

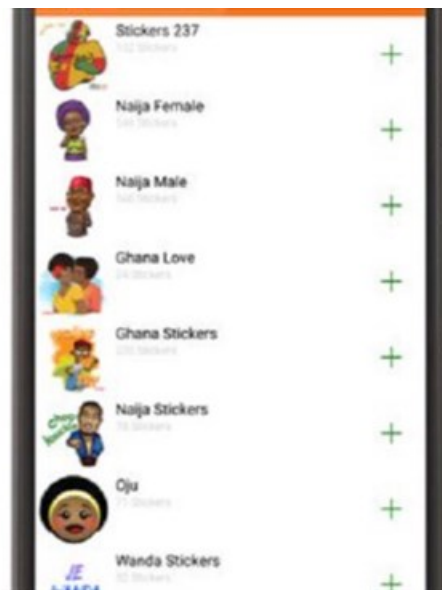
# Meet the Cameroonian startup creating a social network for Africa

By [Gabriella Mulligan](#)

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The social networking and messaging space may well be dominated by global giants like Facebook, Whatsapp, and Instagram, but Cameroonian startup Dikalo wants to take the giants on, with its localised Africa-specific social communications platform.

1000 ways to express yourself.



Dikalo offers a messaging platform connecting friends, but also enables users to chat with strangers by sharing a unique code opening up a public conversation. The platform offers a variety of Africa-relevant graphics and emoticons.

Alain Ekambi, founder of Dikalo, says the startup was launched to create a homegrown social network by Africans for Africans, allowing people to engage and make new connections in a fun and secure way.

“With Dikalo we aim to create an Africa-focused communication platform – something like WeChat in China or Hike Messenger in India. With almost half a billion people online in Africa and not a single African-owned platform – we felt like this has to be fixed,” Ekambi says.

Originally launched in 2016, Dikalo has had a number of pivots and relaunches, and in its current form has been operating since early 2017.

Ekambi plans to add a range of in-app services, for example, users will soon be able to make mobile-money transactions within the app, to make Dikalo a comprehensive communications platform with various value-added elements.

“The idea is to have a place where we can offer Africa-focused services but also connect the African continent in a fun and unique way without waiting for Facebook or Google to do it for us,” he says.

“Dikalo wants to be the gateway of how Africa goes online.”

So far, the platform has 20,000 users, and is available via [web](#), [iOS](#) and [Android](#) apps.

There’s still a lot of work to do, and bootstrapped to date, Dikalo will soon look to start fundraising to enable the startup to grow its user base, and hire new team members.

“We are working on a platform that we believe could become something great if done right with the help of the right people,” Ekambi says.

“Dikalo will survive because we will offer something familiar yet different than anything else on the market, by embracing our African identity instead of mimicking what’s already out there.”

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