and more in developing countries. (Source: ITU <<http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict> >).

**ITU:** International Telecommunication Union. The United Nations specialized agency for Telecommunications, <<http://www.itu.int/>>.

**Mobile Phone:** Portable telephone device that does not require the use of landlines. Mobile phones utilize frequencies transmitted by cellular towers to connect the calls between two devices. A mobile telephone service provided by a network of base stations, each of which covers one geographic cell within the total cellular system service area. (Source: ITU, <[http://www.itu.int/wsis/tunis/newsroom/stats/The\\_Portable\\_Internet\\_2004.pdf](http://www.itu.int/wsis/tunis/newsroom/stats/The_Portable_Internet_2004.pdf)>).

**Mobile cellular subscriptions:** The number of subscriptions to a public mobile telephone service using cellular technology, which provides access to the Public Switched Telephone Network. Post-paid and prepaid subscriptions are included. (Source: ITU (2009), <<http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict> >).

**Mobile Internet:** Internet accessed via mobile devices such as mobile phones through advanced wireless technologies like Wi-Fi, WiMax, IMT-2000, ultra wideband and radio frequency identification (RFID) tags. These operate at long, medium and short ranges. Handheld devices that are Internet enabled could open up the information gateway in a new and exciting market –one that could help further the goals of universal access while challenging manufacturers and service providers to meet different users' needs across the globe. (Source: ITU, <<http://www.itu.int/osg/spu/publications/portableinternet/ExecSummFinal2.pdf>>).

**MXit:** A free instant messaging application developed by MXit Lifestyle (Pty) Ltd. in South Africa that runs on multiple mobile and computing platforms. Along with its own standard protocol, it can connect to Yahoo, ICQ, Google Talk, Facebook, AIM, or Windows Live Messenger contacts as well. (Source: MXit, <<http://www.mxitlifestyle.com/getting-started>>).

**Online** – A resource that is available over the Internet or a network. (Source: Center for International Development at Harvard University, Information Technologies Group, <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/readinessguide/glossary.html>).

**Online Content:** Information that is available online. The "message" rather than the "medium." (Source: Center for International Development at Harvard University, Information Technologies Group, <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/readinessguide/glossary.html>).

**Online Socialization:** *See Digital Behaviour*

**Participation Gap:** Unequal access to the opportunities, experiences, skills, and knowledge that will prepare youth for full participation in the world of tomorrow. (Source: Henry Jenkins, “Building the Field of Digital Media and Learning”, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, <[http://digitallearning.macfound.org/atf/cf/%7B7E45C7E0-A3E0-4B89-AC9C-E807E1B0AE4E%7D/JENKINS\\_WHITE\\_PAPER.PDF](http://digitallearning.macfound.org/atf/cf/%7B7E45C7E0-A3E0-4B89-AC9C-E807E1B0AE4E%7D/JENKINS_WHITE_PAPER.PDF)>).

**Penetration:** A measurement of access to telecommunications, normally calculated by dividing the number of subscribers to a particular service by the population and multiplying by 100. (Source: ITU (2009), “Glossary, Acronyms and Abbreviations”, <[http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/publications/wtdr\\_99/material/glossary.html](http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/publications/wtdr_99/material/glossary.html)>).

**Personal computers:** Self-contained computers designed to be used by a single individual. (Source: ITU (2009), <<http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict>>).

**Population:** The number of all residents in a country, regardless of legal status or citizenship, excluding refugees not permanently settled in the country of asylum. Data are midyear estimates. (World Bank, “Country At a Glance technical notes”, <<http://go.worldbank.org/WG51XXDWB0>>).

**Private Chat:** An online discussion between two users via keyboard on a computer or mobile device such as a phone. (Source: PC Magazine, <[http://www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia\\_term/0,2542,t=chat+room&i=39614,00.asp](http://www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia_term/0,2542,t=chat+room&i=39614,00.asp)>).

**Province:** South Africa has nine provinces: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo Province, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West and Western Cape. Each province has its own provincial government, with legislative power vested in a provincial legislature and executive power vested in a provincial premier and exercised together with other members of a provincial executive council. (Source: SouthAfrica.info, <<http://www.southafrica.info/about/government/govprov.htm>>).

