NATIONAL MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY STRATEGY OF BHUTAN

BHUTAN MEDIA FOUNDATION

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The ***National Media and Information Literacy Strategy of Bhutan*** was commissioned under the auspices of UNESCO in support for the development of Bhutan's National MIL Strategy and accompanying Policy Brief. The Strategy was informed by comprehensive desk research, a nationwide survey, multi-stakeholder consultations, and validation workshops convened with relevant stakeholders and partners.

Published in 2026 by the Department of Media, Creative Industry and Intellectual Property (DoMCIIP), Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment (MoICE) and the Bhutan Media Foundation (BMF).

Thimphu, Bhutan

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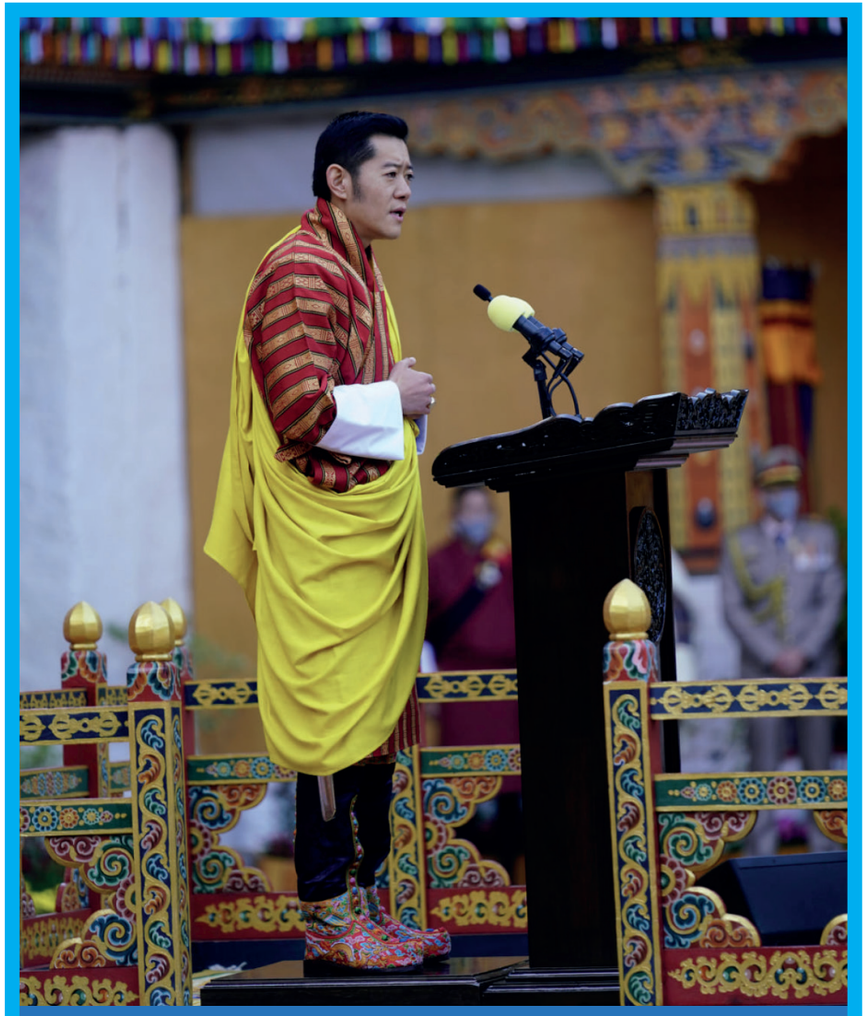
ISBN 978-99936-890-4-1

Designed and printed at Kuensel



"Educationists and experts have identified what twenty-first-century competencies mean for children everywhere. By developing their abilities for critical thinking, creative thinking, and learning to be life-long learners, we have to prepare them to be inquisitive, to be problem-solvers, to be interactive and collaborative, using information and media literacy as well as technological skills. We must prioritise self-discovery and exploration, and involve learners in the creation of knowledge rather than making them mere consumers of it."

