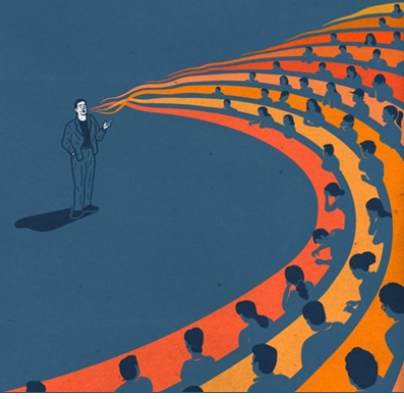




Exploring the Multifaceted Impact of Communication on Our Lives



WELCOME TO OUR JULY-SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

In a world driven by connectivity and information sharing, effective communication has become the cornerstone of progress and understanding. In this edition of our newsletter, we explore the multi-facets of communication and its impact on our lives. From media literacy ethics to harnessing the power of social media for education, we have a lineup of insightful articles that delve into the heart of communication.

In this edition, we also share the recorded webinar on Open, Flexible, and Distance Learning (OFDL), underscoring how effective communication is crucial in adapting to evolving educational landscapes.

Join us on this communication journey, where words and ideas connect us in meaningful ways, shaping the world we live in. Thank you for being a part of our community dedicated to fostering effective communication for a brighter future.

The Digital Revolution: Navigating the Ethics and Competencies of Media and Information Literacy

Wong Lai Cheng | Manager (Publication) | SEAMEO RECSAM

In recent years, digital and new media technologies have experienced significant growth. The advent of these media technologies have revolutionised the ways in which we inform, educate, and organise ourselves, bringing unprecedented opportunities for expression and access to information. These platforms allow us to easily search for information, maintain social contacts and to create and share information. Our society are not only media consumers, they can also be active media producers as long as they have the skills that enable them to participate fully in this new media communication environment.

In this digital era society, it is about constructing and validating content and information. Many people spend a lot of time searching for news and information online, the digital spaces also enhance the information sharing process, both positively and negatively (Wok et al., 2012).

“The internet has altered our societies as profoundly as the printing press did. Requiring a deep reimagining of the ethics and mindsets with which we approach knowledge, communication and cohesion.”

Antonio Guterres
UN Secretary General



According to United Nations (2022), youth are the driving force of connectivity globally, with 75% of 15 to 24- year-olds online in 2022, compared with 65% for the rest of the world’s population. This scenario has created unprecedented opportunities for them to communicate, learn, and socialise, while exposing them to new ideas and more diverse sources of information.

As of April 2023, there were 5.18 billion internet users worldwide, which amounted to 64.6% of the global population. Of this total, 59.9% of the world's population, were social media users.

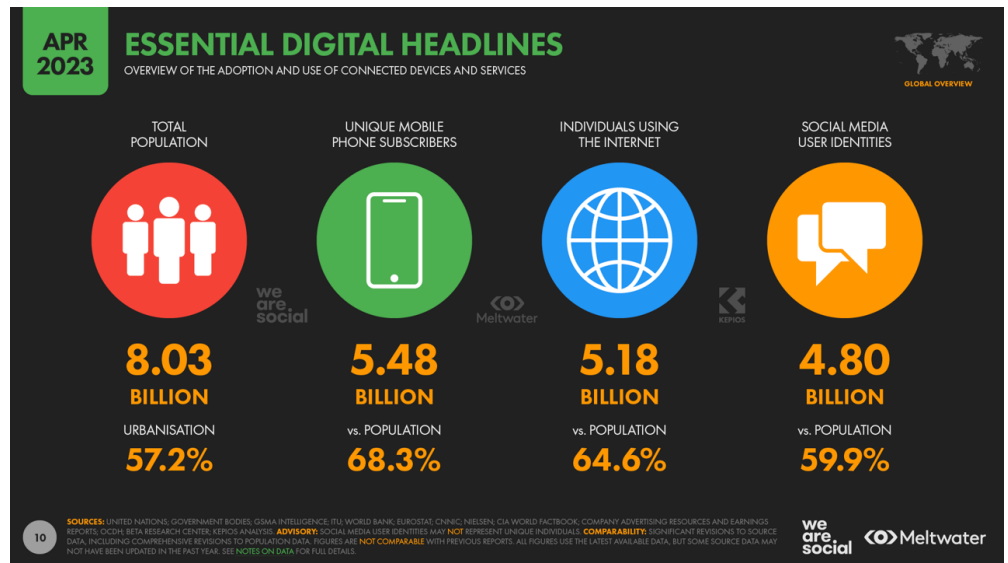
The recently published UNESCO Global Education Monitoring (GEM) 2023 Report revealed that only around half of 15-year-olds in OECD countries are able to tell facts from opinions. When these platform opens for all to create and share information, the rise of disinformation campaigns and conspiracy theories have