**Race:** *See Ethnicity*

**Rural:** Any area that cannot be classified as urban. Rural areas are less dense and are usually farming or mining areas. Examples of rural areas from responses include Tzaneen, a small agricultural village with a population of 30,000 in the Mopani district of Limpopo, and Balfour, a coal mining and maize farming town in Mpumalanga, with a population of 21,000. (Source: Statistics South Africa. 2001. Census 2001: Concepts and definitions / Statistics South Africa. [www.statssa.gov.za/census01/html/concepts%20&%20definitions.pdf](http://www.statssa.gov.za/census01/html/concepts%20&%20definitions.pdf)).

**SIM:** Subscriber identity module (card). A small printed circuit board inserted into a GSM-based mobile phone. It includes subscriber details, security information and a memory for a personal directory of numbers. This information can be retained by subscribers when changing handsets. (Source: ITU, <<http://www.itu.int/osg/spu/publications/portableinternet/ExecSummFinal2.pdf>>).

**SMS:** Short Message Service. A service available on digital networks, typically enabling messages with up to 160 characters to be sent or received via the message centre of a network operator to a subscriber's mobile phone. (Source: ITU, <<http://www.itu.int/osg/spu/publications/portableinternet/ExecSummFinal2.pdf>>).

**Social Network Site:** A web-based service that allows individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site. (Source: Boyd, d. m., & Ellison, N. B. (2007), "Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship", <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html>>).

**Software** - The programs or other "instructions" that a computer needs to perform specific tasks. Examples of software include word processors, e-mail clients, web browsers, video games, spreadsheets, accounting tools and operating systems. (Source: Center for International Development at Harvard University, Information Technologies Group, <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/readinessguide/glossary.html>).

**Urban:** Areas classified based on dominant settlement type and land use. Cities, towns, townships and suburbs are typical urban settlements. They must be high-density populated areas, with a population of 20,000 or more. (This number has been adjusted to account for a 4.8% increase in population per annum, since 2001 when the original figure was termed.) Urban areas include Cape Town, the second-most populous city in South Africa, as well as Rustenburg, the fastest growing city in South Africa which boasts one of the highest GDPs per capita in the nation. (Source: Statistics South Africa. 2001. Census 2001: Concepts and definitions / Statistics South Africa, <[www.statssa.gov.za/census01/html/concepts%20&%20definitions.pdf](http://www.statssa.gov.za/census01/html/concepts%20&%20definitions.pdf)>).

**Wireless:** Generic term for mobile communication services which do not use fixed line networks for direct access to the subscriber. (Source: ITU, <<http://www.itu.int/osg/spu/publications/portableinternet/ExecSummFinal2.pdf>>).

**World Wide Web:** The complete set of electronic documents stored on computers that are connected over the Internet and are made available by the protocol known as HTTP. The World Wide Web makes up a large part of the Internet. (Source: ITU, <<http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict>>).

**Youth/Young People:** Males and females of ages 14-24 years. (Source: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "The State of the World's Children 2011", <[http://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/pdfs/SOWC-2011-Main-Report\\_EN\\_02092011.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/pdfs/SOWC-2011-Main-Report_EN_02092011.pdf)>).

**Zones:** Another term for chatrooms on MXit. *See Chatrooms.*

## Annex IV: Working Group Member Biographies

### Gerrit Beger ([gbeger@unicef.org](mailto:gbeger@unicef.org))

Gerrit Beger is the Chief of the Youth Section of the Division of Communication in UNICEF New York Headquarters.

He has been working with UNICEF for the last eight years with postings in Nigeria and India.

Gerrit leads the innovative Youth Section, which uses new technologies and media to engage young people in social change through youth media and educational initiatives.

He has over 12 years of experience working as a communication and advocacy professional in different environments, including the NGO/IGO sector, as well as corporate firms.

Gerrit is a German national holding a MA in Communication Science and Political Studies from the University of Leipzig.

### Tanja Bosch ([tanja.bosch@uct.ac.za](mailto:tanja.bosch@uct.ac.za))

Tanja Bosch is a senior lecturer in the Centre for Film and Media Studies at the University of Cape Town, South Africa.

