

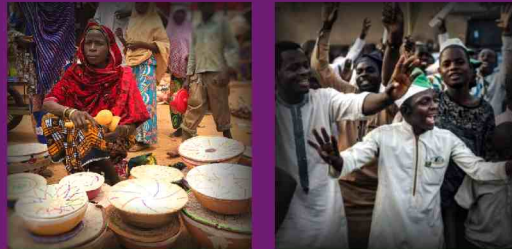


United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



United Nations  
Peacebuilding  
Peacebuilding Fund

# Media and Information Literacy



# NON-FORMAL EDUCATION GUIDE

for **All Platforms**

Media and  
Information Literacy

# NON-FORMAL EDUCATION GUIDE

for **All Platforms**

Published by  
the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)  
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Edited by  
Nosa Owens-Ibie  
Ifedolapo Ademosu  
Abiodun Oyeleye

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## CONTRIBUTORS

### **Content Developers**

Prof. Muraino Olaiwola Oso  
Prof. Chinyere S. Okunna  
Prof. Nosa Owens-Ibie  
Prof. Cecil Blake  
Prof. Abigail Ogwezy-Ndisika  
Prof. Victor Ayedun-Aluma  
Prof. Rotimi Olatunji  
Dr. Abiodun Oyeleye  
Dr. Adama Adamu  
Dr. Olunifesi Suraj  
Dr. Titilayo E. Aduloju  
Mr. Chido Onumah  
Mr. Garba Kabir Alabi  
Mr. Austin F.I Ezejimofor  
Mrs. Ifedolapo Ademosu  
Miss. Moyosore Adedeji

### **Content Editors/Verifiers**

Prof. Nosa Owens-Ibie  
Dr. Joe Wilson  
Dr. Zubairu Atta  
Dr. Haruna Ismail  
Dr. Titilayo Osuagwu  
Dr. Abubakar Minijibir  
Dr. Nkiru Ezeh  
Mallam Zuru Garba Hamisu  
Mrs. Omobolanle Ismail  
Mrs Ifedolapo Ademosu

### **Artists:**

Mr. Sharafdeen A. Oyewole  
Mr. Chris Ajufoh  
Mr. Olasunkanmi Muteeu

**T**oday's world is shaped by the quality of information produced, accessed and consumed at an individual and societal levels. This determines the quality of our decisions and actions. Increasingly, current digital realities and their social media manifestations, have enabled more opportunities for expression. Increased access to the internet is promoting freedom, with consequences for peace and conflict. This publication is a contribution to responsible online communication. We hope you learn from the following pages, and enjoy the process as much as we did.



**Association of Communication Scholars &  
Professionals of Nigeria (ACSPN)**

[www.acspn.com.ng](http://www.acspn.com.ng)  
[info@acspn.com.ng](mailto:info@acspn.com.ng)  
[acspn.communicationnigeria@gmail.com](mailto:acspn.communicationnigeria@gmail.com)

# Table of Contents

1. COMMUNICATION, INFORMATION AND MEDIA .....	7
2. IMPORTANCE AND ROLE OF MEDIA AND INFORMATION PROVIDERS IN SOCIETY .....	9
3. MIL-WHAT AND WHY? .....	12
4. UNDERSTANDING GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS .....	14
5. UNDERSTANDING CITIZENSHIP .....	18
6. MIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS .....	21
7. HOW TO EFFECTIVELY ACCESS INFORMATION .....	24
8. UNDERSTANDING NEWS AND OTHER MEDIA MESSAGES .....	27
9. MEDIA AND INFORMATION ETHICS .....	29
10. ROLE OF MIL IN LIFE-LONG LEARNING .....	32
11. TYPES AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION .....	34
12. UNDERSTANDING MODALITIES FOR ACCESSING INFORMATION .....	37
13. EVALUATING INFORMATION .....	40
14. CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS .....	43
15. FAKE NEWS / HATE SPEECH .....	45
16. SOCIAL-CULTURAL CONTEXT OF MEDIA CONTENT .....	47

# Preface

The aim of this book is to provide a basic understating of the idea of media and information literacy (MIL). This book is meant to teach people how to access, understand and evaluate information, the different types of governance systems that exist and how it affects them as citizens. It is also meant to ensure that users know how to use and share information responsibly. This is because the wrong use of information can cause panic, fear, different types of conflict (ethnic, religious, political, etc.) and even suicide and death. It will build in users the ability to think deeply about the content and intention behind every information they receive as well as their own motives for sharing information.

The book intends to teach people about their rights, and how those rights are affected by the type of information accessed and shared; it would also teach people some of the different governance systems available and how these can determine how well they enjoy their rights. Media and Information Literacy has the capacity to empower people to be conscious with the type of information they seek and access and how they eventually use it. MIL will also give opportunities to people to find and create jobs. MIL is not just about communication but also focuses on how communication affects all aspects of human life. Therefore, this book is meant for individuals and organisations in all sectors and works of life.

The content of the manual covers the following five key areas:

1. Introduction to MIL
2. Understanding the Role of MIL in Society
3. Accessing Media and Information
4. Evaluating Information and Information Sources
5. MIL, Media and Other Information Sources

**Timing:** It is recommended that Facilitators discuss the content in not less than 15 sessions of 45-minutes each.

## CHAPTER ONE

# COMMUNICATION, INFORMATION AND MEDIA



### INTRODUCTION:

People assume that it is only the media and communication practitioners that communicate. However, in reality communication is something people do every day. We communicate with indigenous media / oramedia like town announcers, drums, town hall meetings, etc.; traditional mass media like television, radio and newspapers and alternative media such as films, music, computer games and new media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp, etc.

### OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, users should:

- Be able to understand the basic concepts of Communication, Information and Media.





## Instructor/Facilitator:

Explains the basic concepts of communication, information and media.

## What is Communication?

- Communication is the sharing and exchange of messages for the purpose of achieving common understanding.

## What is Information?

- Information is any fact, idea, knowledge or experience that helps people make decisions.



## What is Media?

- Media are the channels for sharing information among people. Media include: indigenous/oramedia like town announcer, drum, town hall meeting, etc., traditional mass media such radio, television, newspapers and new media such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.

**Mode of Presentation:** Pictures on Card boards and Illustrations.

## CHAPTER TWO

# IMPORTANCE AND ROLE OF MEDIA AND INFORMATION PROVIDERS IN SOCIETY



### INTRODUCTION:

The media and other information providers such as libraries, museums and oramedia help provide people with facts, ideas, knowledge or experiences that help them to make right choices every day.

### OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, users should understand:

- The importance and roles of different media and information providers
- How to engage the media and information providers
- Different ways to use messages from media and information providers including how to actively participate in their community

### Importance of Media and Information Providers in the Society

The media and other information providers are an essential part of any society and for the following reasons. They:

- Empower citizens with the knowledge and information they need to be active and useful members of their community.
- Ensure people are aware of what is going on in the society.
- Provide people with information that helps them carry out their everyday activities.
- Teach audiences skills that can lead to employment opportunities.
- Stand as watchdogs to protect people from harm by releasing the relevant information that helps them take the necessary precautions.
- Provide a platform for interaction.
- Champion different causes.