– His Majesty the King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck
The Royal Kasho on Education Reform, 17 December 2020

Contents

Foreword V
Acknowledgements VII
Executive Summary IX

1. Background 1
2. Vision, Objectives, and Guiding Principles 8
3. Strategy Recommendations 10
4. Core Domains and Competency Framework 14
5. Assessment and Certification Framework 18
6. Implementation Timeline and Milestones 20
7. Institutional Framework 22
8. Risk Management Framework 26
9. Priority Matrix 30

Annexure I: 34
Annexure II: 35
Annexure III: 36
References 43

Tables

Table 1: Core Domains with Competency Areas 15
Table 2: Overarching Skill Strands 16
Table 3: Cross-Cutting Competency Dimensions 16
Table 4: Proficiency Levels 17
Table 5: Implementation Pathways 17
Table 6: Assessment and Certification Overview 18
Table 7: Implementation Timeline and Milestones 20
Table 8: Roles and Responsibilities 23
Table 9: Summary of Strategies 25
Table 10: Priority Matrix 27
Table 11: Project Risk Matrix 28

Figures

Figure 1: Media and Information Literacy Action Model 29
Figure 2: Media and Information Action Plan 29

Graphs

Graph 1. Respondents' Profile 37
Graph 2. Education 37
Graph 3: Domicile 37
Graph 4: Digital media usage behaviour 38
Graph 5: Time spent on the Internet 38
Graph 6: Time spent on Digital Content 38
Graph 7: Sources of news and information 39
Graph 8: Sources of news and trust 39
Graph 9: Verify information 40

Abbreviations and Acronyms

MIL	Media and Information Literacy
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
BMF	Bhutan Media Foundation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
MoESD	Ministry of Education and Skills Development
RUB	Royal University of Bhutan
BICMA	Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority
DoMCIIP	Department of Media, Creative Industry and Intellectual Property
MoICE	Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment
JAB	Journalists' Association of Bhutan
BCMD	Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy
GNH	Gross National Happiness
ToT	Training of Trainers
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
FYP	Five-Year Plan
BQF	Bhutan Qualifications Framework
BCSEA	Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment
ICM Act	Information, Communication and Media Act 2018
RGoB	Royal Government of Bhutan
AI	Artificial Intelligence
OTT	Over-the-Top
BBS	Bhutan Broadcasting Service
BtCIRT	Bhutan Computer Incident Response Team
NFE	Non-Formal Education
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
PwDs	People with disabilities
LG	Local Government

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Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment
Royal Government of Bhutan

MINISTER

MoICE/PRS/2026/220 **20th October 2026**

Foreword

Our ability to benefit from the digital world depends on how well we understand and use the information it brings into our lives. For Bhutan, this means equipping our people with the judgment, confidence and responsibility to make informed choices and participate meaningfully in society.

Media and digital technologies have expanded opportunities for learning, enterprise, public service and participation. They have also increased exposure to misinformation, online scams, cyberbullying and privacy risks. As artificial intelligence changes how information is created and shared, the ability to assess its credibility and use it responsibly becomes even more essential.

The National Media and Information Literacy Strategy of Bhutan responds to this need. Grounded in Gross National Happiness, equity and lifelong learning, it provides a coordinated framework to strengthen these capabilities across education, governance, media and communities. It aligns with national priorities for education reform, digital transformation and development, while drawing on relevant UNESCO frameworks and international experience.

Implementation is a shared responsibility. Government agencies, educational institutions, media organisations, civil society, the private sector and development partners must work together to make learning opportunities accessible across ages, abilities, languages and locations. The proposed National MIL Coordination Body will support this effort through clearer responsibilities and stronger coordination.

The success of this Strategy will be measured by the difference it makes in people's lives. Clear leadership, sustained resources, capable facilitators and regular assessment must translate its ambitions into practical results.

I call on all partners to take ownership of this effort. Together, we can help our people navigate change, protect themselves and others, and use information and technology to build trust and advance our collective wellbeing.

Lyonpo Namgyal Dorji

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Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere appreciation to all respondents, participants, and stakeholders who provided valuable insights and contributed to the development of this Strategy.

We are especially grateful to UNESCO New Delhi Office for their support and valuable guidance throughout the process.

We also extend our sincere thanks to the four consultants from RTC Professional Services—Dr. Rachel Jacob, Dr. Pallavi Majumdar, Dr. Rupali Sehgal, and Dr. Tshering Dolkar—for their dedicated work in engaging with diverse stakeholders, conducting desk research, carrying out the nationwide online survey, and supporting the development of this Strategy.

