Building Digital and Media Literacy Skills for Safer Online Spaces for Children in Southern Africa
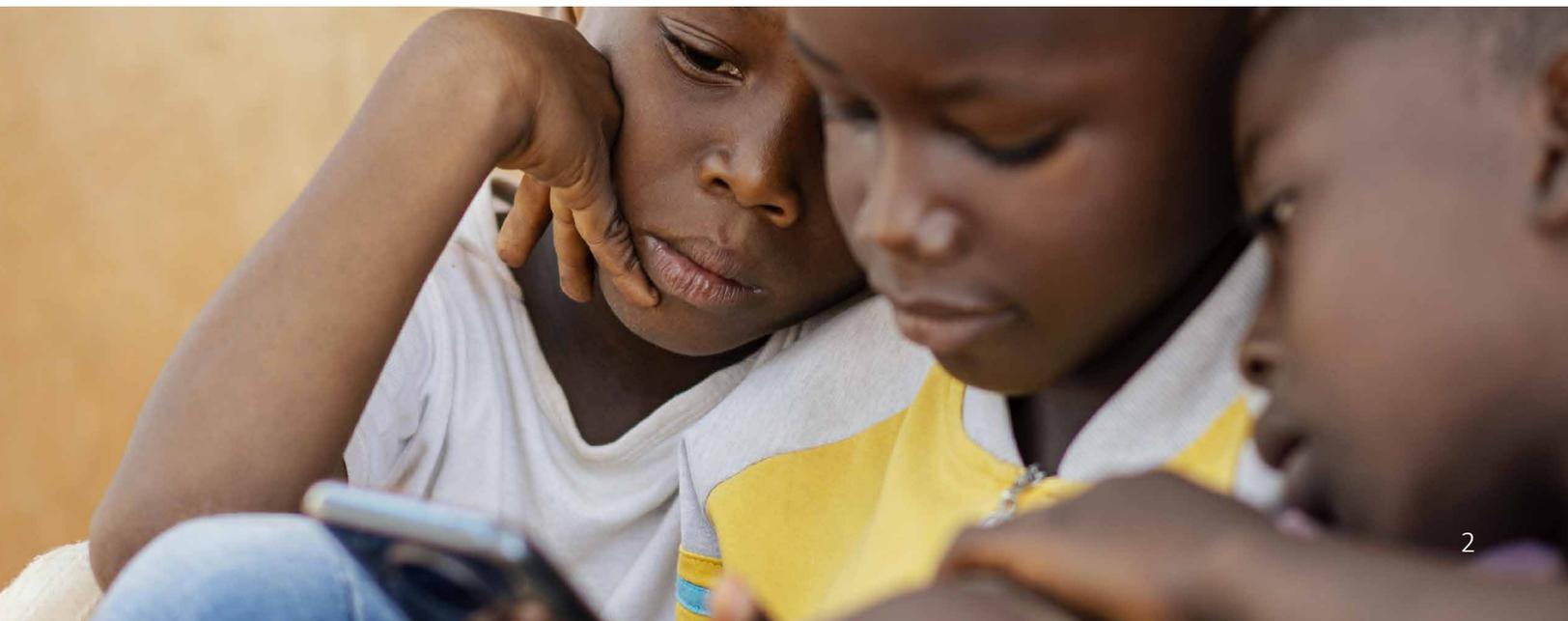
March**, 2026**

Executive Summary

Children in Africa including in Southern Africa are growing up in an increasingly connected world, yet most lack the digital and media literacy skills needed to navigate it safely. Rapid growth in mobile and internet access in Botswana, South Africa, Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe has outpaced meaningful investment in digital education, leaving millions of children exposed to online harms including among others, cyberbullying, child sexual abuse material (CSAM), technology-facilitated gender-based violence (tfGBV) and misinformation. Risks associated with misuse of artificial intelligence are also pronounced. One in three school-going teenagers in South Africa has experienced cyberbullying. Across the five African countries, one in three women reports online gender-based violence. Marginalized children, particularly girls, rural learners, and children with disabilities bear a disproportionate share of these risks.

