



**OSFU**  
THE ONLINE SAFETY FOUNDATION  
UGANDA  
*Online safety for All*



# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

2022- 2027

[www.osfu.org](http://www.osfu.org)



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We are advocating for the adults to regain or to rewire to enhance their responsibilities for their child and young people in the digital era as they embrace the enormous opportunities that do come with the utilization of these technologies

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### **Mission**

To provide cutting-edge digital safety services, foster a secure environment, and advocate for digital safety, regardless of one's ability to pay.

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### **Vision**

Creating a secure digital world, empowering young minds through prevention, protection and proactive systemic change, and equipping them with essential skills for responsible digital navigation."

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**To achieve our mission and realize our vision, The online Safety foundation Uganda, OSFU is guided by these values:**

**Innovation** – challenging the status quo and doing things differently to lead the world to a safer online environment.

**Empathy** – We approach our work with compassion and understanding, ensuring our actions are fair, ethical, and informed by evidence and research.

**Integrity** – We uphold the highest standards of honesty and transparency in all our activities, fostering trust and credibility.

**Commitment** – We are dedicated to our mission, persistently working to ensure the safety and well-being of our online community.

**Continual Improvement** – We strive for excellence by constantly seeking ways to improve our services and adapt to the ever-evolving online landscape.



A mother overhears two men arranging online to meet her ten-year-old daughter. In a small country town, a woman learns her abusive ex-husband has posted her intimate images online. A 15-year-old boy is humiliated when footage of him drunk and vomiting is shared across his school.



A teenage girl is captured on video in her bathroom, tears in her eyes, as a predator remotely coerces her to perform sex acts on her mobile phone on command.



An anonymous account targets a vulnerable woman on social media, urging her to kill herself and providing explicit instructions.



**These cases – reported to us over the last year by Ugandans – epitomise the real dangers that now come alongside the wonders of our online world.**

The technologies that enable us to stream ourselves into the homes of family overseas, connect with like-minded gamers, and learn from educational institutions around the world are the same technologies that enable these chilling scenarios.

It won't surprise anyone that COVID lockdowns, a shift to hybrid working and remote learning meant that more Ugandans have been online – and in turn, that all forms of online abuse reported to OSFU have grown considerably since before the COVID-19 pandemic.

In areas such as online child sexual exploitation material and image-based abuse, this has led to reports being as high as double what they were in 2019.



These elevated levels of abuse have become our new normal. The tectonic plates of online harms have shifted, reinforcing my belief that the work of OSFU is more important than it's ever been.

**As the hazards and risks and threats evolve, so must our strategy to deal with them. This document outlines how we will prioritise our activities to help Ugandans of all ages enjoy safer and more positive experiences online through to 2027. The strategy is framed by a forward-looking strategic outlook which will inform the steps we need to take. Having started operations in 2022, we in Uganda have a lead on the rest of the world. However, we still have much to do.**

The macro forces shaping our work will see a continued escalation towards online learning, working and connecting; advances in technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and algorithms which will have potential to help or harm children, young people, adults and society; immersive technologies, especially those

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that blend virtual and actual worlds to create hyper-realistic experiences, which will create more possibilities for abuse if we don't make the seamless integration of safety protections a design imperative.

**The online environment is being shaped by social, ideological and geopolitical events with both COVID and political conflict creating greater degrees of polarisation, fear, uncertainty and doubt. This is playing out online in numerous ways, as is the tension between a range of fundamental rights.**

These include where tech companies scan for known child sexual abuse material on their services: is an adult's right to privacy superior to the rights of a child victim? Or where an online service attempts to balance freedom of expression through protections against hate speech and extremism. These are critical areas where we need to strive to find the right protective balance. These new Ugandan laws were designed to keep pace in a society characterized by rapid change



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and innovation, where the duality of technology – used for both good and ill – has become a defining theme of our age.

While we've had several years to learn, grow and effect change, these new powers cement our role as a leader in online safety. They place OSFU at the forefront of the fight against online abuse and harm.

At OSFU, we approach our work through three lenses – prevention, protection, and proactive change. All this work is underpinned by the scaling impact and power of Strategic partnerships.

We will continue to work to prevent online harm by developing resources and programs based on robust evidence. We will continue to protect Ugandans and alleviate harm with our services and solutions. And we will continue to be proactive in minimizing harms with initiatives such as Safety by Design, which encourages the technology industry to anticipate, detect and eliminate online risk, as the most effective way to build our digital environments to be safer and more inclusive – from the ground up.

Safety by Design makes good business sense, too, we advocate for it, stimulating companies to invest and innovate for a better customer

experience without having to clean up reputational revenue disasters or regulatory 'tech wrecks'. Embedding safety makes for a better online experience and user retention.

As the technology sector hurtles towards the AI, Machine learning Algorithms metaverse and Web 3.0 – both of which potentially challenge traditional notice and removal models – we will continue to emphasise the need to retain humans in the loop and to keep their online welfare front of mind. OSFU will be there to remind companies, Organizations of the importance of user safety, serving as a corrective force by using our improved regulatory tools to keep industry accountable.

