

Youth Declaration on Media and Information Literacy

Global MIL Week 2016

We, the young people who participated in the UNESCO-led Global Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Week 2016, Youth Agenda Forum held on 2 November 2016 in Sao Paulo – in connection with the Global MIL Week feature event – resolve that:

The new information age is boundless. MIL blossoms in an environment where there is a rapid exchange of ideas and perspectives. Social Media is both a tool and a platform for us youth representatives, whether we are young journalists, information specialists or from any other academic or social background. It links us to immediate engagement with other people across the world.

The mode of knowledge acquisition is vastly different from those of previous generations. This is largely because of the reliance on compelling factors within our digital age that have completely transformed how we operate on a daily basis. Young people tend to reject spoon-fed education and prefer to pursue knowledge through exploration and discovery. The internet has undoubtedly become a nucleus of information.

Youth should be actively involved in the promotion of media and information literacy and our contributions should be appreciated and endorsed by key stakeholders. It is very important that governments, universities and research bodies see how best the youth can be mainstreamed into their initiatives. While some young people are digital natives, already wired with the competencies of ICTs, others have no access to these technologies or related competencies. Many young people live in societies where an understanding of contemporary social issues is curtailed by either a lack of access to information or critical competencies to evaluate information.

Yet we (young people) should recognize that in some societies the so-called ‘Post-Fact’ or ‘Post-Truth’ phenomenon is emerging. For us, youth, facts, and truth should always matter. Our ability to be critical thinkers and to engage in research and information verification is urgent. We are not merely carried by new technology but place equal value on libraries and other providers of information. Libraries are never more important in this digital age. Libraries should not be devalued in knowledge societies.

The role of Media and Information Literacy in the process of development should not go unnoticed nor should the function of media, libraries etc. as instruments and institutions for citizens’ participation in society. Governments and educational systems need to recognize their obligations to promote their citizens’ participation as a measure of social inclusion in the advancement of global informational communication.

MIL and Youth Empowerment and Civic Engagement

MIL capacitates us to know our own rights and to advocate for the needs and rights of other people. We can play an active role in transforming the way we preserve and share information. MIL should:

- *Enable* us to gain awareness of and exercise our rights online and offline as well as opportunities and risks - for empowerment and self-protection;
- *Connect* young skilled leaders for them to become agents of positive change in their societies;
- *Encourage* us to share the impact of our work in advocating for peace, equality and intercultural dialogue;
- *Ensure* that we are afforded an opportunity to interact and share ideas or cost effective resources that will help to advance MIL in our home countries or states around the world.

We have the right to hold governments accountable and we should be given the opportunity to contribute with varied views on decisions and policies affecting our lives helping to shape such policies.

Youth's contribution to intercultural dialogue and prevention of violent extremism.

MIL has the potential to boost our positive voices by helping to disseminate an alternative narrative to extremist messages and undermining their appeal. It can support the calls within the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security to give youth a greater voice in decision-making at all levels.

Online Privacy

We understand that any personal information published in the media is at risk of being misused by other internet users and additional actors. There is also potential harm for those of us who seek to advocate for the rights and freedom of others. In MIL, stakeholders and partners should collaborate to:

- *Raise awareness* about the importance of virtual safety and potential threats;
- *Advocate against* the infringements of a person's right to privacy.

Gender equality

Gender mainstreaming is also important to MIL. There should be a continued drive to develop meaningful actions to equally include both women and men in MIL – especially young women and men. Key stakeholders should:

- *Consider* the rights and inclusion of women;
- *Stimulate* young women's interest in MIL, allowing them to get the same training and opportunities that are traditionally offered to men.

Freedom of expression, and diversity of voices

MIL, as a tool for sustainable development, is based on fundamental rights. Prioritizing the voices of youth in society requires freedom of expression. It also necessitates a diversity of voices across languages, ages, cultures, creeds etc. The absence of diversity and free expression gives rise to polarization, intolerance, hate and even extremism. Youth have the right to impart, seek and receive information. MIL stakeholders and including youth should:

- *Raise awareness about and advocate* for the right to freedom of expression, access to information and diversity of voices; any limitations of the right to impart, seek and receive information need to be exceptional, as well as in law, necessary, proportionate, and for a legitimate purpose.

Literacy for people with special needs

It is important to include all persons in MIL in both process and benefit. MIL partners must consider young persons with impairments and:

- *Consult with and create opportunities* for youth with special needs by *introducing MIL* strategies to accommodate their varied necessities as well as their ideas on how to improve the delivery of MIL

Strengthening the Global Alliance Partnership on MIL (GAPMIL)

Strengthening the GAPMIL Youth Committee and Ambassadors by:

- *Ensuring* that we are connected firstly to regions but also globally;
- *Including* us in the decision-making processes of other GAPMIL Committees within our regions;
- *Guaranteeing* youth participation in the conception of key MIL events, documents and strategies

Call on UNESCO and other stakeholders worldwide

Promote policies for the integration of MIL in education curricula in the formal, non-formal and informal systems. This will facilitate the exercise of global citizenship in this new era of civic education. Stakeholders should also seek to:

- *Advocate* for critical thinking and analysis, endowing teachers with MIL competencies to build up Media and Information Literate societies;
- *Youth* produced information and media should be included in the production and distribution of user-generated content as part of the overall framework of MIL;
- *Facilitate* dialogue and connections between youth and stakeholders like media outlets, libraries and technological companies which are mediating information, content etc.;

- *Advance* research on youth representation and participation in media, libraries and other information spaces, in view of promoting information and media content that reflects our needs, concerns, and aspirations;
- *Expand* the spaces for us to express ourselves through different platforms.