

Statement of Youth Committee of Global Alliance on Media and Information Literacy on International Youth Day 2017

Media and information literacy skills for youth in a peaceful world

The International Youth Day celebrates 1.8 billion young people living in this world. This is the largest youth population ever. Development of critical thinking through media and information literacy (MIL) is one of the most important skillsets for the progress of sustainable and peaceful world that youth from today will lead.

“MIL blossoms in an environment where there is a rapid exchange of ideas and perspectives. Yet, youth are also one of the most vulnerable groups, prone to radicalization, hate speech, false news and intolerance” says **Ms. Adam Lee Bah**, head of the Youth Committee of Global Alliance on Media and Information Literacy (GAPMIL).

MIL undermines the appeal of extremism

Statistics show that 1 in 10 of the world’s children live in conflict zones. As highlighted in the GAPMIL’s [Youth Declaration on Media and Information Literacy](#), MIL has the potential to boost positive voices by helping to disseminate an alternative narrative to extremist messages. MIL skills undermine their appeal. “Young people carry the heaviest burdens of conflict and violence -- they are also essential for any lasting solution leading to peace” emphasized [Ms. Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, on the Youth Day 2017](#).

However, there is a large participation gap of youth in the current media and information landscape. While some are digital natives, others have no access to information, media and technology or the related critical competencies. As well, many young people live in societies where an understanding of contemporary social issues is reduced by either a lack of access to information or critical competencies to evaluate information. Skills, knowledge and the ability to be critical thinkers and to engage in research and information verification is, thus, urgent. MIL can support the calls in the [Security Council resolution on 2250 on youth, peace and security](#) to give youth a greater voice in decision - making at all levels. As **Mr. Alton Grizzle**, the officer responsible for UNESCO’S global action on MIL noted in a research carried out by UNESCO on youth responses to MIL competencies, “[92% of youth surveyed](#) embraced the idea that media and information literacy competencies can help to empower young people to protect themselves from radical and extremist groups and to counter hate speech online.”

Key with education on critical thinking

The [UNESCO-led social media innovation, MILCLICKS](#), is one such initiative that strives to empower youth with indispensable MIL competencies so that they can cultivate critical minds, take the right actions and self-protect online. It responds to the need of young people to act as peace builders in promoting peace and countering hate and extremism.

Education on how to critically engage with information from all forms media and information providers, in an ethical and wise way, is crucial. It is not enough to warn, but is instrumental to teach. 21st century education, both formal and non-formal, has to focus on the empowerment of young people with skills for critical media and information literacy. This ability to question things and accept other points of view brings soil for the development of pluralistic, inclusive and respectful democracies.

“GAPMIL Youth committee is calling on all youth to join in and advocate for critical thinking and development of MIL competencies through MIL CLICKS,” concluded **Ms. Lee Bah**.

GAPMIL Youth Committee