### Roles of Media and Information Providers in the Society

The media and information providers do different things in society:

- They educate people. They show them how to do different things they did not know how to do before. Examples include showing people how to make soap and how to recycle old materials, etc.

- The media also inform and enlighten citizens on what is going on at different times of the day. They find ways to explain things that people do not understand. Examples include telling people when there are road blocks or traffic or early warning for when natural disasters like floods, earthquakes, mudslides etc., are going to happen.



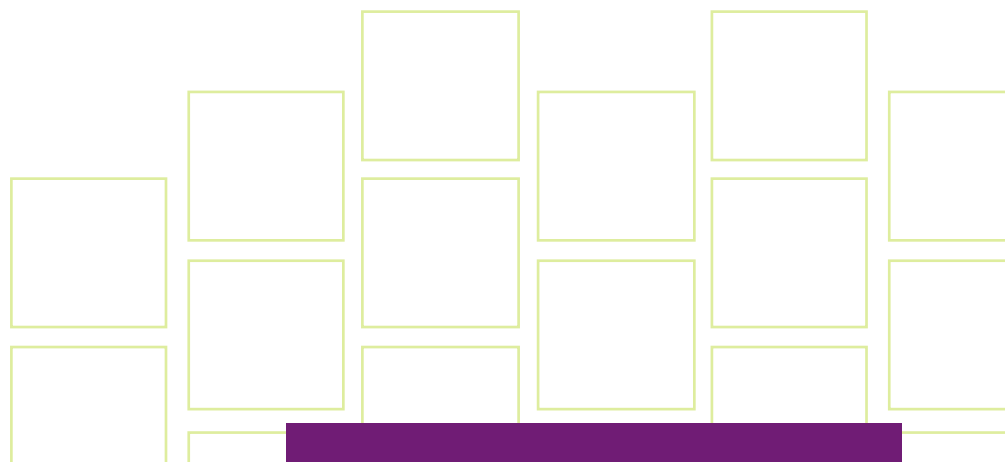
- Media and oramedia can also be used to mobilise people. The media use inspiring and appealing content to gather people for a worthy cause like supporting a project to help people. People are entertained by content through music, films, books, etc.
- In addition, the media serve as platforms for persuading people to believe in something or behave in a certain way. For instance, the media is used extensively by politicians to persuade people to support them during elections.

- The content in traditional, new media and oramedia are used to record or capture history, as well as promote new sets of values that would be beneficial to all.

**Note:**

- The roles of these media platforms are not always neutral. They usually take on the beliefs and perception of the person who created the message.
- The platforms can promote the celebration of mutually shared values irrespective of the background of the people.

**Mode of Presentation:** Illustration / Pictures / Oramedia items



## CHAPTER THREE

# MIL - WHAT AND WHY?



### INTRODUCTION:

MIL stands for “Media and Information Literacy”. Before now, we had different types of literacies which include media literacy, information literacy and library literacy etc., but all of these have been merged into one and are now being described as Media and Information Literacy.

### OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, users should be able to:

- Understand the basic meaning of MIL
- Engage in critical thinking
- Easily evaluate information
- Analyse information

### What is MIL?

- MIL is the ability to access, critically analyze, evaluate and produce media and information content.



- This means that an individual will know how to find information and test whether such information is true or not. Understanding how to test for fake information should also encourage people to create and spread only true content on any media or information platform.

### Why MIL?

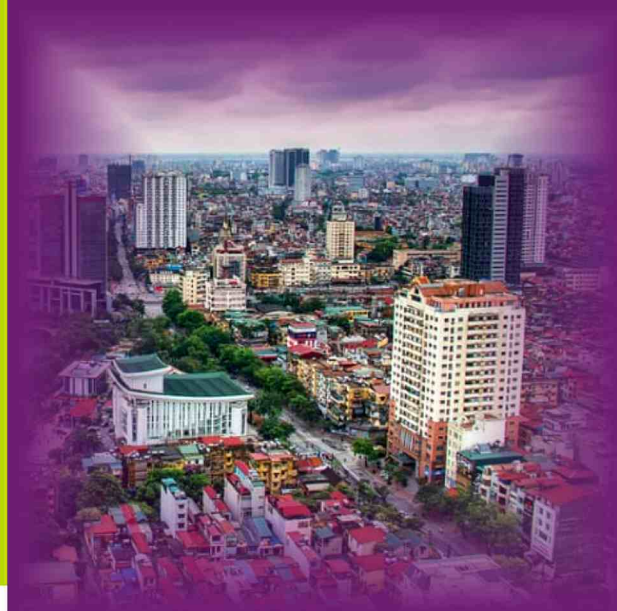
- There is a lot of fake news and hate speech causing problems in different societies. People believe the fake news posted on social media networks, mistakenly carried by media houses in error or circulated by word of mouth.
- Wrong information has caused people to make decisions that affect them and others negatively. There have been casualties from people who act on wrong information.
- With MIL people will understand how to create responsible media and information content.
- They will learn to be responsible when sharing media and information content. Basically, people need to live by the code: #thinkb4youclick.
- Eventually MIL will create responsible and active citizens who crosscheck information and data no matter who said it or where it is coming from before sending. They are also able to caution others because they know the right thing to do.

### Mode of Presentation: Illustration/Pictures

What?	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Media,</li><li>• Information and</li><li>• Literacy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To avoid Hatred</li><li>• To avoid Conflict</li><li>• To avoid Violence</li><li>• To avoid Danger</li></ul>

## CHAPTER FOUR

# UNDERSTANDING GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS



### INTRODUCTION:

Governance is one of the key ways by which citizens benefit from the resources of their nation. But sometimes there are arguments about the management of these resources, sometimes leading to rumour, misunderstanding and conflict. This chapter will help citizens understand their roles in governance in order to avoid misconceptions and conflicts.

### OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, users should be able to:

- Explain the concept of governance
- List types of governance systems
- Explain African governance systems
- Identify merits and demerits of African governance systems
- Identify areas of similarities and differences between African and Global governance systems
- Appreciate the role of media and information literacy (MIL) in governance

### What is Governance?

Governance is the process of choosing, organising and sharing power. It also includes setting priorities and achieving goals for individuals, organisations and societies.

Governance is also about putting in place open and accountable procedures for evaluating and measuring how the resources available to a society are being used.

### Types of governance systems

There are a number of governance systems with some more similar than others. A few of the more common ones are described below:

*Monarchy* - A government that is led by a king or queen or a royal family.

*Oligarchy* - A country that is controlled by a small group of people and this can be

determined by wealth, education or military training.

*Military* - A government that is led or run by military forces, whether it is legal or taken by force.

*Communism* - This is a system of government in which the state is seen as a loose federation of self-governing communities.

*Socialism* - This is a system of government where everyone in the society is thought to equally own the means of production.

*Democracy* - A system of government where people are given equal opportunity of



selecting their representatives.

