

Are you the world's most networked person?

 By Issa Sikiti da Silva: @sikitimedia

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Western Union, the multinational company specialised in money transfer, is celebrating its 160th anniversary by launching a global online network - a Facebook-linked platform meant to hunt for the most networked person in the world. The South African launch took place yesterday, Thursday 4 August 2011, in Rosebank simultaneously with Ghana, Kenya and Morocco.



"Western Union's Your World is a non-commercial venture that only serves to enable users to visualise their global network of Facebook friends," Western Union SA spokesperson Lisa McConnell told journalists.

The network, www.westernunionworld.com, links with Facebook connections which a user can share with friends on their social network, the company said.

Score and ranking

McConnell said depending on the number of friends users have on their network and their location in the world, Your World will automatically generate their score and ranking. "From there, you are going to compare your ranking against your Facebook friends, against other users in your country and even against users from across the world."

The network had already 20 000 likes and 300 000 visitors globally across 200 markets by yesterday afternoon. Users from 44 African countries have already joined the site, including from less developed markets such as Sierra Leone and Niger.

Western Union operates in more than 200 countries and territories across the world and has about 470 000 agent locations worldwide. In 2010, it completed 214 million consumer-to-consumer transactions worldwide, moving US\$76 billion of remittance between consumers and 405 million business payments.

SA's total remittances through Western Union was 0.32% of the country's GDP in 2009, while Western Union remittances to many impoverished countries in some parts of the world represent an important part of their GDPs, and help many families to put food on the table daily.

Take the challenge

"We're incredibly proud that people across the globe have been inviting us to be part of their lives for 160 years. Today, we are online, on mobile and landlines, around the corner in over 400 000 agent locations and around the clock, potentially touching the lives of one sixth of the world's population. That gives us a privileged and unique perspective on the world," the company said yesterday.

Western Union started as a telegraph line company in 1851 in the west of the United States. The SA offices are located in Bryanston, Johannesburg.

"Step forward now and take the Western Union Network Challenge at www.westernunionworld.com/yourworld," McConnell urged.

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Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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