Executive Summary

Bhutan is undergoing rapid digital transformation, with expanding access to mobile technologies, social media, and online information. In 2025, the country recorded 868,781 mobile subscribers, alongside increasing adoption of AI and other digital innovations. While this growth has reshaped the information environment, it has also heightened exposure to misinformation, disinformation, online scams, cyberbullying, privacy breaches, and other digital risks. At the same time, the media landscape has diversified, encompassing the Bhutan Broadcasting Service's television and radio networks, commercial and community radio stations, newspapers, cable operators, OTT services, printing presses, and a growing number of digital platforms.

Strengthening MIL is, therefore, essential to enabling citizens to participate safely, responsibly, and meaningfully in an increasingly digital society. The National Media and Information Literacy Strategy of Bhutan is grounded in evidence collected between April and December 2025 through a review of national and international literature, a nationwide online survey with 369 valid responses, three stakeholder consultations involving 51 participants, and validation with 32 relevant stakeholders.

The findings demonstrate high levels of digital connectivity but uneven MIL competencies. While 94% of survey respondents reported regular internet access and 52% relied exclusively on smartphones, only 9.9% reported verifying information very often, while 26.7% did so rarely or never. Social media has become an important source of information, although it is less trusted than print and broadcast media and government websites. These findings highlight the need to strengthen citizens' ability to assess information critically, verify sources, protect themselves online, and communicate and share information responsibly.

The assessment conducted for this Strategy also identified significant institutional and capacity gaps. Bhutan has a strong foundation of MIL-related initiatives developed over the past decade and a half by government agencies, educational institutions, media, civil society, academia, and development partners. However, these efforts remain fragmented, project-based, and insufficiently coordinated. MIL is not yet systematically integrated across formal and non-formal education, lifelong learning, community programmes, and public awareness initiatives. Stakeholders also identified gaps in trained personnel, appropriate learning resources, institutional coordination, sustainable financing, technical expertise, research, and monitoring and evaluation.

Thus, this Strategy provides a coherent national framework to address these gaps and build on existing efforts. It institutionalises MIL through education and lifelong learning, institutional capacity development, public awareness, research, policy coordination, and multi-stakeholder partnerships, structured around six strategic goals:

- Building a media and information literate society through inclusive and lifelong learning
- Strengthening institutional capacity and governance for implementation
- Developing national MIL competencies and certification systems
- Expanding access to inclusive and localized MIL resources
- Promoting ethical media use and combat misinformation and disinformation
- Establishing monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive learning systems

Aligned with Bhutan's national development priorities—including the Royal Kasho on Education Reform (2020), the National Education Policy, Thirteenth Five-Year Plan, and the Social Media Policy for the Royal Government of Bhutan (2016)—as well as the principles of GNH and relevant UNESCO MIL frameworks, the Strategy positions MIL as a cross-cutting national competency rather than a standalone programme. Its implementation will empower citizens of all ages, backgrounds, abilities, and locations to access, understand, critically evaluate, create, and responsibly share information.

By building these competencies, Bhutan will strengthen informed citizenship, social cohesion, and resilience in an increasingly complex digital environment—while advancing quality education, digital transformation, good governance, cultural vitality, and the overall well-being of society. The National MIL Strategy thus provides a long-term framework for building an informed, resilient, inclusive, and digitally empowered Bhutan.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction and Context

In an era marked by rapid digital transformation and the exponential growth of information, the capacity to critically engage with media and information has emerged as a foundational skill for civic participation, democratic resilience, and informed decision-making. MIL, as conceptualized by UNESCO, encompasses a set of competencies that enable individuals to access, evaluate, create, and communicate information and media content effectively and ethically (UNESCO, 2013, 2021). As societies grapple with challenges ranging from misinformation and disinformation to digital exclusion and media polarization, MIL is increasingly recognised as essential for safeguarding democratic values, promoting sustainable development, and fostering a culture of critical inquiry (Mihailidis, 2020; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

Globally, the adoption of MIL has gained momentum, with numerous countries integrating MIL into educational curricula, national strategies, and community outreach initiatives (Ecorys, 2024; Nordicom, 2021). UNESCO has played a pivotal role in advancing this agenda through declarations, frameworks, and partnerships that encourage multi-stakeholder collaboration and policy innovation. These international efforts have underscored the need for contextualized, inclusive, and lifelong approaches to MIL, particularly in developing countries where digital divides and low levels of institutional capacity present additional hurdles (UNESCO, 2019; Crawford-Visbal et al., 2020).