### **African Communal System**

Africa had its own system of governance even before the introduction of western democracy to Africa. African governance systems involve transparent and accountable systems of choosing, organising and sharing power; setting priorities and achieving goals for groups, communities, clans, kingdoms, empires, etc. that existed before foreign interventions.



## Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages of African governance systems include:

- **Community engagements:** African governance systems have been known to promote involvement in community affairs and decisions by all members of the community through town hall meetings as well as age group discussions and decisions often relayed back to the centre.
- **Transparency:** These systems were built to be open so that community members could see what was going on and why and how decisions were being taken.
- **Accountability:** All leaders under the African governance systems are accountable to different people in order to protect the larger community. They were often accountable to the kingmakers, the chiefs, chief priests and even the people themselves who could protest whenever they noticed shady dealings. Because they had people they had to give an account of their rulership and decisions to, they behaved responsibly.
- **Inclusiveness:** African governance systems allowed everyone to be present and or represented when decisions needed to be made - women, men, young and old, people with disabilities, etc. As such, since the numbers would often be too large for a one time sitting, each of the different age and gender groups - young people, market women, mothers would send in representatives to sit at those meetings and speak on their behalf.
- **Checks and balances -** The pre-western governance systems also empowered different groups with different responsibilities and ensured that they and other groups did not misuse power at any point.

*Disadvantages of African governance systems include:*

As with every system and situation, there are always merits and demerits. A few of the demerits of African governance systems are as explained below:

- **Unquestionable submission to authority based on age:** The African society is entrenched in a system that promotes respect of authority and especially based on age. As such, members of those societies are often seen as overstepping their bounds if they question their elders. In fact, it can sometimes be seen as insubordination which can make it difficult for younger people to introduce new ideas which may be beneficial to a community.
- **Perpetuity of monarchy in power:** The systems do not give opportunities for a wide range of leadership based on skills or knowledge as leaders overstay in power based on family. Titles are usually passed on from father to son or another ruling family even if they are absolutely clueless as to how to lead and have no new ideas to make their communities better.
- **Abuse of succession procedures:** These societies often have mapped out plans for how the leadership baton would be passed in societies. However, once in a while people often violate the process to seize power for selfish reasons and they do this through underhanded methods like killing, setting people up to get banished, etc.

## Global Governance Systems

There are different governance systems all over the world as mentioned earlier and they have features that are similar and others that make them distinct from each other.

Similarities between African and Global Governance Systems include:

- Transparent and accountable systems of choosing,
- Organising and sharing power;
- Setting priorities and achieving goals for the society and organisation.

Differences between African and Global Governance Systems include:

- Election procedures for choosing leaders in democracies are well set out and allow for a larger population to have a say in who leads them unlike African procedures that include leadership by heredity, community involvement in choice and consensus building.
- Military imposition or one party rule in the case of military and communist systems. These types of systems are often done by force as oppositions would be dealt with and seen as traitors.

## Role of MIL in Governance

Governance systems require people to make their selection of leaders based on the information they have about them. Since information is a tool of persuasion, wrong and hateful information can sway people into making wrong choices and exhibiting extreme behaviour against those who have opinions that differ from theirs.

Meanwhile, people are bombarded with all sorts of information from different sources on a daily basis. In order to ensure that people consume and use the right information that is factual and free from hatred and all manner of extremism against people of different ages, genders and tribes etc., it is important to teach them the skills they need to check for facts. These skills would also enable them to identify fake information, disinformation or misinformation in order to avoid making wrong choices.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# UNDERSTANDING CITIZENSHIP



### INTRODUCTION:

Citizenship is the membership ticket of an individual in a country due to his/her birth or naturalisation. Citizenship is important to governance because it is all about people. An understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship would enable people work individually and together to make positive differences in their society.

### OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, users should be able to:

- Identify their rights as citizens
- Understand their duties and responsibilities within Governance systems

### Who is a Citizen?

- A citizen is a member of a clan, kingdom, political community, country or nation who enjoys the rights and assumes the duties of membership.

### Rights of Citizens

All citizens have a number of rights within their country of origin. These rights are in categories and include:

- Citizens' rights in governance which include: a right to life, right to personal opinion/expression, right to worship/religion and freedom of association, etc.
- It also includes political rights such as the right to vote, economic rights such as the right to work and earn a decent living and social rights such as the right to adequate housing, health and even food, etc. Citizens' rights in governance should include but not limited to: right to life, right to personal opinion/expression, right to worship/religion, freedom of association, etc.

### Duties and Responsibilities of Citizens

While citizens have rights, they also have duties to perform as members of their nation. These duties include:

- Respecting/obeying federal, state and local laws: Every group of people have laws that guide and determine how they live. Obeying the law is not meant to be selective. Citizens cannot choose what laws they want to obey.
- Participate in election as voters or electorates: All citizens are eligible to register as voters in order to be part of the process of selecting their representatives at the national, state and local levels, they have the right to contest and be voted for.
- Pay taxes honestly and promptly: Taxes are one of the most important ways the government of any country generates money to invest in development projects and provide social services. Citizens are therefore expected to pay taxes to enable the government plan for different projects across the country.
- Defend the country in times of conflicts: Citizens are also expected to be prepared to defend the sovereignty of their country when there is need for it such as during civil wars or conflicts with other countries or nations.
- Respect national symbols and be able to recite anthems: All citizens are also



expected to hold in high honour and esteem any object or symbol or statement that represents the country and this includes the national flag, the national colours, the national anthem etc.

- Preserve the unity and stability of the country: Citizens should be ever willing to ensure that the different parts of the country stay united. They are under no circumstances to use rumours, wrong and violent words to promote disunity in the country.

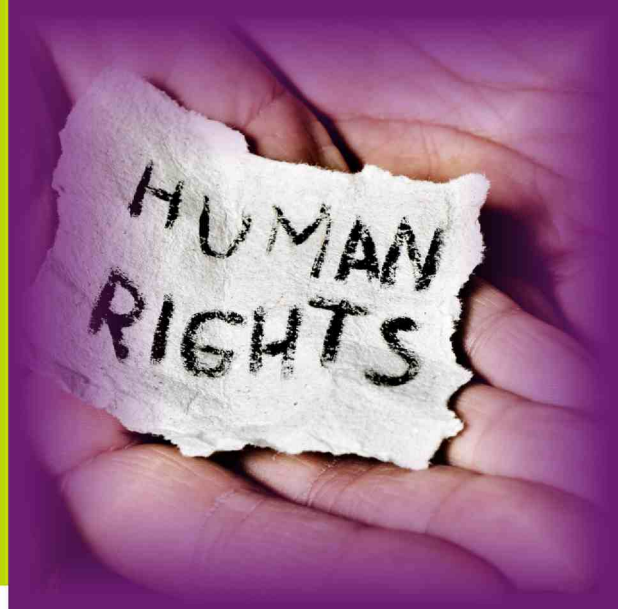
**Note:**

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) empowers citizens to participate actively in their communities and enables them interact with others with respect and without bias.

