

SAFPS to launch a groundbreaking platform to combat fraud

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Traditionally, South Africa has been a popular country among fraudsters looking for every opportunity to try and find their next victim. Statistics from the Southern African Fraud Prevention Service (SAFPS) point out that there was a 600% increase in incidents reported by their members in 2022 when compared to 2018.



Nazia Karrim, head of Product Development at the SAFPS

"The Southern African Fraud Prevention Service (SAFPS), in its role as the South African custodian of fraud prevention, has decided to take decisive action to tackle the problem that scams are posing to our economy. Over the years, the SAFPS has rolled out several important communication campaigns that aimed to educate South Africans about the various frauds and scams they can become victims of. However, the challenge is that reporting a scam – while important – is a reactive response once a person has already become a victim," says Nazia Karrim, head of Product Development at the SAFPS, "we need to establish a proactive approach to combating fraud and scams."

Yima: A proactive approach to scams prevention

The SAFPS continuously engages with various industry associations to reduce the country's fraud landscape.

"In response to the growing need for a proactive approach to fraud prevention, the SAFPS is developing a product called Yima. Once launched, the product's website will be a one-stop-shop for South

Africans to report scams, secure their identity, and scan any website for vulnerabilities related to scams. They will also be able to educate themselves on identifying a scam. These tools will enable consumers to surf the net more confidently and go about their daily lives aware and informed. These are just some exciting elements South Africans can access through the site," says Karrim.

"The most unique element of Yima is the ability to provide the consumer with the tools to be proactive when preventing scams and the services to assist them when they fall victim to a scam."

– Nazia Karrim, head of Product Development at the SAFPS

The main element of the website will be the ability to report a scam incident or any suspicious activity to the SAFPS. This suspicious activity includes a fake or suspect-looking online shopping website/portal and instances where the user has received phoney banking information. These reports will be collated and shared with law enforcement for investigation. Users will also be provided a scams hotline to report a fraud incident directly to their banks, retailers or insurance companies via a single number. Users will only need to remember one number rather than search for each institution's contact numbers online.

Additionally, Yima users will have access to the consumer products and services offered by the SAFPS.

"The most unique element of Yima is the ability to provide the consumer with the tools to be proactive when preventing scams and the services to assist them when they fall victim to a scam. This will make a significant difference in the war on

scams. Empowering the consumer is key to prevention," says Karrim.

Not all scams are conducted online

Upon returning to South Africa from a holiday in Mauritius, Ms Jones almost became a victim of a scam. Her mobile SIM card malfunctioned, leaving her incredibly stressed as an important business tool was not working. She quickly switched off her smartphone and restarted it, hoping it was a freak occurrence. A few minutes later, she received a call from an individual who informed her that he was from her mobile service provider. He indicated that he noticed that her SIM card malfunctioned and that he could assist her in fixing it; all she needed to do was provide him with the one-time pin (OTP) sent to her phone.

Well aware of the various scams fraudsters use to target individuals, Ms Jones questioned the so-called representative about why he needed the OTP. Then, in an angry outburst, he started raising his voice and threatening to disconnect her service immediately if she did not comply with his request. Fortunately, Ms Jones, unmoved, was aware of the potential scam risks and informed the so-called representative that she would visit the nearest branch of her mobile operator to address the issue in person. She then disconnected the call.

"Many South Africans would have panicked and given in to the scammer's demands. This exchange is just one of the many examples of how Yima will make a significant difference in educating the consumer about the tactics used by scammers to pressure them to comply with the demands and, in the process, fall victim to the scam. In the future, Ms Jones will be able to report this incident on Yima and have direct access to her mobile provider and banks to alert them of the issue via the scams' hotline," says Karrim.

Prevention is better than cure

One of the crucial elements when it comes to a proactive approach to scam prevention is early detection and intervention. Yima will be the perfect platform to accomplish this and to communicate the message: Stop. Think. Don't get scammed!.

"Additionally, Yima will have a newsroom portal with reports and case studies about these scams so that the public can be warned about them. It will also be a trusted space where victims can report their incidents and request assistance. Yima is unique because it empowers the consumer with a method to access products that will help secure their identity, report a scam incident and provide them with a layer of protection they never had before, free of charge," says Karrim.

The SAFPS is engaging with local and international industry stakeholders to build a powerful product which it plans to launch in June after undergoing significant Beta testing.

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