This report examines the state of digital literacy education across six Southern African countries. All reviewed countries have adopted locally made laws and policies which are also aligned with international frameworks, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Yet still, a significant implementation gap persists. Policy ambition consistently outpaces delivery, especially in under-resourced communities. In Lesotho, only 51% of primary school teachers meet basic digital literacy standards. In Zambia, most schools, while compelled to teach ICT, lack devices, connectivity, and trained educators.

In accordance with the UNESCO definition, digital and media literacy encompasses the ability to access, evaluate, create, and communicate information safely and critically across digital platforms. Equipping children with these competencies is essential to reducing their vulnerability to online exploitation, enabling meaningful civic participation, and ensuring their maximo benefit from opportunities presented by digital life. Models such as South Africa's Web Rangers programme and Namibia's partnership-driven curriculum rollout demonstrate the potential benefits of government, civil society and private sector collaborations.

Grounded in the African Union's Digital Education Strategy and Digital Transformation Strategy, this report calls on States and regional bodies to take measures to close the gap between policy and practice. Key recommendations include: directing sustained investment towards teacher digital competence at all levels; prioritising infrastructure, devices, and connectivity for the most vulnerable learners; fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration among government, civil society, researchers, and the private sector; and enacting rigorous policies that make digital literacy a core component of children's education across the region. Without urgent, coordinated action, the expansion of digital access risks deepening rather than reducing inequality and harm for Southern Africa's children.

Introduction

In today's interconnected world, access to digital technology and information is increasing at an unprecedented rate. Between 2016 and March 2021, mobile cellular subscriptions in Botswana increased by 18%, and internet subscriptions by 60%, illustrating the steady rise of internet users in the country.[1] Additionally, key findings in the Centre for Human Rights' report on African children's online privacy rights show increasing evidence of governments' efforts to expand digital connectivity across African jurisdictions. [2] This marks a significant victory for access to information and freedom of expression and shows progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals' vision to 'Leave No One Behind'.

However access to devices and connectivity alone is not sufficient. For rural youth in Southern Africa, having a device or internet connection means little without the skills, support, and safe spaces needed to use it meaningfully. Limited digital literacy training remains a significant and widespread problem across the region.

While the responsibility to stay safe online falls on States, digital platforms as well as parents, it is important that children, in their evolving capacity, develop the skills to minimize exposure to online harms and seek help when needed.[3] Yet a majority of young internet users in Southern Africa have not received meaningful digital literacy education, which exposes them to significant risks, including online harms, misinformation, misused Artificial Intelligence, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence (tfGBV). Addressing this requires intentional, systemic action and the formal education system is uniquely positioned to ensure that all children receive the quality digital literacy education they need to participate safely and meaningfully in digital life. [4]

This report examines digital literacy initiatives providing essential protection for children's safe digital participation across South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia and Zambia. It analyzes current government policies and initiatives, identifies critical gaps, and proposes actionable solutions for creating safer, more inclusive digital environments through digital literacy skills development.

The African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy envisions

Mobile cellular subscriptions in Botswana

18%
Increase between **2016** and March **2021**

60%
internet subscriptions

1 Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), "Study on the use of ICT in Education and Remote Learning During Crises and the Required investment for Digital Transformation for African Countries:Country Profile Report Botswana"https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Veronica-Mckay/publication/384427522_COUNTRY_PROFILE_REPORT_-_BOTSWANA_STUDY_ON_THE_USE_OF_ICT_IN_EDUCATION_AND_REMOTE_LEARNING_DURING_CRISES/links/66f7e5f0869f1104c6badbad/COUNTRY-PROFILE-REPORT-BOTSWANA-STUDY-ON-THE-USE-OF-ICT-IN-EDUCATION-AND-REMOTE-LEARNING-DURING-CRISES.pdf?origin=publication_detail&_tp=eyJjb250ZXh0Ijp7ImZpcnN0UGFnZSI6InB1YmxpY2F0aW9uIiwicGFnZSI6InB1YmxpY2F0aW9uRG93bmxvYWQiLCJwcmV2aW91c1BhZ2UiOiJwdWJsaWNhdGlvbiJ9fQ&__cf_chl_tk=2NDZ_roOTl1ro2PPDziVtWXnKeJKCXomEP7gPKBJlTY-1756675627-1.0.1.1-hWaoGnAYxFOwI.12gtDJ3Vq6ibeloWYBU1q4PM9mSSM
2 ECPAT International, International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children "The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, The Child Rights International Network and the Centre for Child Law (University of Pretoria, South Africa)
3 End Violence Disrupting Harm study "Online Risk and Harm for Children in Eastern and Southern Africa" https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/media/3841/file/Online-Risks-Harm-Children-ESA-2023.pdf
4 Ibid 3