It provides a platform for interaction where citizens can make suggestions to the leaders in authority using a balanced approach in order to check the excesses of people in power. Moreover, it provides opportunities for citizens to produce their own media content etc.

## CHAPTER SIX

# MIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS



### INTRODUCTION:

All humans have rights but there are also limitations to the exercise of those rights. There is a need to understand these rights as they relate to the generality of people and particular groups such as women, children, youth and people living with disabilities.

### OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, users should be able to:

- Describe fundamental Human Rights
- Identify the African concept of Human Rights
- Explain the relationship between MIL and Human Rights



- Discuss MIL and Gender Rights
- Identify MIL and Children and Youths
- Explain MIL and People with Disabilities
- Explain MIL and minorities and other under-represented groups

### What is Human Rights?

It refers to the basic entitlements of every human being that should not be taken or denied him or her as a person. Fundamental human rights include:



- Right to life
- Right to personal opinion/expression
- Right to worship/religion
- Right to freely associate with anyone etc.

While globally, individual rights are the main focus, the African concept of Human Rights also addresses the rights of the individual as a member of a community and also considers the rights of children, women and the physically challenged as important and essential members of the community and society.

### Importance of MIL to Human Rights

- MIL empowers citizens to access, understand, champion and enforce their fundamental human rights.



- MIL also enhances gender rights, children and youth rights, rights of persons with disabilities and minorities and other under-represented groups.
- MIL also compels able-bodied citizens to treat people living with disabilities with respect.
- In addition, MIL also ensures that all citizens are given equal opportunities to be responsible members of society.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

# HOW TO EFFECTIVELY ACCESS INFORMATION



### INTRODUCTION

Information plays a key role in every aspect of people's lives. It enables them make choices that have long lasting between consequences and some positive and others negative. It is therefore necessary for everyone to be able to effectively search for information that will impact his or her lives positively.

### OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, users should be able to:

- Use different tools to search for information
- Understand what to look out for when searching for specific information

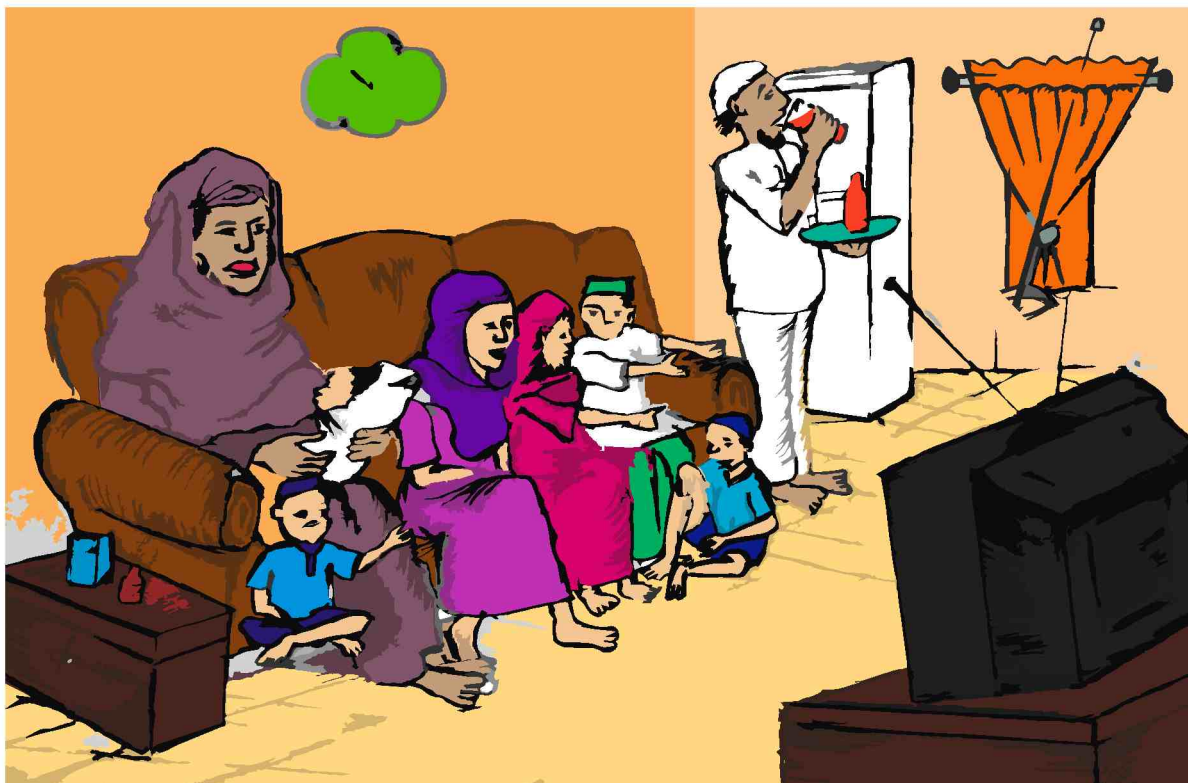


- Differentiate among types of information
- Understand the platforms to visit for specific information



### How to Search for Information

There are different sources of information and like mentioned earlier, they include the media, libraries, museums etc. As such, there are different ways to search for information from those sources.



When using search engines, online journals or books on new media platforms, the users can identify and use key words to search for the facts or ideas that will help them with their decisions. So on google search for instance, the audience can type what they are searching for, for example 'elections in Great Britain'. 'elections in Sierra Leone', and 'Riot in Oshodi'.

In addition, users need to develop the skill of active information seeking. They need to constantly be on the look-out for where they can get true and accurate information.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# UNDERSTANDING NEWS AND OTHER MEDIA MESSAGES



### INTRODUCTION

The media is a major source of information and their content usually takes different forms. Understanding these forms would help for effective and efficient use of media products.

### OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, users should be able to:

- Identify different forms of media messages
- Determine when to apply them
- Identify strength and weaknesses of various media messages



## What are the Forms of Media Content?

Newspapers have different content categories which include news, editorials, features, opinions, advertisements and letters to the editor. For television and radio, these would include news, documentaries, magazine programmes, music and advertisements, etc.



Media and information providers discharge their roles to the society, through the messages in their content. Users need to know that these messages are produced by people working within the media and also with the information providers. Therefore, there are many interests designed into the content such as the interest of owners sometimes driven by the profit motive and in some other cases politically motivated by politics, regulations, power, ethnicity, culture and religion, etc.



## CHAPTER NINE

# MEDIA AND INFORMATION ETHICS



### INTRODUCTION:

Every profession, sector or society has values that guide its behaviour and operations. The media shares information that members of the society use in their everyday lives; as such, they need rules to guide how they operate and the type of information they share. In the same vein, social media users now have the ability to create and share information as well. This makes it necessary for them to know and understand the ethical demands for performing such roles.

### OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, users should be able to:

- Understand concepts like truth, facts and opinion
- Distinguish between the concepts

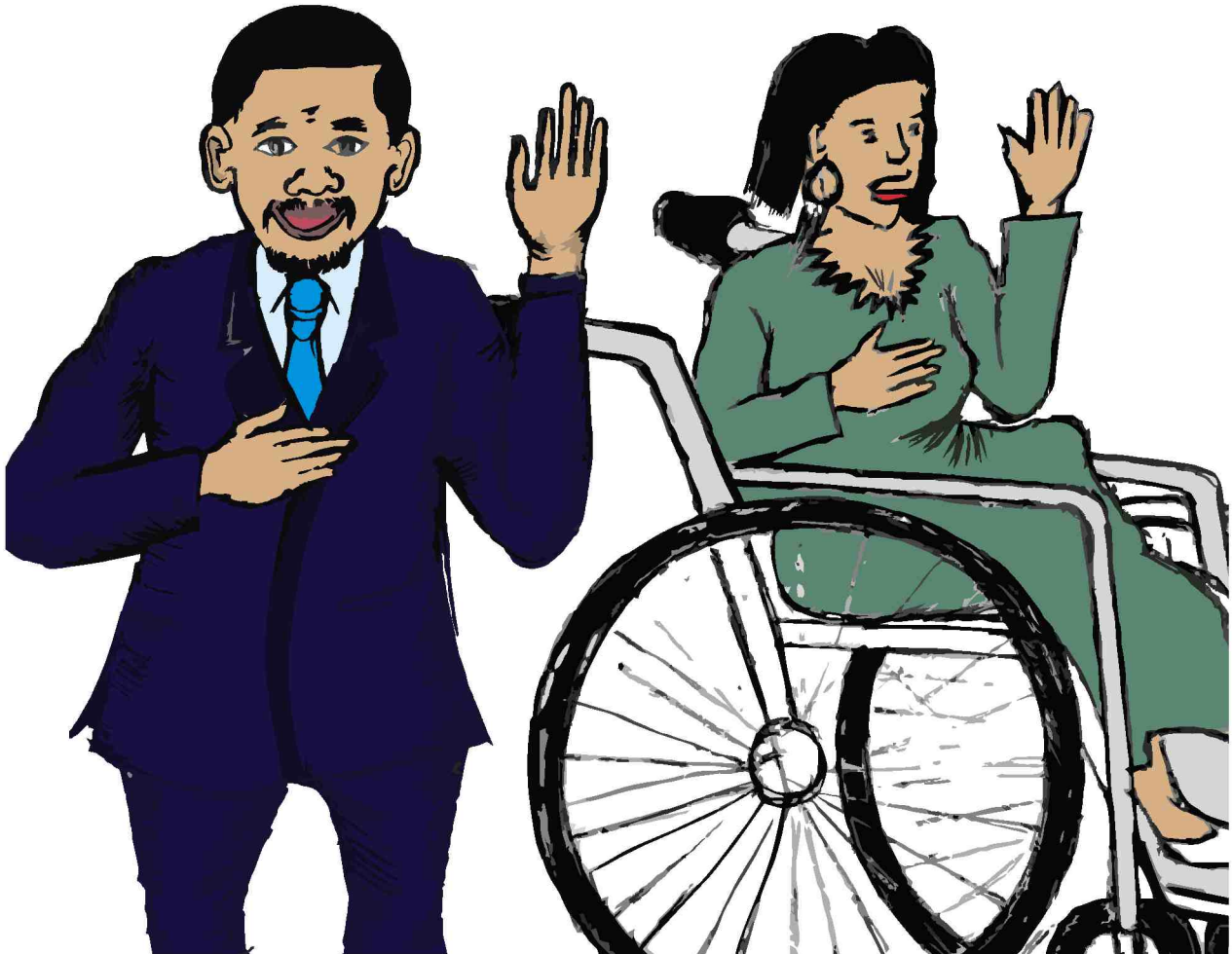


- Identify the importance of allowing multiple views and perspectives
- Learn what constitutes graphic images

### **What is ethics?**

Ethics refers to moral principles that guide how people behave or perform an activity. Some of the ethics of media and information services include:

- Crosschecking materials before sending to others or publishing it.
- Responsible use of social media.



### **What is an opinion?**

It can be described as a person's view or perspective about a matter which has been formed based on different factors and which may not be based on fact or knowledge.

### **What is a Fact?**

This refers to any information that has been proven to be true in other words it can be seen that it accurately represents what people can see.

## **What is Truth?**

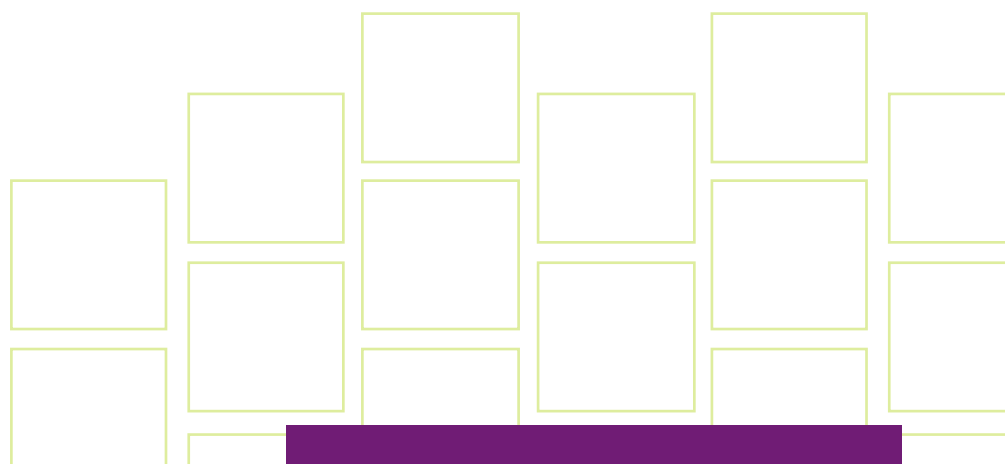
It refers to a fact or belief that is accepted as being an accurate representation of reality.

## **Why is Ethics Important?**

As we have discussed earlier in the course of the classes, information is very important and plays a great role in the decisions people make on a daily basis. This means that wrong information can make the difference between life and death. As such, no one can afford to send out the wrong information or manipulate information for their selfish intentions.

From the above definitions, it is clear that opinions are good but should not be the landmark by which people live. Media and Information providers are often guilty of inserting their own views into facts or truth they have gathered. In addition, some of them intentionally and unintentionally allow people to influence and manipulate their content.

It means that media and information providers need to be able to differentiate between the opinion of people (which can include influencers, government officials etc.) and facts and truth for the good of all citizens.





## CHAPTER TEN

# ROLE OF MIL IN LIFE-LONG LEARNING



### INTRODUCTION:

There is no end to learning. Learning is not an activity embarked upon by only those who are in formal schools or undergoing one training or the other. We all learn from our everyday activities and as it is commonly said, learning only ends the day someone dies. Since technology will always influence how we access, use and share information, Media and Information Literacy offers an opportunity for continuous learning about the responsible use of information. This continuous learning would ensure people have the right tools to create a safe community where people can live in harmony.



## OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, users should be able to:

- Appreciate the benefits of MIL as a process for continuous learning
- Encourage exposure to MIL by their families



### MIL AND Life-Long Learning

Technological developments will continue to influence how people access, use and share information from different media platforms. MIL is therefore an opportunity for continuous learning and education as well as an opportunity for exposure to latest skills in how to use media and information responsibly. Through MIL, people are also able to transmit their media literacy skills to others. It therefore creates the possibility of continuous production, access and transmission of information from generation to generation in a responsible way.

**Resources:** Storybooks, Newspapers, Videos from You Tube. Etc.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# TYPES AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION



### INTRODUCTION:

People access information in diverse forms and from several sources. There is need for people to understand the types of information they may be exposed to in their everyday activities. People also need to be able to properly identify the sources of such information as this can be a factor to determine how to use such information.

### OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, users should be able to:

- Identify and explain types of information
- List sources of information
- Understand the process of accessing information
- Evaluate information for its credibility, bias, accuracy, truthfulness, completeness etc.
- Understand the cultural relevance of information
- Identify fact-checking under traditional and new media

### Types of Information

We often receive media information in the form of news, opinions, editorial, letters to the editors, advertisement in newspapers while on radio and television we can have news, documentaries, magazine programmes music, advertisements, etc. Any of these can be transmitted to us through technological devices, e.g. smartphone and will become a basis for decision making in our everyday lives.

**News:** This will generally refer to regular information about happenings in the society which we come across in newspapers, and on radio and television.

**Documentaries:** These are special reports on events, issues, personalities and organisations packaged and presented to the audience with a view to helping them have clearer understanding of such issues.

**Opinions:** These refer to personal views that are presented in newspapers or aired on broadcast stations.

**Advertisement:** This refers to information about a product (commercial product, political idea, religious programme etc.) that is packaged and shared on media platforms with the sole aim of convincing people to accept and patronise them.



### Sources of Information

Information can come through any of the following sources:

- Personal
- Government
- Archives
- Books
- Internet
- Television
- Radio
- Newspapers
- Personal telephone
- Android, smart phones
- Personal computers and
- Social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc.

### How to Access Information

- Identify your information need(s)... What do I need this information for?
- Identify the information source(s)... Where is this information coming from?
- Identify relevant platforms for accessing information... Where is the best place for me to get the information I need?

## How to Verify Information

A person must be sure that the information he/she is accessing is:

*Credible:* The person must check whether the story is believable and or convincing enough.

*Accurate:* He or she must also check and confirm if the information is correct in all the details.

*Factual:* The person must also verify if the story or event actually occurred. In other words, is the story based on reality?

*Truthful:* He or she must check if the information is honest, correct and something that others can confirm physically.

*Ethical:* The person must be sure that the information is based on sound principles and values etc.

To do this, one must ask relevant questions regarding the source of the information, target audience, point-of-view and even the hidden intentions of the message sender. People have to be told that there are factors that influence or determine why people produce and share information as earlier discussed. We must therefore be able to cross check information for the values listed above. This is called fact-checking.

# UNDERSTANDING MODALITIES FOR ACCESSING INFORMATION



## INTRODUCTION

Effective use of information content is very important and involves acquiring a set of competencies. With the amount of information available to us on a daily basis and many of which are user-generated content, locating/accessing relevant and reliable information can be difficult and time-consuming. Hence, it is vital to understand the modalities for accessing information. The chief aim of this chapter is to simplify and make access to information easy and more effective for the users.

## OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, users should be able to:

- Explain information access or access to information.
- Understand the meaning of information source.
- Identify their information needs.
- Understand how to make enquiry about the sources of information they receive.
- Identify various platforms relevant for accessing their information needs.
- Understand the modalities for accessing information.

### What is Access to Information or Information Access?

- This is the ability for an individual to seek, receive and impart information effectively. It is also the individual's right to obtain and use information generated by other people. In other words, it is the freedom and skill to identify, locate, obtain and effectively make use of data or information.

### What is Information Source?

This refers to a person, thing or place from which message or information comes, arises from or is obtained. The purpose of the source is to inform another person about a topic or event. This means that the source provides knowledge about an issue to somebody else.

## Information Needs

- Information needs can be seen as the desire of an individual or a group to find and obtain information to gratify or satisfy both conscious and unconscious need. They are what a person wants, needs or expects in an information source such as a consumer searching for a good or product to purchase, a person looking for information about current affairs/events or a student researching on a topic to complete an assignment etc.



## Why Make Enquiry About the Source(s) of Information?

- It is important to make enquiry about the source of information before one consumes it because not all information is reliable or true.
- Users should also bear in mind that not all available information will be useful to them based on their information needs.
- Thus, it is good to always evaluate the appropriateness of the message and its source before accepting or rejecting it.

## Various Platforms for Accessing Information

- The various platforms for accessing information are: databases, library catalogs, encyclopaedias, books, archives, personal interviews, focus group interviews, resource persons, newspapers, television, radio, internet, personal telephone, smart phones; personal computers; search engines (Google, Bing, Yahoo,

DuckDuckGo, etc), Wikipedia and social media platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.

### **Modalities for Accessing Information**

Modalities for accessing information can mean the ways or modes in which information is obtained, located or accessed. These are modes that users should understand in order to access relevant and appropriate information and they include but are not limited to:

- Identification of what the users are looking for
- Selection of the platform(s) or search engine(s)
- Identification of keywords
- Use of some keywords in your topic
- Make sure the keywords are spelt correctly
- Click search or press the enter key on the keyboard
- Assess the results
- Repeat above steps using different platforms or search engines

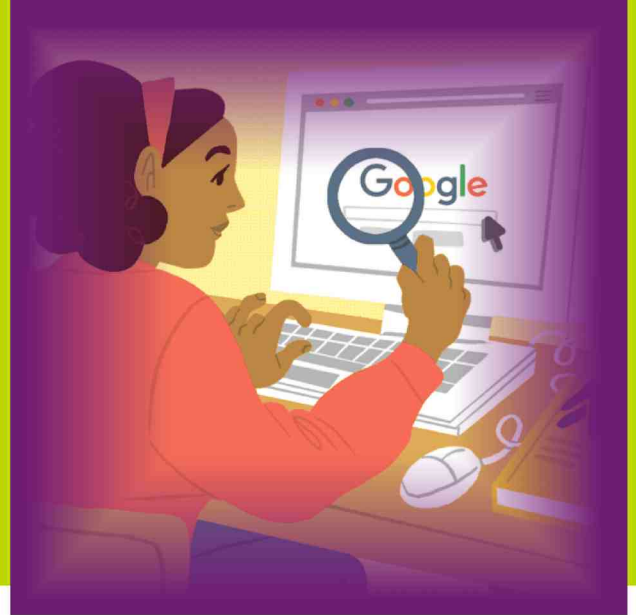
### **Note**

First, an individual finds or locates the information that is relevant to the topic being searched for using the modalities for locating and accessing information. Once the information has been found, the next stage is to analyse or evaluate the information and the sources from which they were acquired.