gained ground and we must massively upscale efforts to enhance the competencies of people of all ages to think critically in digital spaces, and to understand the algorithms that underpin them.

The lack of awareness about **Media and Information Literacy (MIL)**, leads people to think that “if it’s on the Internet, it must be true”. In this context, we need to empower people with MIL. Educators also play a critical role in helping to ensure students leave school with the skills needed to not only be critical media consumers, but also thoughtful producers of mediated messages.



UNESCO (2011) identifies MIL competencies as the ability to ethically and effectively locate, assess, and utilise needed information; comprehend the functions of media and information providers; evaluate media content critically; and interact with them for self-expression, life-long learning, and contemporary content production. MIL in digital spaces refers to the ability to critically access, analyse, evaluate, and create media and information content within digital technologies and online platforms. It encompasses a range of competencies and skills necessary for navigating the vast and overwhelming digital landscape, making informed decisions, and engaging responsibly with online content.



The annual **Global Media and Information Literacy Week** helps raise awareness of the need for an international effort towards helping all people become informed creators & consumers and is a crucial platform for rallying worldwide stakeholders to remind people of the importance of MIL agenda towards a more literate and sustainable society. This year's theme for MIL Week, which will be held from 24 – 31 October 2023 is: **"Media and Information Literacy in Digital Spaces: A Collective Global Agenda"**.

UNESCO highlights that integrating MIL in digital spaces enables citizens to:

- Know their rights online, and to respect the rights of others such as their rights to privacy, and digital rights, such as freedom of expression and access to information;
- Be more critical about how they use information, digital technologies and media and thus become more resilient to hate content and disinformation that stir conflicts;
- Develop more agency and autonomy to self-protect and to protect others, thus staying safe online;
- Appreciate how transparency and accountability of digital platforms and media can facilitate openness and dialogue in digital spaces;
- Know how to access information online and what ethical steps to take when access is blocked;
- Meaningfully engage in dialogue and promoting equality and non-discrimination online which include gender equality and respecting the perspectives of others while advocating for peace and inclusive digital spaces.

In addressing these issues, governments, digital platforms, civil society, schools, libraries, academics and media must link up efforts.

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Unlocking the Power of Social Media for Teaching & Learning

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The social media landscape is constantly evolving, with its purposes shifting from their original intent. It's no longer solely about connecting with unreachable individuals; users now harness these platforms for more valuable endeavours, such as education and learning. In today's digital age, acquiring knowledge via social media has become more accessible. Numerous specialised social media accounts dedicated to specific topics like education, health, sports, and more have emerged. Users can easily discover these accounts by utilising relevant hashtags, which guide them to the appropriate content. Furthermore, educators and teachers have seized the opportunity to enhance engagement with their students by hosting interactive learning sessions through social media platforms. However, not all teachers and educators know how to utilise their social media account to organise learning session. To support them, SEAMEO SEAMOLEC recently organized a Regional Training on Interactive Learning through Social Media, attracting 100 participants from countries such as the Philippines, Cambodia, Uzbekistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Yemen. Taking place from 12 to 23 June 2023, this in-depth course had a simple goal: to give educators the skills they

need to use social media effectively for creating engaging and interactive learning experiences.

