

A speech presented at Internet Safety, Security and Privacy Campaign on the 25th of October 2008 at De Event Place, Planet One Entertainment, Lagos

By Jummai Umar-Ajijola

Citizenship Program Manager, Microsoft Nigeria

jummai@microsoft.com

Colleagues, gentlemen of the press, future leaders.... indeed I am very excited to be here today to witness one more step in our campaign to transform our image as an internet crime haven.

Nigeria has an unenviable image in cyber-space due to the activities of a few cyber-deviants, many of whom may not be Nigerians. Through this coalition, working with Nigerian youth, demonstrating constructive ingenuity positive creativity and global leadership in the fight against cybercrime, we plan to transform the cyber image of Nigeria to reflect a true image of us as a nation where the internet is a safe and secure place to communicate with others, study and do business. I believe this is who we really are.

It is with this objective that Microsoft (MS) started the Internet Safety, Security and Privacy Initiative (ISSPIN) Campaign in Partnership with Paradigm Initiative of Nigeria (PIN). ISSPIN is a social crusade that has metamorphosed into a coalition with a life of its own. This coalition is set to support the efforts of the Federal Government of Nigeria in the great strides it has made in combating Cybercrime in our society.

The ever growing coalition includes Microsoft Nigeria, Paradigm Initiative Nigeria, Planet One Entertainment, Soundcity, Teledom Group, New Nigeria Club, NairaHost, Blarque Brotha Entertainment and the Nigeria Computer Society among others. There have also been several spontaneous contributions in kind (people's time and effort) which are extremely heart warming.

Many anti-cybercrime initiatives take a corrective remedial approach after the damage has been done. The ISSPIN Campaign takes a peer pressure based preventative approach by discouraging cyber crime and facilitating positive utilisation of cyber space.

We must reach our youth about cyber crimes in a preventative manner. As the saying goes, "prevention is better than cure." Music is a media the youth relate to, and we are excited that the top artistes in Nigeria today all support this initiative which empowers the youth to own the ISSPIN Campaign and ensure it is sustainable.

We have adopted a model which includes music, games, competitions and challenges to engage the youth more deeply in order to make the serious job of combating cybercrime more fun for us all. What we hope to achieve with this model is that you the youth, take ownership of this process so as to ensure that the message is passed on to the rest of the community. This is a sure way to engender success and also sustain the momentum this event has generated.

We believe that the anti-cybercrime model we are pioneering will be exported to other countries in Africa and beyond. This is a creative initiative by youth, and for youth which will serve as a trail blazing model for other nations to follow. We must all contribute to cleaning up our national reputation, in part, by stemming all forms of cybercrime swiftly, effectively and proactively. We welcome well articulated and thought through constructive suggestions for follow-up and complimentary activities because the traditional methods have not worked and we need to find new ways to address the global situation.

We acknowledge the fact that we need curative action from law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders as well but there are many strategies in every battle including the battle against cybercrime. If the younger people are pioneering this initiative, we should encourage them.

Some of you may be wondering what essays have to do with fighting cybercrime. We believe that the essays compliment the process. Essays will not immediately stop cybercrime or 419 but they help to raise awareness within and among the community and the youth in particular. Essays and the information they contain empower vulnerable groups and it is a way of leveraging on information which is a crucial component of the modern information society we all desire to build.

We have other complementary activities lined up including:

- a. Ongoing rehabilitation of youth who will disengage from cyber-crime related activities (colloquially known as Yahoo Yahoo boys) and be trained as legitimate software programmers and attached to mentors with the possibility of potential internship opportunities. Many of such youth will be the budding entrepreneurs in our future if given positive encouragement now. We invite other people and organisations to partner with us to the sustain this exciting process by offering to mentor, facilitate the training of and/or host at least one rehabilitated youth.
- b. Already a team of IT Youth "Ambassadors" are touring Nigerian secondary and tertiary institutions raising awareness among peers. Currently there are 24 such inspiring youth from 11 states across Nigeria who have now dedicated one year to the campaign through various activities. For example, 5 students of the University of Lagos (UNILAG), who got onboard through the essay competition, visited at least 20 secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Lagos last week as their own contribution to the campaign.

- c. A national essay competition, with prizes, has already commenced. We also expect the competition to contribute to making “yahoo yahoo” activities “un-cool.”
- d. Some training for teachers related to “parental controls” available to schools will be undertaken
- e. Essay writing and quiz competitions were held in Awka, Anambra State and Minna, Niger State commence 22nd and 23rd October 2008.

ISSPIN is a COLLABORATIVE effort to address the issue of cybercrime in Nigeria and we encourage all stakeholders to take action no matter how modest to discourage cyber crime and encourage Nigeria’s positive leadership in cyber space.

We look forward to expanding the collaborative platform by integrating with ongoing and future legal and technical initiatives by other stakeholders who are engaged in technical and enforcement efforts.

A country that is hitherto associated with negativity in the cyber world is now grabbing the attention of the whole world as the exporter of a very daring solution that puts the youth at its centre. I am very happy to note that the proverbial journey of a thousand miles has started for us with this single step and we will nurture and watch it grow.

Microsoft and its partners will continue to support the process and encourage all stakeholders to work together in our quest to attain the national vision of making ***Nigeria into an IT enabled, just and prosperous society.***

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is what Microsoft, PIN and its partners like you are seeking to make happen.

Thank you