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# EVALUATING INFORMATION



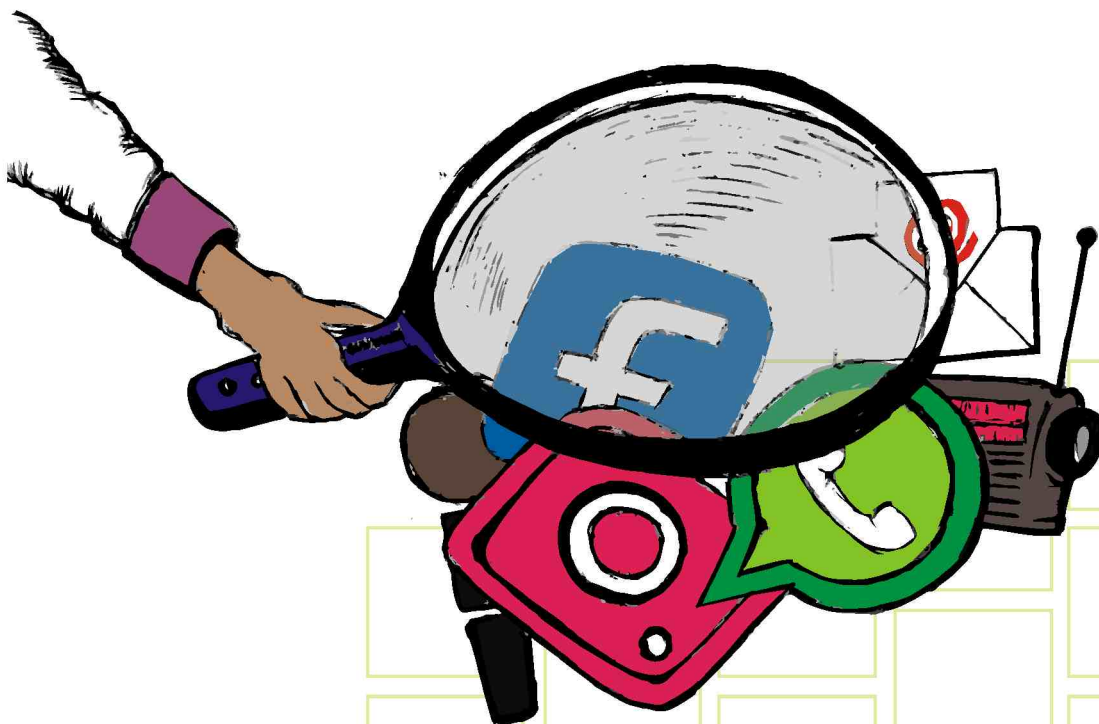
### INTRODUCTION

With the proliferation of information and information sources available to us in today's world of digital media, we often find ourselves having too much information (information overload)! Thus, there is need for us to sift and sort through them all. We need to ask some set of questions in order to verify whether the information available or to be consumed will be relevant and useful.

### OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, users should be able to:

- Understand the importance of evaluating information
- Explain how to evaluate information
- Know the steps to evaluate information (credibility, bias, accuracy, truthfulness, completeness)
- Identify fact-checking under traditional and new media platforms



## Why Evaluate Information?

It is necessary for media users to evaluate information by thinking critically about the reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, point of view or bias of information sources. That way, they are able to make informed decisions because they know all there is to know about the information and where it is coming from.

## Criteria for Fact-Checking for Both Traditional and New Media

In order to stay safe from false or fake information, users should critically ask questions based on the following factors:

- Accuracy:

Is the information accurate and verifiable? Does the tone of the message suggest accuracy? Are the source and references cited? Is the information free of grammatical, spelling and other typographical errors?

- Author:

Who is the publisher? Is the source produced by a reputable site or organization? Can the author's name be easily figured out? Is the contact information about the author available?

- What makes it Current?

Is there any information about the date of publication? Are the web links recent and reliable?

- Fairness:

Is the source free of bias towards one point-of-view? Is the source free of advertising or profits making? What are the various points-of-view presented?

- Relevance:

Who is the target audience of the information? Does the purpose of the source meet with the user's information need?

- Objectivity:

Does the content show any evidence of bias? Is there any advertising on the page? If there is an advert, is it clearly separated from the main content?

- Coverage:

Is the target audience identified? Does the content meet the information need of the target audience?



## Note:

To evaluate information, a person must be sure that the information aligns with the values of:

- **Credibility:**

Where is the information coming from? Is it a known source or an unknown source? The example of how Russia used Social media to target American voters can be used here.

- **Accuracy/Fact:**

An example is the case of the news that made the rounds on social media claiming that senior police officers each received \$8, 000 from the All Peoples Congress party (APC) to conspire and rig the elections. People spread the story without checking where the information was from or what the source of the story was. Eventually, the Police arrested a year three student of the Faculty of Arts, Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone as the kingpin behind the circulation of the fake message against the police.

In addition, the individual needs to ask, are the dates correct? Did it happen when they said it happened and where they said it happened and how they said it happened? Or did someone change the story a bit?

- **Truth:**

This is also close to accurate information and fact. Everyone needs to ask, is this truth? In other words, does this exist exactly as it has been written or is it the truth twisted to fit someone else's opinion? Truth does not change. It is the absence of a lie.

- **Ethics:**

It is important to ask, is the information right or wrong? Does it or will it have negative or positive consequences on anyone or a lot of people? And just maybe you want to ask, if I was on the other end of this information, how would I feel? And do I want to be responsible for causing trouble among people or in the larger society?

# CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS



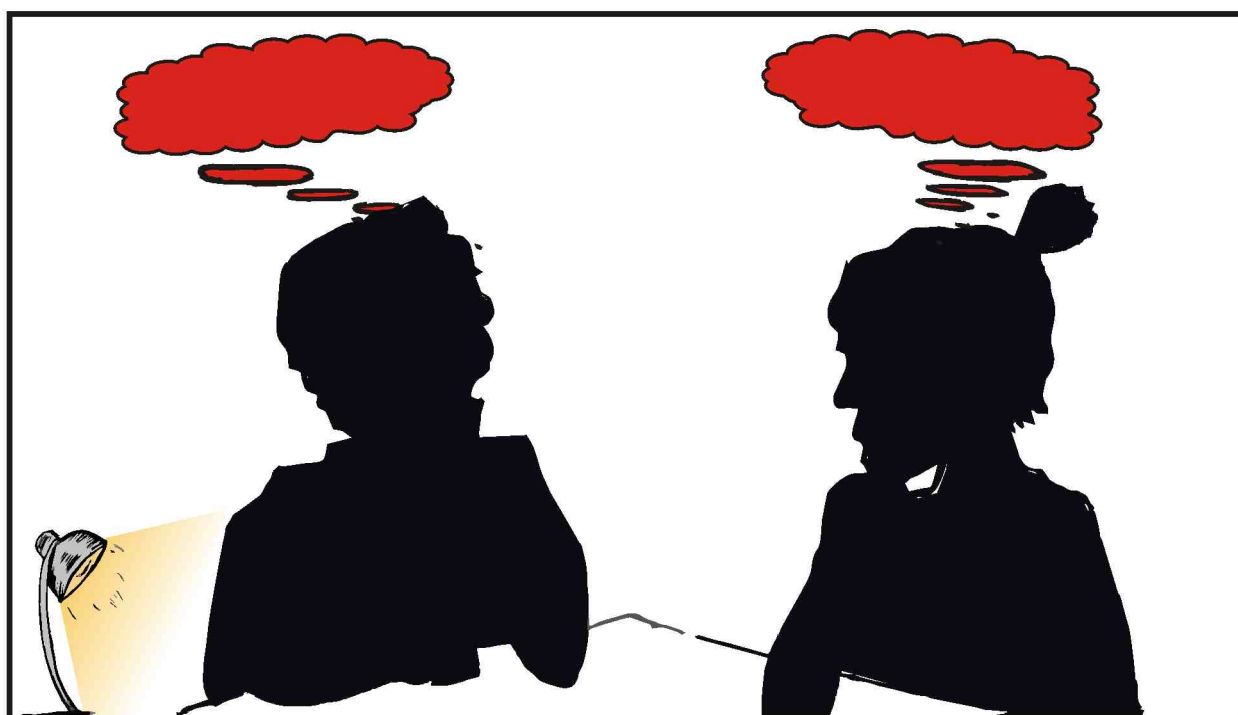
## INTRODUCTION

Information is life and an essential part of every individual's daily routine because people use information for different things. Information on different topics and issues comes from different directions and platforms on a regular basis. People need to know how to deal with the quality and quantity of information being pumped into society daily.

## OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, users should be able to:

- Analyse, reflect, interpret, compare, contrast and evaluate information and media contents
- Produce their own content (user-generated content)
- Understand the roles of different media
- Identify what constitutes critical thinking and when to apply it



Critical thinking skills are needed to handle all the information people get on a daily basis. **Critical thinking** is the ability to form a clear and logical (straightforward, making sense) idea in the mind about any subject, content or problem in order to make a proper decision on what to do with information or about a situation.

It is important for everyone to have critical thinking skills so they can think for themselves and not just accept all information without questioning it. It helps individuals ask questions when they receive, hear or see any information before forwarding it to others. It helps them decide what to do and believe and how to determine the relationship or link between two or more ideas.

The critical thinking skills include:

- Observation
- Analysis
- Interpretation
- Reflection
- Evaluation
- Inference
- Explanation
- Problem solving, and
- Decision making.

One simple way to develop the critical thinking skill is to ask yourself the following questions the next time someone sends you information on WhatsApp or Facebook.

- Who said it or Who sent that information? What is the person's position? Does he have some authority or is he or she an expert on the subject you are discussing?
- What did they say exactly? Was it their opinion or a fact? Did they give all the information or they left some details out?
- Where did they say it? Was it during an important event? Before or after the event? At what time?
- Why was it said? Did the person who said it explain the reason why? From what you have read, are they trying to make someone look good or bad?
- How did they say it? What was their mood like when they said it? Was their body language the same as their expression? By the time you go through these questions, you can usually tell which ones are real or fake and out to cause harm.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

# FAKE NEWS / HATE SPEECH



### INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, it is difficult to regulate the way people talk on online platforms. Simple conversations often turn out to become opportunities for people to insult and talk anyhow to and about other people and using whatever is at their disposal to do so. The result is that there has been an increase in hate speech and fake news causing a lot of problems in society. This is a problem which has to be addressed.

### OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, users should be able to:

- Define Fake news
- Explain the relationship between MIL and fake News
- Discuss MIL and how it can tackle Misinformation
- Understand how MIL can address Disinformation
- Explain Hate Speech
- Discuss MIL and violent crime



Fake news is information that is untrue and not an accurate account of the incident that happened. It is misleading others by giving them a false impression about an event, an individual or a situation. The spread of fake news can be intentional or unintentional.

When untrue information is shared and it makes people believe the wrong thing, it is known as or called Misinformation. Misinformation is always out to deceive people and can also be intentional or unintentional.

When fake news is intentional, it is called disinformation. This refers to information which is codedly spread in order to influence public opinion or hide the truth. This includes political, religious and group propaganda. In this case, the source of the information wants people to deliberately believe the wrong thing about a person, a country, an event or situation so those people can behave in a way that favours their cause.

The other danger to society is hate speech. Hate speech is a form of communication where people abuse anyone who has a different opinion or idea about any topic that is being discussed. Hate speech is usually filled with hateful words and hostility and a lot of anger towards the other person or organisation without any just reason. Hate speech makes people afraid and causes unnecessary divisions and negative feelings amongst the audience or people in a society.

People use social media to push hate speech and fake news because information travels fast. Negative use of media and information can promote violent crimes which is why people need to be careful.

### **Media and Information Literacy, Fake News and Hate Speech**

People need to check any and every information they see or are sent on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. to confirm whether they are true or false.

MIL teaches you to assess information to determine if they are true or not. It teaches you what to look for and where to look for it.

More importantly, it shows you that not all information must or should be shared. If you must share it, confirm that it is true before sending to others. The Chairman of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) of Sierra Leone had to publicly declare that despite multiple media reports on the subject, no distributed ledger technology was used during the country's March 7 national elections. He also revealed the exact technology they used for the election process. This story shows that even media houses sometimes fall victim to instances of fake news and this is what MIL wants to correct both at institutional and individual levels.

This means that no one should spread information of a story when they were not at the point where it happened nor are they absolutely certain of what took place.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

# SOCIAL-CULTURAL CONTEXT OF MEDIA CONTENT



### INTRODUCTION

Societies are made up of different people. It is often very rare to have societies with mono cultures and religions. As such, it is the best thing to ensure that all sections of society can live with each other in unity and this means that there must be mutual respect at all levels.

### OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, users should be able to:

- Explain existing diversities in society be it religious, ethnicity, linguistic aspects of their culture.
- Understand how global media systems work especially when it comes to diversity





## What is Diversity?

Diversity simply put means different. It refers to the variety in the human population that can come in the form of gender, language, ethnicity, religion, cultural and, socio-economic status, age, colour, point of views and other forms of identities.



Diversity needs people to understand that every individual is unique, and we all must recognise our individual differences.

Countries have developed their own media systems to enable them showcase their uniqueness. This process of setting up media systems within countries to disseminate information about the events and people and situations in their country is referred to as Global media systems.

## What are Global Systems?

The Global media systems describes the way the media functions under different national contexts; it looks at the political, economic, cultural, legal and policy laws and structures that enable the media function and discharge their roles in different societies.

Examples of global media providers are Cable Network News (CNN), Al Jazeera (AJ), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Voice of Nigeria (VON), Voice of America (VOA), Reuters, Dutche Welle (DW) etc.

Each of the global media organisations disseminates (spread) news from the political, economic, social, cultural and or peculiar interests of country of origin, ideology or other interests.

What this means is that every time you watch a news on any of these media organisations, the stories are being presented in a way that suits the country and they are under no obligation to make another country look good.

