

Doha Declaration on Supporting Media and Information Literacy Education in the Middle-East

Experts meeting: June 11-13 2013, Doha, Qatar

The participants at the Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Experts' Meeting, held in Doha between June 11th and 13th, 2013 have adopted the following declaration as part of combined efforts to promote media education throughout the Arab world.

The participants discussed the MIL landscape across the region and around the world, making the following observations:

- Developing understanding of the concept of MIL among education policy makers and other institutions is a major challenge
- As an abundance of sources of information continue to emerge, there is a need to work towards the long term aim of incorporating MIL into school curricula, to ensure that younger generations are made aware of critical thinking and true comprehension of the information available to them.
- A lack of resources and manpower means that networking between MIL experts is absolutely essential to develop the subject across the region. However, effective communication is lacking at the moment.
- Many countries face difficulties as a result of socio-economic and political issues and a lack of political will from stakeholders. In countries where governments have created an enabling-environment for MIL education, initiatives launched by various organisations have experienced a marked increase in success.

Based on examining case studies and learning from the experiences of various organisations around the world, the following recommendations have been made:

- It is essential to help all stakeholders recognise the value that MIL skills offer students in other aspects of their lives. Technology-literate students, capable of critical thinking, will benefit any workplace and contribute to society in general in the future. Recognition of this fact is a fundamental necessity which will assist in the development of MIL on every level.
- The formation of a steering committee, comprised of between six and ten MIL experts, which will be responsible for developing and sharing ideas and programmes for developing MIL in the Arab region. This committee would also be responsible for attending international events and networking on behalf of educators in the region.
- The provision of sustainable training programmes, research and curricula on MIL education for teachers will contribute to the development of MIL. Examples of how this can be done exist (like in Morocco) and can be used as a starting point to be introduced across the region.

- A shift in methods of teaching and providing information needs to be introduced. A lifelong approach to learning should be adopted, while interactive methods of education should be introduced in classrooms to develop critical thinking skills. Librarians and media professionals should play a more prominent role in helping students understand and process information, and should work closely with teachers and professors in this regard.
- Establishing exchange programmes to build on successful youth-produced media initiatives and to develop understanding of how media, information providers and memory institutions work around the world. These could include summer school courses, internships and virtual meetings. Initiatives which enable young people from different cultures to interact within the media play an important role in MIL's mission to combat stereotypes and encourage tolerance.
- Creating socially inclusive MIL programmes for visually impaired, special needs and disabled children and adults.
- Creating inclusive MIL programmes for women in the Arab world.
- Parents and care-givers must be included in MIL education, so as not to isolate them from their children's education and to contribute to the development of a viewpoint which sees MIL as an extension of general literacy.
- Mapping MIL across the Arab region should be introduced. It is essential to monitor the performance of MIL programmes over time. While regional and international organisations can assist in this regard, the responsibility for these assessments should lie with national bodies.
- National and international networks within the Arab region should be established in order to share knowledge and resources between stakeholders and encourage countries in the region to engage in MIL.
- An annual experts' meeting should be convened in the Arab world to discuss issues related to MIL, to assess ongoing schemes and develop further programmes.
- Representatives are committed to advocating for MIL education at the highest levels with the aim of enlightening governments' views of MIL and sharing ideas for the introduction of national MIL policies. International organisations such as UNESCO and UNAOC, as well as the Arab League and other international and regional organisations could assist in this end.
- The production of shared resources, designed in a culturally-sensitive, gender-sensitive and disability-friendly manner, to help teachers work according to best practices. While there are cultural differences to be considered when developing these materials, there are key competencies at the centre of MIL which should be agreed upon and used to strengthen the cause of the subject with different stakeholders.
- Universities and news organisations should implement MIL programmes within their respective countries.