Tanja teaches radio journalism, new media, health communication and media theory and research. Her areas of research and publication include talk radio and democracy, community radio, and youth use of mobile media, particularly cellphones and Facebook.

She completed her MA in International Affairs while a Fulbright Scholar at Ohio University, where she also graduated with a PhD in Mass Communication.

Her dissertation, which was awarded the Broadcast Educational Association (BEA) Outstanding Dissertation Award 2003, was an ethnographic study of community radio and identity in South Africa.

### Sandra Cortesi ([scortesi@cyber.law.harvard.edu](mailto:scortesi@cyber.law.harvard.edu))

Sandra Cortesi is a Youth and Media Policy Working Group and the Youth and Media Lab Project fellow at the Berkman Center, coordinating research and education initiatives. Both in Digital Natives Project and in her current work, Sandra has been working in conducting various surveys and interviews and has enjoyed dealing with topics such as identity and creativity. Within the Digital Natives Project she relishes the contact with young people and their innovative ways of thinking and also the vast communication and collaboration possibilities the internet has to offer. She has also been working for the Research Center for Information Law at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland. In June 2009, Sandra finalized her Master's in Human Computer Interaction at the University of Basel.

**Urs Gasser ([ugasser@cyber.law.harvard.edu](mailto:ugasser@cyber.law.harvard.edu))**

Urs Gasser is the Executive Director of the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University. He teaches at Harvard Law School, at the University of St. Gallen (Switzerland) and Fudan University School of Management (China). He is a visiting professor at KEIO University (Japan) and a Fellow at the Gruter Institute for Law and Behavioral Research. Urs Gasser has written several books, is the co-author of “Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives” (Basic Books, 2008, with John Palfrey) that has been translated into ten languages (including Chinese), and has published over 70 articles in professional journals. His research and teaching activities focus on information law and policy issues. Current projects, several of them in collaboration with leading research institutions in the U.S., Europe, and Asia, explore policy and educational challenges for young Internet users, the regulation of digital technology (currently with focus on cloud computing), ICT interoperability, information quality, the law’s impact on innovation and risk in the ICT space, and alternative governance systems. He graduated from the University of St. Gallen (J.D., S.J.D.) as well as Harvard Law School (LL.M.) and received several academic awards and prizes for his research.

**Laura Hallam ([laura.hallam@mxitlifestyle.com](mailto:laura.hallam@mxitlifestyle.com))**

Laura Hallam has worked on digital and social media programmes and campaigns targeting the global youth for about eight years. She has a good understanding of the complexity and diversity of the youth market not only in South Africa, but also in South East Asia and Latin America.

Her various positions in the youth sector over this period have afforded her a bird’s eye view of witnessing the birth of social media and the emergence of global youth trends. She has an understanding of what makes them tick - their daily challenges and issues and most importantly, how to use technology to enhance their lives.

Laura is currently the Specialist of Social Business and Education at MXit Lifestyle, where she heads up the division of MXit Reach – the company’s CSI-driven platform that provides counselling, education, empowerment and life skills initiatives across MXit’s over 44 million-strong global community. Part of her mandate is to deliver MXit’s philosophy of integrating social good into the company’s offering and includes creating country-specific tools for users in Africa and Indonesia.

Laura has led campaigns in partnership with NGO’s, civil societies, organizations, and companies like UNICEF and other UN Agencies, the US and South African Governments, and even President Obama to engage and support youth-centric programmes on MXit.

Laura, who is based in Cape Town, South Africa, has been with MXit Lifestyle for the past four years. For three years she served as the company’s International Brand Manager in charge of international research, product development, and communications. She helped to

shape MXit's global brand with relevance for local market consumption in its strategic quest to seek out emerging markets for MXit. Her time in this capacity also saw her launch MXit Music as a platform for up and coming musicians and garage bands. For the last year, Laura has been in her current position as head of MXit Reach.

Prior to MXit, Laura worked at the Shuttleworth Foundation in the role of Brand Manager, where she was the creator of the organisation's widely respected publication, HIP2B2. She grew the magazine distribution to 150,000 school children, thereby successfully promoting the subjects of science, technology and mathematics. She also grew the HIP2B2 television show, broadcasted on mainstream South African television, to a viewership of over 2 million. Her role was primarily to encourage children in the study of these subjects, and to elicit an excitement of these subjects in everyday life.