For Bhutan, the importance of MIL has grown alongside rapid digitalisation and significant changes in the media environment. The country had 868,781 mobile subscribers in 2025 (BICMA, 2025), while the adoption of AI and digital technologies continues to expand. Citizens spend an average of 163 minutes per day on social media (Bhutan Media Foundation, 2023), while smartphone adoption has also increased, with imports valued at approximately Nu. 2.7 billion in 2024 (Kuensel, 2025; The Bhutanese, 2025). Alongside this digital growth, Bhutan's media landscape has become increasingly diverse, encompassing the BBS's television and radio networks, commercial radio stations, newspapers, campus and community radio stations, cable television operators, OTT services, printing presses, and a growing number of digital media platforms.

While increased connectivity and access to digital platforms have created opportunities for learning, communication, public services, and civic participation, they have also increased exposure to misinformation, online scams, cyberbullying, privacy risks, harmful content, and other digital harms (Journalists' Association of Bhutan, 2025). These challenges can affect public trust, social cohesion, informed decision-making, and democratic participation. Vulnerable groups—including children and youth, older persons, women, persons with disabilities, and rural communities—may face additional barriers to accessing and evaluating reliable information.

MIL can strengthen Bhutan's resilience by equipping citizens with practical skills to assess sources, verify information, recognise manipulation, protect personal information, create content responsibly, and engage respectfully online (Pesic et al., 2020). It can also support Bhutan's broader goals of good governance, digital transformation, lifelong learning, and Gross National Happiness. These developments underscore the need for a coordinated national approach to strengthen citizens' ability to navigate the information environment safely, critically, and responsibly.

1.2 Concept and Scope of MIL

MIL is a broad and interconnected set of competencies covering the ability to access, understand, evaluate, create, and share information and media responsibly (UNESCO, 2013, 2021). It encompasses media literacy, information literacy, digital literacy, news literacy, critical thinking, digital citizenship, online safety, and ethical communication.

UNESCO's MIL framework emphasises three broad functions: access to information and media; critical understanding and evaluation; and responsible creation and sharing. In the contemporary digital environment, these competencies also include the ability to understand digital platforms, algorithms, privacy, emerging technologies, and the ways in which information is produced, distributed, and consumed.

MIL is, therefore, not limited to formal education or technical digital skills. It is a lifelong competency relevant to children and youth, educators, journalists, public officials, communities, older persons, and other groups across society. In both formal and non-formal contexts, MIL interventions benefit from a localised approach that responds to learners' socio-cultural realities. The culturally embedded, rights-oriented framing offers an important reference for Bhutan, where oral tradition and local narratives play a central role in knowledge dissemination.

Definition

"MIL is defined as a set of competencies that empowers citizens to access, retrieve, understand, evaluate and use, to create as well as share information and media content in all formats, using various tools, in a critical, ethical and effective way, in order to participate and engage in personal, professional and societal activities."

– UNESCO

1.3 MIL Initiatives in Bhutan

Bhutan has undertaken MIL-related initiatives for over a decade and a half, supported by government agencies, CSOs, media and educational institutions, and development partners. These efforts have expanded alongside the growth of broadcast, print, the Internet, social media, and digital technologies through policy development, training, educational resources, public awareness, and research.

1.3.1 Institutional Efforts

The Bhutan Media Impact Study (2008) first highlighted the growing influence of media on society (Department of Information and Media, 2008). This was followed by the Policy Guideline and Strategic Framework for Media Literacy Education in Bhutan (2009), developed by the erstwhile Department of Information and Media (DoIM) in collaboration with the Royal Education Council (REC) and Ministry of Education (MoE). Between 2011 and 2019, as per its Annual Report 2019-2020, the DoIM had implemented MIL programmes for teachers, students, NFE instructors, university students, civil servants, youth, media practitioners, and religious communities, reaching more than 10,000 participants.