The Online Risks Facing African Children

an integrated, inclusive digital society and economy in Africa. It highlights the continent's digital skills gap and offers recommendations that reflect the importance of digital literacy. According to the strategy, African youth constitute 60% of the overall population which accounts for one of Africa's most precious assets because they can be empowered and transformed into a digitally adaptive, skilled, and innovative workforce that can lead its own digital pathway towards inclusive growth. To do this, the strategy recommends, among other things, to review education curricula in accordance with the needs of the digital society and promote gender-inclusive education frameworks that enable digital skills development for women and girls.[5]

For African children, digital literacy is of greater significance because they already face educational, social, and economic challenges that can limit the benefits they receive from digital literacy skills, while exacerbating their exposure to online dangers.[6] Common dangers that affect children online include exposure and being victims to Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), online grooming, cyberbullying, Ai manipulation and exploitation, as well as mis and disinformation.

According to the South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASOP),one in every three school going teenagers falls victim to cyberbullying.[7] Cyberbullying and other harmful online behaviours thrives through the illusion of invisibility of the human face and convinces some children that perpetrators cannot be traced online. This belief emboldens child perpetrators to engage in cyberbullying, stalking, or online grooming.

These harmful actions not only leave digital footprints, but also expose children to lasting mental health issues, as well as legal and reputational risks.[8] Equipping children with digital literacy skills is therefore essential to improving their online posture, enabling them to recognise threats, navigate digital spaces responsibly, and protect themselves from exploitation and harm.[9]

5 African Union "The Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030)" https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38507-doc-dts-english.pdf
6 LA Abdulrauf, H Dube "Data privacy law in Africa: Emerging perspectives", Pretoria University Law Press, 2024.
7 IOL " Don't Look Away: Swipe, post, destroy: Inside South Africa's cyberbullying crisis"
https://iol.co.za/news/south-africa/2025-11-26-dont-look-away-swipe-post-destroy-inside-south-africas-cyberbullying-crisis/
8 P J Kizza "Unmasking the Cyberbully: Understanding the Psychological and Social Dynamics behind Online Abuse"https://www.researchgate.net/publication/382522150_Unmasking_the_Cyberbully_Understanding_the_Psychological_and_Social_Dynamics_behind_Online_Abuse
9 NAN Ibrahim, MH Mahbob and others "The Impact of Influencer Culture on Children" https://rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/articles/the-impact-of-influencer-culture-on-children/

The growing social media influencer culture has also intensified unrealistic pressures on African children and shifts the traditional roles and trust from caregivers, who are mostly digitally illiterate, to online celebrities as sources of information and advice. This translates into peer comparisons around likes, followers, and trends which shape their self-worth and drive conformity. These pressures reveal how digital culture fuels vulnerability in the presence of insufficient guidance from home or school, which consequently, forms a breeding ground for extremely damaging forms of behaviour and abuse, including engaging in technology-facilitated Gender-Based Violence (tfGBV) among other digital harms.