They learned how to create good lesson plans that use digital tools, make the most of Facebook Groups for education, use effective methods for teaching in these groups, and make short, engaging lessons for social media. Following the virtual sessions, participants had one more week to finish their final projects. These projects involved making a detailed lesson plan and teaching a session in a special Facebook Group, matching the lesson plan they made earlier.

When the course ended, participants had to turn in their projects for assessment. Those who met the course criteria and showed they were good at interactive learning on social media got an electronic certificate. This certificate proves their achievements and shows they know how to use social media as a great educational tool. With this training, SEAMEO SEAMOLEC keeps helping educators in the region use new and creative ways to teach in the digital age.



Envisioning Open, Flexible and Distance Learning (OFDL)



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Online, flexible, distance learning (OFDL) continues to be a buzz term globally, but how does it fare in Southeast Asia? It is a region of duality, where both digital economy and digital divide burgeon. While over 70% of the population enjoys connectivity, some countries, not just areas within a country, lack adequate home access. In terms of education, as per SEAMEO Journal (2018), online learning platforms face significant hurdles in Southeast Asian colleges. These include high initial costs, sustainability concerns, post-completion employment recognition, and ensuring platform quality assurance. It is essential to reorganise online programmes to properly support educational systems.

Discover the reality of OFDL in Southeast Asia through this webinar organised by SEAMEO and ICDE, and explore cases in Singapore and the Philippines. To access the webinar, please visit the SEAMEO Secretariat YouTube channel and search for "Webinar on Envisioning Open, Flexible, and Distance Learning (OFDL)."



Embracing Accessibility in Technology Towards Education for All

Fezny Othman | Media Officer | SEAMEO SEN



Open Educational Resources constitute a transformative paradigm in education, marked by an open license framework that upholds the intellectual property rights of content creators while concurrently granting the public explicit permission to access, reuse, repurpose, adapt, and redistribute educational materials. This innovative approach not only respects copyright ownership but also democratizes knowledge dissemination.

In an era marked by the pursuit of knowledge and the aspiration for a sustainable and resilient society, one imperative stands out: the need for expanded access to educational content. The world's progress depends on the widespread availability of educational materials and resources. In this pursuit, the embrace of Open Educational Resources (OER) emerges as a powerful catalyst, offering the promise of swift and unfettered knowledge sharing. Through OER, we unlock the doors to a future where learning knows no boundaries, where knowledge is truly open to all.

In a rapidly evolving digital landscape, ensuring inclusive and accessible education is an imperative. This mission extends beyond overcoming conventional educational challenges to address modern complexities such as unequal connectivity, parental involvement, waning student motivation, and evolving assessment methodologies. Additionally, it encompasses a dedicated focus on the unique barriers faced by Learners with Disabilities (LWD), making accessibility a central concern when integrating technology into their learning experiences. In essence, OER stands as a cornerstone for advancing quality education and fostering equitable, inclusive access to knowledge, all while addressing the multifaceted challenges that confront contemporary education.

UNESCO Recommendation on Open Educational Resources (OER)

Amidst the rapid advancement of educational technologies towards a more promising future, a paramount principle takes center stage: 'leave no one behind'. This transformative

commitment is deeply ingrained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and lies at the core of UNESCO's mission. In its 2019 session, the 40th UNESCO General Assembly issued a pivotal recommendation on Open Educational Resources (OER), serving as an urgent call to member states. It impels them to take up the cause of inclusive and equitable quality education by wholeheartedly embracing 'OER' as an integral part of their mandates.

Inclusive Open Educational Resources (iOER): Empowering Accessibility and Equality

In recent times, Inclusive Open Educational Resources (iOER) have garnered substantial attention from various stakeholders. iOER expands upon the concept of Open Educational Resources (OER) to ensure universal usability and accessibility, catering to the diverse needs and abilities of all, including individuals with disabilities, regardless of their specific requirements.

