

SA tech startup creates security system for low-income families

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Crime in South Africa's townships is rampant and residents usually cannot afford alarm systems in their homes. This circumstance leaves them unprotected and vulnerable to theft and other aggravated crimes.



Three University of Cape Town (UCT) students created a low cost security system that caters specifically to lower-income families to get them connected and protected. Ntsako Mgiba, Ntando Shezi and Kabir Prema created Jonga with the aim of changing the lives of township residents.

The device consists of two parts: a hardware section that is mounted on the wall and a software part that is either a smartphone app or SMS notification, depending on the type of cellphone the user has. "The two parts communicate with each other. The hardware will sense the person breaking in and send a notification to your phone, asking if you're expecting anyone. If you're not, it panics and sends notifications to your neighbours, alerting them to what's happening in your house," Mgiba explains.

The team first pitched the idea at UCT Up-Starts, a joint initiative of Super Stage, the Vice Chancellor's Office and the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship. The initiative offers students the opportunity to become social entrepreneurs through a 20-week programme. Since receiving attention and investment at Up-Starts 2015, the Jonga team have entered one competition after the other to raise funds for their product.

This type of social entrepreneurship is just gaining ground in South Africa, especially for young people. "It's not a very easy space to get access to. I've noticed that the startup community in Cape Town is a very incestuous community. But it's easier when you get your foot in the door," Mgiba remarks.

"We don't believe security should be a privilege of the few who can afford it, much like everything else in the country. We just want all people to be safe and make security accessible to everyone," he continues.

With a goal of R2 million, the group has so far raised just over R500,000, enough to pilot the device. The pilot programme will launch in the first half of this year in Ilitha Park, Khayelitsha with thirty units.

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