Laura is enormously passionate about the use of technology and its reach in helping the youth develop into educated, confident adults.

**Shafika Isaacs ([shafikai@telkomsa.net](mailto:shafikai@telkomsa.net))**

Shafika Isaacs is an International ICT for Development Consultant, specializing in the education sector. She is currently Program Director of eLearning Africa and Fellow at Education Impact, a network of international consultants specializing in educational technologies.

She has formerly held positions as Founding Executive Director of SchoolNet Africa, Education Director at Mindset Network and Director of the Trade Union Research Project, and worked with UNESCO, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the World Bank, Cisco, and Microsoft.

Shafika serves on a number of boards and committees including the Advisory Board of the Horizon Report K-12, the Organizing Committee of eLearning Africa, the Steering Committee of Online Educa Berlin, the Board of Directors for SchoolNet South Africa and SchoolNet Africa and was founding Steering Committee member of the UN ICT Task Force's Global eSchools and Communities Initiative (GeSCI). She served as Chairperson for the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women's Expert Group Meeting on the role of technologies in the advancement of women and girls.

She has published a number of papers related to technologies for development, education and women's empowerment and is the author of a book on globalization and its effects on workers in South Africa.

Shafika has a MSc in Science and Technology Policy at the University of Sussex and an Executive MBA cum laude at the Graduate School of Business at the University of Cape Town. In 2003, she was a finalist for the World Technology Network Award.

Shafika is from South Africa.

**Tino Kreutzer ([tino.kreutzer@undp.org](mailto:tino.kreutzer@undp.org))**

Tino Kreutzer is a Specialist in Digital Media and Sociology. He is currently working at UNDP as Information Management Specialist in Central African Republic. Tino's research on use of Mobile Phones in Urban Youths of South Africa has proven to be unique and extremely important within context of digital media in South Africa.

Tino, who is based in Afghanistan now, was a strong faculty member at Centre for Film and Media Studies at University of Cape Town for several years, and graduated from very same institution with Masters in Media Development.

**Priscillia Kounkou Hoveyda ([phoveyda@unicef.org](mailto:phoveyda@unicef.org))**

Priscillia Kounkou Hoveyda is currently the Project Manager of Digital Citizenship and Safety, Youth Section in partnership with Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University.

Prior to UNICEF, she has worked in the Eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo with the International Rescue Committee, in Iran focusing on the protection of human rights and in Paris and New York as an in-house lawyer with different law firms and companies.

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**Kate Pawelczyk ([kpawelczyk@unicef.org](mailto:kpawelczyk@unicef.org))**

Kate Pawelczyk is working as the Communication Officer at UNICEF South Africa Country Office since October 2009. Prior to that, Kate was working within the Communication's team as both Intern and Programme Assistant.

Kate is an expert in Communication and Development. Kate has completed her Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Journalism & Media and History, and her Honors degree in Development Studies.

She is an avid consumer of digital and social media.

**Akshay Sinha ([asinha@unicef.org](mailto:asinha@unicef.org))**

Akshay Sinha is currently working as a Consultant on Digital Citizenship and Safety Project in the Youth Section at UNICEF.

He has completed his BSc at Rochester Institute of Technology, MBA at Fordham University, and is currently pursuing a Masters of Arts in International Relations studies at Columbia University. Previous to UNICEF, he was working at UN FAO for Iraq in conflict/post-conflict rural development and worked in Strategy Consulting and Investment Banking prior to that.

**Melanie Zuch ([melanie.zuch@gmail.com](mailto:melanie.zuch@gmail.com))**

Melanie is currently working as Intern to the Digital Safety and Citizen Project at UNICEF New York Headquarters. She holds a BA in Development Studies from Brown University, and will matriculate at Harvard Law School in the fall of 2011.

Prior to her internship at UNICEF, Melanie spent a year in Cape Town, South Africa, working as a researcher on the PREPARE: “Promoting sexual and reproductive health among adolescents in Southern and Eastern Africa – mobilizing schools, parents and communities” project. She has also worked with the Youth Program at the International Rescue Committee New York Resettlement Office, and in HIV clinics in Odumase Krobo, Ghana and Durban, South Africa.