Since we know the internet will never be free from malice, conflict, and human error, we need to be smart about how we create the online world of the future. That means making sure safety and governance are built

into new technologies, so we can prevent and remediate any harm they might cause in the wrong hands.

This is not something we can leave for tomorrow because there is too much at stake. The rest of the world is taking notice and soon there will be many organizations like ours.

Even so, my primary goal is to make



sure Ugandans especially children and young people are protected, and that Uganda is ready for the future.

Over time, every Ugandan parent should be able to feel confident that as their children enjoy the wonders of the internet they are protected from its dangers. They should know that OSFU is there to help – and that we will have their back.

We will continue to build the capability we need to mature as an organization so we can face the many challenges the online world will generate now, and into the future.

We'll get better at fighting the threats we know and prepare well for the ones we know are coming.

We want our online world to be a place where we can explore, imagine, learn, connect, and create great memories together. Most of all, we need it to be a place where we can respect each other and be safe.

**Dr. Sulaiman Kawooya**  
CEO/ eSafety Director



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# The role of the OSFU

**The Online Safety foundation Uganda is a Non-profit organization protector, advocate and educator for online safety – the first of its kind in Uganda. OSFU represents our commitment to protecting citizens from serious online harms.**

Online harms are activities that take place wholly or partially online that can damage an individual's social, emotional, psychological, financial or even physical safety.

These harms occur as a result of content, conduct, or contact and can include online activity or material that:

- depicts sexual exploitation or sexual abuse of children
- promotes, instructs, or incites terrorism, violent extremism or other criminal activity, such as rape or murder
- encourages or promotes suicide or self-harm
- bullies, abuses, threatens, harasses, intimidates, or humiliates another person
- involves non-consensual sharing of intimate images or videos
- is inappropriate and potentially damaging for children to see

## **The Online Safety Foundation Uganda's Strategic priorities**

1. Promote online safety for Ugandans :
2. Provide information to Ugandans on the services we provide.
3. Provide and distribute information to Ugandans and our partners on critical online safety issues and trends.
4. Administer and market software solutions to respond to complaints and conduct regulatory investigations into child cyberbullying material, adult cyber abuse material, image-based abuse, and illegal and restricted online content.
5. Administer and market solutions and capacity building services to control harmful online content, such as videos depicting the sexual abuse of children or terrorism, through to material which is inappropriate for children, such as online pornography.
6. Coordinate the activities of schools departments, authorities and agencies relating to online safety for Ugandans especially children online protection.
7. Conduct and evaluate research about online safety for Ugandans.

**OSFU helps to keep Ugandans safer online by countering online harms, improving online safety under a holistic framework that comprises three pillars: Prevention, Protection, and Proactive and Systemic Change.**

Empowered by the various Ugandan laws, guided by our priorities, and enabled through domestic and international partners, these interconnected pillars support the Online Safety foundation Uganda, OSFU to deliver our mission.

### **Protection**

Operate and scale the use of AI powered software to block harmful content and investigate abuse

### **Proactive and systemic change**

- Prevention; Reducing the likelihood of online harms
- Prevention is critical.

It is the most cost-effective and enduring way to deter online harms before they manifest into something serious. OSFU believes it is always better to solve the chronic problem rather than continually grapple with the acute symptoms.

Through research, education and training programs, OSFU works to set a foundation to prevent online harm from happening. We aim to provide Ugandans with the practical skills and confidence to be safe, resilient and positive users of the online world, and to know where to seek help if issues do arise.

We base our approach on evidence. We have been building this body of evidence over time to track our progress and to make sure we have real, positive impact. We calibrate our approach to ensure our programs are contemporary, fit for purpose, and responsive to the needs of each particular community or targeted group.



## Strategic goals

Coordinate online safety education and prevention across the schools, communities, etc in accordance with Online Safety's legislated mandate and with the cooperation and involvement of key stakeholders.

Deliver targeted online safety programs and resources designed to support communities at increased risk of online harms, using a model informed by data and research.

Elevate and harness the voices of young people by working directly with them to get their advice on how to design Online Safety programs and resources that are authentic to them and compel them to change behaviors and seek help when they need it.

Lead best practice online safety education by equipping the education sector and other major partners, such as law enforcement and Trusted online Safety Providers, teachers, parents, health workers etc to deliver high-quality and age-appropriate material, aligned with the National Curriculum.

Provide professional development to frontline sectors, with training to build capacity to better recognise and respond to online risks and abuse.

Provide technological and monitoring solutions and services to enhance online safety for students, parents and teachers under the Schools Online Safety Clinics Initiative thus improving on mental health and wellbeing

- Build robust evidence to support our programs, with data generated by world-class research, investigations and intelligence, all supported by an evaluation framework.



## PROTECTION

OSFU offers awareness training, conduct workshops, and advocate for policies that prioritize online safety. By involving schools, parents, and local communities, we foster a collective effort to create a safer digital environment

The harms we tackle include child cyberbullying, adult cyber abuse, image-based abuse (sharing intimate images without consent of the person shown), and illegal and restricted content (such as child sexual exploitation material or material advocating terrorist acts).