TfGBV weaponizes digital tools to harm online users based on gender, intersecting with racism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism,[10] and disproportionately targeting marginalized groups such as girls, black, indigenous, LGBTQ+ youth, and children of colour.[11]

A study conducted in Ethiopia, Kenya, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda revealed that one in three women experienced GBV;[12] 28.2% of women reported online harassment, with 36% of cases being sexual in nature and 33.2% involving unwanted sexual advances or offensive content.[13]

The African Union's Africa's Agenda for Children 2040, Aspiration 7 highlights the importance of children's right to be protected from any form of violence, including GBV and tfGBV. It also outlines the impact of violence on children citing children's physical and mental health concerns both in the short and long term that limit their ability to effectively learn and integrate into society which impacts their transition to adulthood.[14] All these risks do not exist in isolation; they are intensified by the very digital systems that shape children's online experiences.

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools and Algorithmic design, which is the automated set of rules that dictate how content is prioritized and shared,[15] not only amplify sensational and harmful content but also sustain the dynamics of online violence, including tfGBV. This is done by reinforcing stereotypes and biased, tailored online experience that eliminates opposing viewpoints and differing voices, creating social media echo chambers.[16] The lack of transparency on data collection by tech companies, processing, profiling and manipulation, especially in unequal contexts further threatens African children's rights, creating new vulnerabilities and risk to exploitation, surveillance, and discrimination. This discrimination is perpetuated by biased algorithms and unchecked power imbalances, such as facial recognition systems that fail on darker skin tones common in Africa and can lead to inaccurate representation of the lived experiences of African children.[17] These harms underscore the urgent need for digital literacy initiatives that equip children with the skills to recognize, resist, and respond to online harms such as CSAM, cyberbullying, misinformation, misused Artificial Intelligence and tfGBV.[18] These unique risks and opportunities that children face when they are connected to the internet and social media have generated increased demand for digital literacy education in Africa today.

10   Ableism is a set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities https://cdrnys.org/blog/uncategorized/ableism/

11   S Dunn, " Supporting a Safer Internet Paper No. 1 Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence:An Overview"https://digitalcommons.schulichlaw.dal.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1774&context=scholarly_works

12   Neema Iyer, Bonnita Nyamwire and Sandra Nabulega, "AlternAte reAlities, AlternAte internets: African Feminist Research for a Feminist Internet, 2020" https://firn.genderit.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/Pollicy%20final%20report.pdf

13   One in three women in five countries in Africa experience online gender based violence, https://dig.watch/updates/one-three-women-five-countries-africa-experience-online-gender-based-violence

14   African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child,Africa's Agenda for Children 2040, Aspiration 7: Every child is protected against violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse, https://www.acerwc.africa/en/africas-agenda-children-2040/aspiration-7-every-child-protected-against-violence-exploitation

15   Esafety "An unfair fight – how algorithms are shaping our adolescents" https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/blogs/an-unfair-fight-how-algorithms-are-shaping-our-adolescents#:~:text=Algorithms%20sort%20through%20enormous%20amounts,interest%20in%20fitness%20or%20gaming

16   University of Texas: Stan Richards School of Advertising and Public Relations "What is a Social Media Echo Chamber?" https://advertising.utexas.edu/news/what-social-media-echo-chamber

17   E Ferrara "Fairness and Bias in Artificial Intelligence: A Brief Survey of Sources, Impacts, and Mitigation Strategies" https://www.mdpi.com/2413-4155/6/1/3

18   5rightsfoundation "Joint Input on the ACHPR's Draft Study on Human and Peoples' Rights and AI, Robotics, and Other New and Emerging Technologies in Africa" https://5rightsfoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/ACHPR-AI-and-Childrens-Rights-Joint-Submission.pdf

Digital Literacy as an Essential Life Skill for Protection and Empowerment

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognises digital literacy as encompassing a set of critical competencies for participation in today's digital world. These core elements include competencies such as accessing, managing, understanding, integrating, communicating, evaluating, and creating information. UNESCO further defines digital and media literacy as the ability to apply these elements safely and appropriately through digital technologies to support education, work, and broader social participation.[19] Seen in this way, digital literacy is not just a technical skill but is a crucial life skill that has the potential to provide children with the knowledge, insights, skills and attitudes needed to guard against potential harm, as well as to reap the benefits of these diverse and ever increasing media platforms in their everyday lives.[20]

A good example is the Media Monitoring Africa's Article 12 Policy Working Group in South Africa that exemplifies a rights-based approach to digital literacy.[21] This initiative trains children in digital literacy skills, and empowers them to participate meaningfully in information and communication technology (ICT) policy discussions at national, regional, and international levels. The program demonstrates how digital literacy education can develop digital citizens who combine safe technology use with active civic engagement and collaborative problem-solving.[22] However, such examples assume access to devices, infrastructure and reliable connectivity, which remain as significant challenges in many parts of Southern Africa.

