One of the good guys

His passion for youths has him traveling to countries like Cambodia and the Soviet Union to teach them language skills. It’s little wonder why Philip Ling is now roaming the country in a bid to help parents and teachers keep children safe online with DiGi’s CyberSAFE programme.

“Remember the science fiction movie TRON legacy? Where a virtual designer ends up in a digital world trying to save his loved ones from the evil villain? Something similar is happening today, in the world of our children,” says Philip when describing how vulnerable children are in the cyber world today.

Leaving a legacy of making a difference

A loving father to two girls, Philip’s philosophy in life is based on quote by Jim Eliot on leaving a lasting legacy, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. With this belief, he has invested much of this past decade teaching and guiding children and youths from his church, local indigenous tribes, and even crossing our nation’s borders to reach and teach young people in Southeast Asia and the Soviet Union. Philip has been with DiGi for over 13 years, the last four with the Corporate Responsibility team. He believes investing his life in the lives of others is a way of paying it forward to make a difference, and that his current position in DiGi allows him to do the same. In his role, he has the unique task of driving DiGi’s sustainability strategy in the areas of digital inclusion and environmental responsibility. Two years ago, he found a way for us to be responsible corporate citizens as we strive to make our mission of delivering Internet For All a reality. He gave DiGi the opportunity to be one of the ‘good guys’ by keeping the most vulnerable individuals in society – our children – safe online.

Making a safer Internet For All a reality

The idea sparked in 2009 during a sharing session with Telenor Group CR on its ‘Empowerment Through Access’ initiatives, with the child sexual abuse filter implemented by the Scandinavian BUs to combat sexual exploitation of children. “As we explored the possibility of implementing it locally, we felt there was a high likelihood the government and general public could misinterpret this as a move to censor the internet. Moreover, there was a general lack of awareness on cyber safety at this point, and a low level of urgency to address the rising trend of children becoming cybercrimes victims,” said Philip. “But we realised this was a big opportunity for DiGi to champion cyber safety as no other corporation has done locally. “We pursued the matter at a conference in 2010 where I met CyberSecurity Malaysia, an agency tasked to create national awareness on the issue under the purview of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. After exploring possible collaborations to reach school children, the idea became a reality with the timely launch of DiGi’s Internet For All mission. We then formed a multi-party partnership with the industry, bringing together the Ministry of Education, CyberSecurity Malaysia and NGO Childline – and existing cyber safety efforts in Malaysia under the banner of the DiGi CyberSAFE programme (DCP).”

Industry recognition for cyber safety advocacy

Telenor Group is one of the world’s major mobile operators. We keep our customers connected in our markets across Scandinavia and Asia. Our more than 30,000 employees are committed to responsible business conduct and being our customers’ favourite partner in digital life. Connecting the world has been Telenor’s domain for more than 160 years, and we are driven by a singular vision: to empower societies.
Since November 2011, DCP has made headway into schools to create awareness on cyber safety and the positive use of the internet across Malaysia. In the first year, it successfully reached more than 7,000 students, educators and parents from over 280 schools, through workshops, the DCP handbook and website.

This year, DCP has scaled up to train 500 ICT teachers as ambassadors to extend its reach to 30,000 students. The programme has been applauded by various stakeholders in the government and NGO space, awarding DiGi the 2012 Best Information Security Organisation and Philip, the Cybersafe Ambassador of the Year Awards. These were awarded by Cybersecurity Malaysia for our pioneer work in raising awareness on online safety. We recently became aware that UNICEF’s HQ unit in New York now is following the progress of our programme.

Dreaming big
website.

“We plan to accelerate awareness to the general public with the DiGi CyberSAFE – Children’s Day Project in coming October. We hope to set a benchmark in the Malaysian Book of Records for the most number of children trained simultaneously in Malaysia. Concurrently, we will conduct a survey of the 30,000 students we hope to engage by the year end through the ongoing workshops. The survey will produce a report reflecting a statistical understanding of Malaysian children’s internet habits, lifestyles.

“On a global level, we are hoping to adopt or create more online solutions to combat the sexual exploitation of children. For instance, Google recently announced that it is working on a technology that would effectively purge all child pornography images from most of the web, predicted to be available a year from now. We hope to continue leading the industry in implementing these solutions as we currently lead in preventing child abuse material distribution via our networks,” Philip shared.

Good guys win

As Philip continues to champion DCP, he hopes to see more parents of young children playing an active role in protecting and educating them on cyber safety. “Parents play the most crucial part of the equation as the immediate family is the most effective protection for children and their online adventures. They therefore ought to realize that the internet is not neutral (for instance, registering on a website is often easier that de-registering), and its rapid evolution means it requires more effort to identify dangers and risks surrounding a decision to engage in a new internet activity (eg. downloading, P2P, WiFi, Bluetooth, etc.). “In cases where a parent is not internet savvy, there are many organisations, family and friends who can assist – you just need to take the initiative to reach out and ask for help,” Philip said. “If all related parties take an active role in advocating cyber safety, there truly can be a safer internet for all. Remember the science fiction movie TRON legacy? I believe the good guys always win in the end.”