- We support people experiencing online harms by compelling the removal of abusive and harmful content, limiting the ability of perpetrators to continue their abuse, and taking enforcement action against those who fail to comply with regulatory notices.

In line with our values of fairness and proportionality, and recognising that overwhelmingly victims simply want material removed, we will often take informal or graduated measures initially.

However, we will not hesitate to use the full range of our powers when we need to.

- Child Online Protection and Schools Online Safety clinics initiative powered by Blocks i (AI powered Internet filtering and online safety solutions for schools) and netspark for schools solution AI powered Internet filtering and content moderation solution for schools



- Alleviate harms by providing responsive and compassionate help that emphasizes removal as first priority, followed by remediation to prevent harmful behaviors such as sharing or threatening to share intimate material without consent.
- Deny the potential for bad actors to weaponise the internet, for example to broadcast terrorist violent extremist content.
- Build strong partnerships that are trust-based and mutually-beneficial with ugandan police forces, government agencies and NGOs, schools, parents/caregivers and communities while supporting and complementing their work through our tested schemes.
- Exercise our regulatory powers fairly, consistently and transparently, while taking steps when appropriate to robustly enforce compliance.
- Facilitate access to support by making our reporting pathway user-friendly and responsive to a wide variety of abilities, while building and improving on that functionality over time.
- Share information, strengthening capacity within OSFU to derive meaningful and actionable insights from data, and then sharing intelligence that contributes to our partners' understanding of the global online harms landscape.



## **Proactive and systematic change**

Reducing the risk of online harms within online services and platforms

Safer product design is fundamental to creating a more civil and less toxic online world much like the safety and design standards in traditional industries, most of which are guided by consistent international rules and norms. These standards include global requirements that car manufacturers embed seatbelts in cars to prevent traffic fatalities; how food and pharmaceutical safety standards and safe-handling practices seek to prevent poisoning, illness or death; or standards that cover consumer products or avoid dangerous business practices.

In the same way, OSFU has been seeking to shift the responsibility back onto the tech sector to assess platform risks and incorporate safety into development processes. We call this Safety by Design.

We know technology rapidly outpaces legislative reform. To offset this lag, OSFU anticipates how emerging technologies might be used, or misused, to harm Ugandans especially children and young people and works to achieve positive systematic change. We also recognize that the online world is borderless. We lead and collaborate with other online safety stakeholders internationally to strengthen our impact across borders and to shape global policies and approaches more effectively.

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## Strategic goals

- Raise the standard of protections for online safety across the Ugandan digital ecosystem by making safety a central consideration in developing products and services.
- Elevate online safety, achieving cultural change within the digital industry by surfacing innovative safety best practices and achieving tangible action around Safety by Design. Safety should be considered as important as data privacy and security in global digital trust policy discussions and when setting norms for internet governance and online service provider regulation.
- Create regulatory partnerships with a range of domestic and international stakeholders, particularly overseas agencies with a similar remit and like-minded governments, to make sure global online safety regulation is coherent, proportionate and effective. These partnerships will also seek to prevent a regulatory 'splinternet' that will impede proactive change and regulatory effect.
- Build capacity and capability by sharing operational knowledge and intelligence to help other jurisdictions establish successful, like-minded authorities, and taking the lead on building a global network of online safety advocates.
- Focus on the future, drawing on online Safety space expertise, assessing and analyzing complaint trends, and conducting research to anticipate the likely impact of transformative technologies such as the metaverse and Web 3.0.

## Partnerships

Working with others to amplify reach and impact

Underpinning OSFU's operating model is a fourth "P": Partnerships.

A single entity working alone will not achieve the online safety outcomes we need across Uganda. The internet is a complex and global environment, and to make an impact we must work with partners at home and around the world.

Safety online is an all-of-society responsibility that should know no borders or boundaries.

We operate in a multifaceted ecosystem populated by a wide spectrum of stakeholders. This includes young people, parents, care givers, the technology industry, law enforcement agencies, the education sector, mental health services, and not-for-profit organizations. It also includes regulators that seek to combat a range of intersectional online harms – whether privacy, security, competition or consumer issues. None of us can achieve our desired impact without partnerships.

OSFU builds and nurtures partnerships at local, state, national and global levels and across many sectors of the economy. As a small office, we invest strategically in partnerships with a shared vision that helps us achieve our joint goals at scale.

Our issue remit is broad, as is our growing constellation of regulatory targets, so this collaboration becomes critical to helping us bolster our reach and impact.

We engage in a variety of ways, such as empowering Schools through Schools online Safety clinics, building communities of practice for our Trusted Online Safety Providers, serving on boards and government forums, conducting research, and collaborating on joint educational campaigns or through operational partnerships. We will make sure we are a data-driven organization equipped with an operating model that ensures a seamless cycle of intelligence and insight-driven action in fulfilling our regulatory and educational role. This deep basis of insight will allow us to support and engage with partner agencies working on different aspects of online safety, and fulfil our mandated coordination role for online safety activities.

There are also consultation processes and formal stakeholder engagement mechanisms like our OSFU Advisory Committee and our Youth Advisory Council. Some examples of our partnerships are:





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**UGANDA**

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