Civil society has also played an important role. The Bhutan Information and Media Impact Study (2013) documented contributions from organisations such as BCMD. Since 2019, BMF and JAB have expanded MIL programmes across schools, monastic institutions, youth, rural communities, and public institutions through training manuals, media literacy programmes, and publications. In recent years, BMF has taken a leading role in implementing MIL initiatives, reaching over 15,800 people.

1.3.2 Educational and Pedagogical Assets

Bhutan's most structured MIL pedagogical resources to date are the Media Literacy Training Modules (2019) and Social Media Literacy Training Modules (2021). These provide Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced curricula tailored to different learner groups, including students, adults with limited literacy, and professionals. The modules cover a range of topics, including digital platform navigation, privacy, online ethics, misinformation, cyberbullying, and media creation. They use participatory learning approaches and incorporate both global concepts and Bhutanese examples. Together, these resources represent an early but coherent effort to mainstream MIL, although they have yet to achieve nationwide implementation or full integration into the formal education system.

In parallel, the Navigating Infodemic, Misinformation & Disinformation – A Toolkit (2021) published by BMF and the Combating Disinformation: A Toolkit (2022) produced by JAB offer practical strategies for identifying and combating false information, tailored especially for youth and social media users. These toolkits blend theoretical grounding with actionable techniques such as reverse image search, fact-checking protocols, and social media verification.

MIL has also been incorporated into formal education in Bhutan, though progress has been uneven. Media Studies was introduced as an optional subject for Classes XI and XII in 2015 through collaboration between DoIM, REC, and MoE, but it has since been phased out under recent education reforms. At the tertiary level, Sherubtse College introduced Media Studies as a double major in 2012, later evolving into a Bachelor of Arts in Media Studies before transitioning to a Bachelor of Arts in Digital Communication and Project Management in 2023. Royal Thimphu College continues to offer a Bachelor of Arts in Communication Arts and Creative Media (formerly titled BA in Mass Communication).

Taken together, these initiatives demonstrate that Bhutan has developed a significant foundation for MIL. They have generated valuable experience, resources, institutional capacity, and partnerships that can inform a national approach to MIL. However, these efforts have largely developed across different institutions and sectors and have not yet been fully coordinated or integrated into a sustained national framework.

1.4 Policy and Legislative Alignment

MIL is closely aligned with Bhutan's national development priorities and education reform agenda. The following policy frameworks provide a strong basis for integrating MIL as a cross-cutting competency supporting holistic education, critical thinking, digital citizenship, civic participation, and inclusive development.

- **Royal Kasho on Education Reform (2020):** emphasises holistic education, critical thinking, and the development of learners equipped to navigate a rapidly changing world.
- **National Education Policy (2025)**: prioritises 21st-century competencies, including digital literacy, critical thinking, civic engagement, and the effective evaluation and use of information.
- **Kingdom of Bhutan Digital Economy Development and Transformation Strategy (2024):** highlights digital inclusion, digital skills, and safe and responsible digital citizenship.

- **Thirteenth Five-Year Plan (2024–2029):** provides a national framework for strengthening human capital, inclusive education, digital transformation, good governance, and citizen participation.
- **Gross National Happiness:** MIL contributes to informed citizenship, good governance, community vitality, cultural preservation, social cohesion, and social well-being by enabling citizens to engage critically, ethically, and responsibly with media and information.
- **Social Media Policy for the Royal Government of Bhutan (2016):** The Social Media Policy provides a framework for responsible and appropriate use of social media within the government and wider public context.
- **Information, Communications and Media Act of Bhutan (2018):** The Act provides the legal and regulatory framework governing information, communications, and media in Bhutan.
- **Rules and Regulations on Content (2019):** The Rules and Regulations on Content provide guidance on the production, dissemination, and consumption of media content.

The above-cited national policies and frameworks position MIL as a cross-cutting competency that can reinforce Bhutan's priorities for holistic education, digital transformation, responsible citizenship, good governance, and GNH.

1.5 International and Regional Lessons

International and regional experiences show that effective MIL strategies require sustained political commitment, strong institutional coordination, curriculum integration, capacity building, and multi-stakeholder partnerships. This section examines how different countries and regional contexts have developed and implemented MIL, highlighting key lessons and their relevance to Bhutan.