Regional Implementation: Patterns and Challenges

The governments of South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia and Zambia have developed fairly comprehensive online safety, Information and Communication Technology policies and regulations aligned with international frameworks like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)[23] and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)[24] which they have all ratified.

For instance, South Africa has in place the Cybercrimes Act 19 of 2020, the Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act, the Film and Publication Amendment Act and the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) 4 of 2013. Together, these form a legislative framework that addresses digital privacy, child online protection and child sexual exploitation among other harmful content and exposure like cyberbullying.[25]

Lesotho's Computer Crime and Cyber Security Bill of 2024, targets digital threats by addressing rising cybercrime, national security risks, and harms such as fraud, cyberbullying, and malicious communications, including offences related to children.[26]

Botswana has the Cybercrime and Computer Related Crimes Act No. 18 of 2018, which criminalises the dissemination of illegal content, as well as offences including cyber harassment and cyberstalking. Recently it also adopted the Data Protection Act of 2024, which includes specific provisions requiring parental consent for the processing of children's personal data.[27]

---

19 A Global Framework of Reference on Digital Literacy Skills for Indicator 4.4.2, Information Paper No.51 June 2018 UIS/2018/ICT/IP/51, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265403.

20 W Meeus, J Ouytsel and others "Media Literacy in the Digital Age: How to benefit from media use while protecting against harm; An overview of competencies needed by learners, teachers and teacher educators using 'Media Didactica'" https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Wil-Meeus/publication/279112553_Media_Literacy_in_the_Digital_Age_How_to_benefit_from_media_use_while_protecting_against_harm_-_An_overview_of_competencies_needed_by_learners_teachers_and_teacher_educators_using_'Media_Didactica'/links/558c136608ae40781c203579/Media-Literacy-in-the-Digital-Age-How-to-benefit-from-media-use-while-protecting-against-harm-An-overview-of-competencies-needed-by-learners-teachers-and-teacher-educators-using-Media-Didactica.pdf

21 Submission By The Article 12 Ambassadors For The Web Rangers to the Committee On The Rights Of The Child, https://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Article-12-Web-Rangers-Submissions-to-CRC-on-GC26.docx-4-1.pdf

22 Article 12 takes its name from Article 12 of the UNCRC, which is focused on ensuring that every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. The Article 12# Working Group is made up of Web Ranger ambassadors who have been trained in digital literacy and have a special interest in policy work. All of the Article 12 members are children, ranging in age from 13 to 17 years old. Article 12 members engage in ICT-related policy submissions and discussions that ensure that their voices are heard, and opinions are considered by policymakers and industry leaders. Article 12 members work on submissions to ensure that policies and decisions that affect children are more child-friendly and relevant and relatable to children and their daily lives.

23 Convention on the Rights of the Child https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child

24 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36804-treaty-african_charter_on_rights_welfare_of_the_child.pdf

25 Digital Rights Alliance Africa "Child Protection and Safety Online in Africa:The Law, Privacy, Challenges and Solutions" https://digitalrightsalliance.africa/download/child-protection-and-safety-on-line-in-africa/

26 Computer Crime and Cyber Security Bill, 2024: Statement of Objections and Reasons https://nationalassembly.parliament.ls/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/COMPUTER-CRIME-AND-CYBER-SECU-RITY-BILL-2024.pdf

27 Ibid 21

In addition to Namibia's Child Care and Protection Act No. 3 of 2015, the Ministry of ICT's draft Electronic Transactions and Cybercrime Bill includes sections that explicitly and comprehensively criminalise online offences against children, especially child pornography and online child sexual abuse material.[28]