Numerous comprehensive checklists and guidelines for enhancing OER accessibility have been developed to meet the needs of educators and practitioners, many of which are readily accessible online (Coolidge, et al., 2018; University of Washington, 2021). These guidelines typically cover various aspects, including content formatting, image descriptions, hyperlink usage, table structuring, multimedia integration, mathematical formulas, and font size considerations. When not adequately addressed, these elements can present challenges for individuals with sensory or learning disabilities, particularly those who rely on screen readers or assistive technologies. In this context, web developers often adhere to the widely recognised Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

iOER plays a pivotal role in facilitating inclusive and equitable access to high-quality educational content. Through the adoption of iOER, all learners, including those with disabilities, can gain enhanced and equal access to educational materials, furthering the overarching goal of fostering a more inclusive and sustainable society.

Waste Hero Education in Southeast Asia

Piyapa Su-angavatin | Programme Officer | SEAMEO SEPS

In a collaborative effort to champion waste management and recycling education throughout Southeast Asia, the SEAMEO Regional Centre for Sufficiency Economy Philosophy for Sustainability (SEAMEO SEPS) has joined forces with Indorama Ventures PCL and the support of eight other dedicated partners. Together, they have embarked on an inspiring initiative known as the "Waste Hero" programme.

At the heart of this endeavor lies the "Waste Hero: Reduce to Zero Master Teacher Training Series," a comprehensive online training program designed to empower educators in five Southeast Asian nations: the Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Vietnam. Taking place from July to October 2023, this training series consists of three core pillars: Recycling Fundamentals, Creating Zero Waste, and Building the Circular Economy.

The primary objective? To equip teachers across various educational levels, from kindergarten to vocational and technical schools, with a profound understanding of waste management and the circular economy. Beyond theory, this programme empowers educators to craft impactful lesson plans and integrate Waste Hero educational materials into their classroom activities and co-curricular programmes.

As a tangible outcome of their participation, teachers will gain access to a valuable resource – editable and printable "Waste Hero" teaching materials. This comprehensive resource comprises 19 activity-based lessons and workshops, all thoughtfully designed to engage students in the critical concepts of waste reduction and sustainable practices. These resources will be readily available for free download, ensuring that the knowledge and insights gained through the Waste Hero programme can be widely shared and applied, ultimately fostering a generation of environmental stewards across Southeast Asia.

The "Waste Hero: Reduce to Zero Master Teacher Training," conducted in July 2023 for educators in the Philippines and over 175 schools in Indonesia.

In the aftermath of this training initiative, the transformative ripple effect was evident. A Post-Training Report revealed that 70 of the participating teachers took proactive steps, engaging approximately 9,540 students in Waste Hero classroom activities within their respective schools. Moreover, these educators generously shared their newfound knowledge with approximately 1,026 fellow teachers and community members, extending the reach of waste management and environmental awareness beyond the classroom.



The training programme served as an inspirational catalyst, motivating teachers to spearhead waste management and environmental initiatives within their schools and communities. These initiatives, driven by their commitment, promise to bring enduring benefits to both educational institutions and the broader community.

Ms. Suchitra Lohia, Deputy Group CEO and Chairperson of Corporate Social Responsibility at Indorama Ventures, expressed her pride in the collaboration with SEAMEO SEPS on this influential project. She emphasised their mutual dedication to fostering recycling and environmental consciousness throughout Southeast Asia. As the world's largest PET resin producer and recycler, the Waste Hero programme holds immense significance as a means of empowering upcoming generations with the essential knowledge and skills for efficient waste reduction, sorting, and disposal. Ultimately, this initiative is a catalyst for instigating positive change and laying the groundwork for a more sustainable future.

Ms. Duriya Amatavivat, the Center Director of SEAMEO SEPS, highlighted the resonant synergy between the Sufficiency Economy philosophy and the principles of responsible waste management, which include recycling education. This partnership with Indorama Ventures, alongside the steadfast support of eight collaborating partners, provides a unique opportunity to instill these values among young Southeast Asians through innovative educational resources. The ultimate aim is to cultivate responsible global citizenship that can play a pivotal role in shaping a sustainable future.

Notably, this programme has forged robust collaborations with the Ministries of Education across Southeast Asian countries and received unwavering support from eight key partners, namely: UNESCO Multisectoral Regional Office in Bangkok, Yunus Thailand Foundation, Southeast Asia One Health University Network (SEAOHUN), SEAMEO Secretariat, SEAMEO SEAMOLEC, SEAMEO RECSAM, SEAMEO TED, and SEAMEO RETRAC. Their invaluable contributions and support have been instrumental in driving the success of this endeavour.