These comparative models highlight key takeaways for Bhutan: the importance of high-level political endorsement (as in the Philippines), multi-stakeholder collaboration (as in Finland and Indonesia), culturally contextualized pedagogy (as in Brazil), and integration across life stages (as in Japan and India).

GLOBAL MODELS OF MIL STRATEGY

Finland: Finland is widely regarded as a global leader in MIL, consistently ranking at the top of the Media Literacy Index. Its 2019 National Media Education Policy positions MIL as a key component of civic resilience against misinformation and disinformation. MIL is fully integrated into formal education from early childhood through adult learning, supported by libraries, civil society, and media institutions, with a strong emphasis on critical thinking and democratic participation (UNESCO; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2019).

Brazil: Brazil's 2023 National Media Education Strategy reflects a rights-based and culturally embedded approach to MIL. Spearheaded by the Secretariat for Digital Policies, it links MIL with digital inclusion, freedom of expression, and civic agency. Influenced by Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, Brazil's strategy views media education as a transformative process aligned with identity, democracy, and social justice (de Almeida Filizola & Parente, 2024).

United States and United Kingdom: The United States has seen increasing state-level legislation mandating MIL in K–12 education. As of 2023, 17 states had passed or proposed 29 bills. However, implementation remains fragmented due to the lack of standardised curricula and evaluation tools. In contrast, the UK emphasises industry collaboration and self-regulation but suffers from underfunding, weak monitoring, and low outreach to marginalised groups (McNeill, 2024).

ASIA-PACIFIC POLICY ECOSYSTEMS

India: India presents a dual-track MIL strategy. The ***FactShala*** program, initiated by Internews with support from Google, delivers community-based media literacy in rural areas via journalists and local radio. Simultaneously, the ***New India Literacy Programme*** aims to provide foundational digital and financial literacy to 50 million adults.

Indonesia: Indonesia's ***Siberkreasi*** movement, under the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, is Southeast Asia's largest national digital literacy program. With 60+ partners—including ministries, universities, and tech companies—it targets over 12 million citizens through tiered training modules. Siberkreasi's integration into the national digital roadmap exemplifies how MIL can align with broader development goals (Yuliantini & Suswanta, 2024).

South Korea: South Korea's 2022 policy update introduced MIL into its national curriculum, accompanied by AI-enhanced textbooks and dedicated teacher training. Civil society partners like the Korea Press Foundation co-develop resources, and a legislative push for a ***Media Education Supporting Act*** is underway (UNESCO, 2020).

Philippines: The 2023 nationwide MIL campaign, spearheaded by the Presidential Communications Office, embodies a whole-of-government model. MIL is being integrated into curricula, community outreach, and inter-agency coordination involving education, welfare, and local governance departments. It builds on the legacy of MIL as a senior high school subject and represents one of the most politically endorsed MIL strategies in Asia (Talusan & Santos, 2024).

Japan: Japan has embedded MIL elements across subjects in primary to tertiary education and implemented targeted digital literacy programmes for the elderly. A notable gap is the moderate linkage between MIL and democratic citizenship education, although policy reforms are addressing this (Kajimoto et al., 2020).

Thailand: Thailand introduced MIL through civil society, with support from NGOs, health sectors, and religious organisations since the 1980s. Universities offer MIL content in communication and education departments. The government promotes digital citizenship and online safety through policy but focuses more on digital skills than critical media engagement. Media regulators and public broadcasters conduct MIL outreach. Curriculum reform and national-level policy alignment with UNESCO's holistic MIL approach remain key challenges (Kajimoto et al., 2020).

Malaysia: Malaysia's MIL efforts are rooted in media regulation and ICT education. The Ministry of Education integrates digital skills and ICT usage in curricula, while MIL is taught in teacher training and higher education. Emphasis is on protecting youth from harmful content, often framed within national security and moral guidelines. Government agencies partner with media outlets and universities to promote awareness. However, critical engagement with political or social content is limited due to regulatory constraints. MIL practices lean toward digital competence rather than empowerment and inclusion. The need for holistic, values-based MIL aligned with UNESCO's vision is evident (Kajimoto et al., 2020).

2. VISION, OBJECTIVES, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2.1 Vision

To cultivate a resilient, informed, and empowered society where all Bhutanese citizens can critically access, evaluate, and engage with media and information in ways that uphold democracy, cultural values, and social harmony.