Lastly Zambia has adopted the Child Online Protection Strategy in 2020 to address child online risks by enhancing policy, legal and institutional frameworks, as well as the Cyber Security and Cyber Crimes Act of 2021, which explicitly provided for child online protection.[29]

However, the journey from policy to practice reveals a shared tension: ambitious frameworks often outpace implementation, especially in under-resourced communities. Lesotho, despite having developed policies on digital literacy skills training, such as the Basic Education Curriculum Policy of 2021 provides for the integration of ICT into the education system to support teaching and learning and enhance digital skills for learners, its implementation lags behind.

A study into the implementation of the policy to enhance digital literacy for both primary and high school learners, revealed that only 51% of primary school teachers in Lesotho have basic digital literacy, with just 31% meeting Ministry standards. Many rural schools still lack electricity, computers, or internet, forcing teachers to use personal cellphones to improvise for lessons.[30]

Similarly, Zambia's experience with the Seventh National Development Plan (2017–2021) reveals how systemic educational challenges compound digital literacy efforts. ICT became compulsory at Junior Secondary level (Grades 8–9), yet, most schools lack digital devices, internet connectivity, and teachers with adequate digital literacy. The overall quality of education is also low, with fewer than one-third of learners passing their Grade 12 exam.[31]

South Africa offers perhaps a better view of policy to implementation, with frameworks like the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development (2011-2025) ((ISPFTED) and the National Digital and Future Skills Strategy providing detailed guidance for digital integration across all subjects. The country's approach recognizes that digital literacy extends beyond traditional IT subjects, requiring systematic teacher development and infrastructure investment.[32]

Encouragingly, recent initiatives in South Africa demonstrate institutional commitment. The 2024 Online Safety Integrated Programme,[33] developed in collaboration with UN agencies, Google South Africa, and civil society, represents a multi-stakeholder approach to digital safety education through provincial workshops and campaigns like Web Rangers. However, South Africa's ground-level challenges mirror those across the region. Many schools still lack basic computer facilities, reliable internet access, and adequate school-based security measures to safeguard computer laboratories, resulting in device theft.

The persistent issues of connectivity, device theft, and sustainability highlight how technical solutions alone cannot address systemic inequalities. The recognition that learners need connectivity beyond school hours for research and homework underscores the complexity of ensuring equitable access.[34] Addressing these inequalities requires coordinated policy reform, economic support structures, and rights-based digital literacy skills that account for the lived realities of learners beyond the classroom.

Zimbabwe and Namibia demonstrate how countries can leverage partnerships to address capacity gaps. In Zimbabwe, rising technology use among learners led the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) to develop Child Online Protection Guidelines to empower children through education.[35]

28 Safe Online "Disrupting Harm in Namibia:Evidence on online child sexual exploitation and abuse"https://safeonline.global/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/DH_Namibia_2_1.pdf

29 Joining Forces "Policy Brief: Protecting children in the Digital Environment" https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Policy%20Brief%20on%20Children%27s%20Rights%20in%20the%20 Digital%20Environment_0.pdf

30 MA Khumalo "Enhancing Digital Literacy for Learners in Inclusive Primary and Secondary Education in Lesotho" https://www.eu-opensci.org/index.php/ejedu/article/view/30928/6479

31 Ibid 27

32 Department of Communication and Digital Technologies (DCDT), noTICE 513 OF 2020 " national Digital and Future Skills Strategy South Africa gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202009/ 43730gen513.pdf

33 Department of Basic Education " Creating safe schools through the Online Safety Integrated Programme" https://www.education.gov.za/ArchivedDocuments/ArchivedArticles/OnlineSafetytraining.aspx

34 Ibid 30

35 Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe "Child Online protection Guidelines for Children"https://www.potraz.gov.zw/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/POTRAZ_COP.pdf