Timor Leste Takes a Leap in Education with the SEA-PLM Programme

Anieluz Pastolero | SEA-PLM Project Coordinator



Her Excellency Ms Dulce De Jesus Soares, Minister of Education, Youth, and Sport (2nd left) attending the training of Test Administrators and School Coordinators for the Field Trial in Timor Leste

In a pivotal move, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Timor Leste is participating in the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) programme, the first regional large-scale assessment in the region. Timor Leste is the most recent addition to countries participating in the SEA-PLM 2024, which is the programme's second round of assessment. Other countries engaged in the program include Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Viet Nam.

The commitment of Timor Leste to SEA-PLM 2024 promises transformative change in the country as it embarks into its first participation in an international large-scale assessment focusing on foundational learning. The wealth of data and information that comes from the regional evidence strengthens Timor Leste's position in utilising data in order to guide and shape educational policy and practice in the country.



The participants of the training of Test Administrators and School Coordinators in Timor Leste

In the speech of Minister of Education, Youth, and Sport, Her Excellency Ms Dulce De Jesus Soares, during the Field Trial training for Test Administrators and School Coordinators held on 27 and 28 September 2023 at City 8, Dili, attended by more than 50 field operators and school heads, the programme's inaugural event in the country, she underscored the importance of the training in ensuring the quality and seamless data collection and test administration. Minister Soares highlighted the broader motivation behind the activity: to systematically collect data that can inform and enhance the primary education to improve student learning outcomes.

As the Field Trial activities conclude across all 7 SEA-PLM participating countries, the programme is on the cusp of its highly anticipated Main Survey in 2024. All National Teams, including Timor Leste's national team, in collaboration with the SEA-PLM Regional Secretariat and key partners are gearing up for the 3rd SEA-PLM Regional Technical Workshop scheduled for 11 to 15 December 2023. This crucial event will revolve around technical discussions and agreements on procedures to strengthen assessment tools and instruments to be employed in the forthcoming SEA-PLM assessment.

Timor Leste's participation in the SEA-PLM programme signifies a profound commitment to advancing education, not only within the country but also on a regional scale. As the Main Survey 2024 nears, Timor Leste's prospects for meaningful change in education are brighter than ever as it leverages on learning evidence to support student learning in Timor Leste and the rest of Southeast Asia.

Unlocking the Future of Education: SEAMEO Secretariat's Collaborative Ventures



In the ever-evolving landscape of education, collaboration and partnerships have become the driving force for transformation and progress. SEAMEO Secretariat, at the heart of educational advancement in Southeast Asia, has been actively engaging in a series of events this quarter that hold the promise of unprecedented collaboration and innovation.

The 2023 China-ASEAN Education Cooperation Week, an event of immense significance, placed a spotlight on the transformative potential of educational cooperation for both China and the ASEAN region under China's Belt and Road Initiative. The focal themes of "Accessible and Equitable Education," "Engagement with Industries," and "Innovation and Development" were explored with vigor.

Another remarkable initiative on the SEAMEO Secretariat's radar was the collaboration with the **Korea Education and Research Information Service (KERIS)**. This endeavor sought to explore projects that harness education technology without reliance on internet connectivity, thereby mitigating issues of inaccessibility. Such initiatives are indispensable to the region's educational advancement, particularly in the face of technological disparities.

Lastly, the SEAMEO Secretariat team had the privilege of participating in the **Talent Development Panel Session at the 7th Yushan Forum** held in Taipei, Taiwan. This two-day event provided a dynamic platform for mutual learning and collaboration. Our team engaged with partners from ROC Taiwan and esteemed representatives from Southeast Asian nations and beyond. The Yushan Forum served as a fertile ground for the exchange of ideas, sharing of insights, and the fostering of collaborations that will undoubtedly shape the future of talent development in Southeast Asia. Together, these partnerships are building a brighter future for talent development in our region.