2.2 Objectives

The main objectives of the National MIL Strategy are to provide a clear framework for strengthening digital resilience, democratic participation, and responsible citizenship in the digital age. Specifically, the Strategy seeks to:

- Mainstream MIL into formal, non-formal, and lifelong education systems to promote critical thinking and civic participation.
- Build institutional capacity through governance mechanisms, training systems, and resource allocation to support MIL implementation.
- Ensure equitable access to inclusive, localized, and accessible MIL content across demographic and geographic divides.
- Combat misinformation and disinformation by promoting verification tools, ethical media use, and a culture of digital responsibility.
- Align MIL efforts with national development plans, education reforms, and digital inclusion strategies.

2.3 Guiding Principles

The National MIL Strategy of Bhutan is guided by principles that provide the foundation for building a digitally empowered society where all Bhutanese can participate safely, critically, and responsibly in the information ecosystem.

- **Inclusivity and Accessibility:** MIL must reach all Bhutanese, including marginalized groups, by offering resources in local languages and accessible formats.
- **Lifelong Learning:** MIL should be a continuous process across ages, integrated from early education to adult learning platforms.
- **Cultural Relevance:** Content and pedagogy should reflect Bhutanese values, identity, and local media realities.
- **Evidence-Based and Adaptive:** Policies and programmes should be informed by data, research, and periodic evaluation.
- **Collaboration and Co-Creation:** Multi-stakeholder partnerships, across government, CSOs, youth, media, and private sector, should guide implementation.
- **Ethical Engagement:** Emphasis on compassion, non-harm, respect, and accountability in digital and media spaces.

3. STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

The National MIL Strategy of Bhutan is organized around six interlinked strategic goals that together form a practical and scalable roadmap. Grounded in the vision and objectives of the Strategy, these goals provide the framework for strengthening MIL across Bhutan. They address the key pillars of education, governance, competencies, equitable access, ethical digital engagement, and continuous learning. Each goal is accompanied by specific objectives and implementation strategies designed to translate policy into action, ensuring that MIL becomes an integral part of Bhutan's education system, institutions, communities, and digital ecosystem.

3.1 Goal 1: Build a Media and Information Literate Society through Inclusive and Lifelong Learning

Objectives:

- Embed MIL into formal, non-formal, and lifelong education systems.
- Promote continuous, self-directed digital learning for all citizens.

Strategy

MIL will be institutionalized across Bhutan's education and community systems. From schools to monasteries to NFE, structured curricula and community-led programmes will foster critical thinking and civic engagement. Drawing on the 5Cs framework (Cook & Maksl, 2025), content will integrate comprehension, critique, credibility, civic participation, and content creation—supported by mobile-friendly, low-bandwidth resources. Digital badges, peer networks, and storytelling contests will sustain learner motivation. Libraries and community centres will serve as delivery hubs for diverse learner groups. The curriculum will evolve continuously based on learner feedback and technological shifts.

3.2 Goal 2: Strengthen Institutional Capacity and Governance for Implementation

Objectives:

- Establish a National MIL Coordination Body.
- Integrate MIL into national laws and policy frameworks.

Strategy

Governance will be led by a dedicated National MIL Coordination Body housed under DoMCIIP, MoICE, ensuring alignment across sectors, supported by BMF. MIL mandates will be embedded in existing institutional responsibilities, supported by necessary reforms, sectoral budgets, and inter-agency coordination mechanisms. Focal officers in key institutions will be trained and resourced to lead implementation. This cross-ministerial and multi-agency coordination body will coordinate MIL planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and public communication. Alignment with the Royal Kasho on Education Reform, the Five-Year Plan, the ICM Act 2018, the National Education Policy, and other relevant national media and digital policies will help institutionalise MIL and ensure its long-term sustainability.

3.3 Goal 3: Develop National MIL Competencies and Certification Systems

Objectives:

- Define MIL competencies and proficiency levels for Bhutan.
- Establish assessment and certification systems for learners and educators.

Strategy

A national framework will outline domains and levels of MIL proficiency. Project-based assessments, digital badging, and standardised evaluations will offer formal recognition. Partner institutions like RUB, MoESD, BCSEA, BICMA will support capacity-building and accreditation efforts. Competency rubrics will align with international benchmarks such as UNESCO and DigComp. Certification pathways will be tiered, catering to learners, educators, and professionals. Assessment will include both formative and summative components linked to real-world skills.

