INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY AND ICE BREAKER

Core Learning Objectives

Time
30 Minutes

Materials Needed
- Provide a comfortable setting for participants to move around and exchange ideas

Participants will
- Share ideas about the meaning of "literacy" and "media literacy"
- Reflect on the special meaning of these concepts in the digital era
- Understand that literacy and media literacy (and digital media literacy) vary in different communities and some groups may be more "left out" than others
- Define the parameters of their own current digital media use
- Discuss and appreciate some of the pros and cons of being able to access information quickly and from so many different sources in the digital era

Context for Facilitator

In this short introduction to the curriculum, participants will reflect on the meaning of literacy, media literacy, and digital media literacy and how these skills are represented in their own communities.

Literacy of all kinds means having *specific skills* (e.g., being able to read or to use a mobile phone) but also to the ability to *understand, reflect on,* and *use* information acquired through these skills. Literacy of all kinds brings a level of independence and power to an individual. These basic themes will be returned to throughout the curriculum.

Facilitator Preparation

The facilitator may wish to gather some basic information in advance about literacy and digital media use in the participants' communities. Data about literacy, media use, and internet use (by geographic area, urban/rural populations, and gender) are available in every country's most recent Demographic and Health survey. See: https://dhsprogram.com/

Ice Breaker

⏱ **5 minutes**

The facilitator invites all participants to stand and participate in a brief "walk with your feet" activity to start them thinking about their own media use and the different concepts that will be covered.

Facilitator says: *Before we get started, everyone please stand and participate in an activity about civic life in the 21st century. Please listen to the following statements. If the statement is true for you, take one step forward.*

At the end of each round (after each statement), the participants should return to their original places.

Sample Statements:

- *Take one step if you have (access to) a computer—a laptop, a tablet, or a mobile phone with access to the internet*
- *Take one step forward if you have a Facebook account*
- *Take one step if you have a Twitter account*
- *Take one step if you have an Instagram account*
- *Take one step forward if you have a WhatsApp account*
- *Take one step if you've ever read the news online*
- *Take one if you've ever noticed something incorrect in the news*
- *Take one step forward if you've ever followed a Hashtag*
- *Take one step forward if you've ever created a meme*
- *Take one step forward if you've ever shared information online with more than two people at a time*

As participants respond, the facilitator will get an idea of participants' involvement with digital media and will also introduce participants to some ideas about where the curriculum might lead.

Discussion

🕐 **15 minutes**

Facilitator asks open-ended questions to introduce the concept of **media literacy in the digital era** and to encourage participants to express their own ideas and concerns. (Accept all ideas unless they are 100% false.)

1. What do you think it means to be **"literate"**?
    (Are you all literate? Is everyone in your community literate? (If not, who is "left out"—age, gender, socioeconomic or ethnic group?)

2. How might it be a disadvantage in your community not to be literate?

3. What do you think **"media literacy"** is?
    (Do you all feel you have "media literacy"? Do you think everyone in your community is media literate? If not, who is "left out"—age, gender, socioeconomic or ethnic group?)

4. Do you think "media literacy" means something special now that the Internet and social media have become so important? (i.e., **"digital media literacy"**)
    (Do you think you are "media literate"? Why/why not?)

5. How might it be a disadvantage in your community not to be media literate?

Concepts to look for:

If learners don't come up with several of the below examples on their own, ask a few leading questions as well.
(For example, for #3, "Is it ever hard to know what sources to trust? Why?")

1. The simplest meaning of *literacy* is "knowing how to read and write."
    (It's about skills. It can also imply having knowledge or understanding.)

2. Media literacy means knowing how to access, analyze, and create media. Media literacy requires critical thinking. It involves the ability to evaluate, or judge, what you find in the media.

3. Different ages, genders, or sub-groups of a community that are not literate—or media literate, or digitally media literate—are likely to be more dependent on others and to be less empowered in society, for many reasons.

4. In the digital era, the "media" are very different from just TV, radio, and newspapers:

    - You can get information very quickly.
    - You can get it from many different sources.
    - Sometimes it "comes" to you without you even looking for it (e.g., ads, or selected news briefs that pop up onto your digital device).
    - It can be hard to know what sources to trust since there are so many.
    - You can *share* and *create* messages in the digital world, not just *receive* them. In the digital world, we are no longer just an "audience" for media.

Final Question

🕐 **5 minutes**

Note that this discussion will be very different according to cultural context. In some environments, digital media are more restricted than in others. This will also depend on the legal environments in different countries. Some learners may feel they don't have enough access to different sources. Some may feel they have access to many sources and don't always know which to trust. Some may feel that having diverse ideas "out there," and being able to share diverse ideas, is important—even fundamental to democracy. Others may feel there should be certain limits on what points of view should be expressed. The facilitator should guide this discussion sensitively according to context.

1. In your opinion, is it a good or bad thing that in the digital world we can get information quickly from so many different sources? *(Make sure participants come up with a few good things about the proliferation of media sources and the speed of access as well as a few bad/dangerous ones.)*

A Few Words About The Curriculum

🕐 **2 minutes**

Facilitator explains: *Today we're going to start on a series of our own experiments to develop our digital media literacy. You're going to have the opportunity to develop some new skills, using some new online tools. Even more important, all the activities are meant to get us thinking more about some of the questions we talked about today. The activities are divided into four modules. The first is called Investigate. The second Deliberate. The third Express and the fourth Advocate. We can think about why these four words were chosen for these modules as we go along.*

So now we're ready to begin to Investigate!

(The facilitator can also write the titles of the four modules on a black/white board.)