A study exploring digital competencies in Zimbabwean secondary schools in 2024 notes progress in using technology to communicate and collaborate, with WhatsApp being used for digital literacy teaching and learning among learners.[36] The study also notes challenges persist in content creation, problem-solving, and safety. Information and data literacy remains mixed: non-proficient schools lack interactive screens and projectors, with teachers relying on phones or poorly equipped labs, while some urban schools use e-learning systems such as online and offline resources.[37] Lastly it also notes that learners respond well to audiovisual materials, which make lessons livelier and improve retention and limited ICT access in rural areas highlights the need for targeted interventions, infrastructure development, and teacher training.[38]

Digital and Media literacy skills was introduced in all government schools in Namibia as a promotional subject for upper primary learners in 2016, and for Junior Secondary phases, (Grade 8 & 9 during 2017 and 2018), with the final roll-out for Grade 12 in 2021. UNESCO, DW Akademie and MiLLi have partnered with the National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) to build teacher capacities on ICT subjects.

NIED is responsible for the Curriculum Development and training teachers. However, they review changes every 5 years, meaning that emerging issues are often left out of curriculum development. Among these, is also the inconsistent and intransparent manner of selecting ICT teachers, lack of capacities and resources in schools to train ICT, and lack of support for ICT subjects in the wider school community.[39]

Other organisations who work towards keeping children safe online are; Communications Regulatory Authority Namibia, a public institution, which advocates for safer online spaces, LifeLine Childline Namibia, in partnership with the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, aims to intensify public education on cybersecurity.[40] UNICEF Namibia office has also established an online reporting portal which allows the public to report cases of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. Training for teachers, caregivers and children are also offered, alongside further advocacy campaigns.[41]

As these Southern African countries continue to navigate the complex digital transformation landscape in education, their shared challenges and innovative solutions offer valuable lessons for developing context-appropriate approaches to online safety that can protect African children while unlocking the full potential of digital learning.

36 Isreal Mbezekeli, Exploring digital competences in Zimbabwean secondary schools using a multimodal view: a hermeneutical phenomenography study, Cogent Education2024, Vol. 11, NO. 1, 2387911, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2387911?needAccess=true

37 Israel Mbekezeli Dabengwa, Sibonile Moyo and others " Exploring digital competences in Zimbabwean secondary schools using a multimodal view: a hermeneutical phenomenography study" Cogent Education, 2024 https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2387911?needAccess=true

38 ibid 31

39 UNESCO and NIED "Strengthen Media and Information Literacy for Primary School Educators" https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-and-nied-strengthen-media-and-information-literacy-primary-school-educators

40 ibid 36

41 Safe Online "Tackling Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Namibia" https://safeonline.global/unicef-namibia/

Conclusion

The region's diverse contexts demand locally-grounded approaches that confront rather than reinforce existing inequalities. Collectively, these national experiences reveal that successful digital literacy implementation requires more than policy frameworks and device distribution. The persistence of urban-rural divides, teacher capacity gaps, and infrastructure deficits across diverse economic contexts suggests that sustainable progress demands integrated approaches addressing social equity, economic development, and educational transformation simultaneously. While each country's journey reflects unique circumstances, their shared challenges point toward the need for regional collaboration, innovative- partner led financing mechanisms, and community-driven solutions that can bridge the gap between digital aspirations and educational realities.

Recommendations

The African Union (AU)'s Digital Education Strategy[42] outlines the following guiding principles for Member States to promote digital education implementation in the region:

- Resources and investment must be directed towards digital competence for all educators at all levels, so they effectively integrate digital technologies with sound pedagogy to improve educational outcomes.
- Investment in digital education, including connectivity, infrastructure, devices, capacity, literacy and skills, should be a priority for all states, so the most vulnerable especially children in rural areas, girls, children living with disabilities so they can effectively deal with digital harms in line with emerging global and regional trends.
- Digital literacy training for children requires collaboration among all stakeholders, educators, private sector, researchers, civil society, and decision-makers, through partnership and continuous dialogue.
- National governments must continue to develop rigorous policies, regulation and support initiatives that prioritize digital literacy that protects and empowers Southern African children.

---

42 *African Union Digital Education Strategyhttps://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/42416-doc-1._DES_EN_-_2022_09_14.pdf*