3.4 Goal 4: Expand Access to Inclusive and Localized MIL Resources

Objectives:

- Create MIL content in Dzongkha, minority languages, and accessible formats.
- Enable mobile and offline access to MIL in rural areas.

Strategy

Localized multimedia content will be developed with inclusive features such as sign language and voice narration. Mobile teaching units and community-led hubs will reach underserved populations. Libraries, CSOs, and community-based organizations will act as co-creation and dissemination centres. Offline MIL kits and radio-based learning formats will ensure reach in low-connectivity zones. Partnerships with telecom companies will support subsidized data access. Local storytellers and youth groups will adapt content to reflect community realities.

3.5 Goal 5: Promote Ethical Media Use and Combat Misinformation and Disinformation

Objectives:

- Build public capacity to detect and counter misinformation and disinformation.
- Foster ethical online behaviour and civic responsibility.

Strategy

Multilingual verification hubs, AI-supported tools, and educator training will build resilience against misinformation and disinformation. Guided by Cho et al. (2024), the strategy incorporates media deconstruction, ethical content engagement, and counter-narrative creation to empower digital citizenship. Verification curricula will be integrated into schools and public campaigns. Collaboration with BtCIRT, BICMA, and local media houses will amplify accurate narratives. Youth and civil society will drive grassroots awareness and digital ethics outreach.

3.6 Goal 6: Establish Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptive Learning Systems

Objectives:

- Track progress using standardized indicators.
- Enable continuous improvement through feedback and review.

Strategy

An integrated M&E system will be implemented using UNESCO-aligned metrics and digital dashboards. Regular evaluations, community surveys, and participatory reviews will guide adaptive planning, ensuring effectiveness and accountability across implementation stages. Evaluation tools will be developed in collaboration with academic and policy institutions. Annual review forums and a national MIL progress report will capture feedback from implementers and beneficiaries. M&E findings will inform curriculum updates and future revisions of the Strategy.

4. CORE DOMAINS AND COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

The Core Domains and Competency Framework provides the foundation for developing MIL competencies and the National MIL Strategy of Bhutan. It identifies the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values required to navigate today's digital and information environment and serves as a common reference for curriculum development, capacity building, assessment, and implementation across education, government, media, civil society, and communities.

4.1 Core Domains with Competency Areas

The Core Domains with Competency Areas form the foundation of MIL framework, outlining key digital and media literacies needed in today's information landscape. Each domain links to specific competencies and target audiences, ensuring the Strategy is inclusive, context-driven, and adaptable across education and community settings.

4.2 Overarching Skill Strands

The MIL framework includes overarching skill strands from Eshet-Alkalai's model, which cut across all domains. These meta-skills enhance critical thinking, adaptability, and ethical engagement in digital spaces.

Table 1: Core Domains with Competency Areas

Domain	Definition	Competency Clusters	Primary Target Audiences
1. Information and Data Literacy	Recognizing information needs and responsibly locating, evaluating, and using information.	Search strategies and filtering; source evaluation and bias detection; data management; multiformat analysis.	Students, educators, public officials, researchers, CSOs
2. Media Literacy	Understanding the media's role in society and critically analysing and creating media messages.	Deconstructing media messages; identifying bias and framing; analysing visuals and deepfakes; counter-narratives.	Teachers, journalists, content creators, youth, leaders
3. Digital Content Creation	Creating, editing, and sharing digital content while respecting ethical and legal norms.	Multimedia storytelling; ethical content use; copyright and licensing; content impact awareness.	Youth, CSOs, journalists, digital entrepreneurs
4. Communication and Collaboration	Engaging in ethical, inclusive communication and teamwork in digital spaces.	Netiquette and empathy; collaboration tools; conflict resolution; context-sensitive messaging.	Students, teachers, CSOs, online moderators
5. Digital Devices and Software Operations	Using and managing digital technologies for productivity and problem-solving.	Device and software operation; videoconferencing; emerging tech (AI, IoT); troubleshooting issues.	All citizens, especially underserved communities
6. Security and Safety	Protecting oneself and others online and understanding digital rights and responsibilities.	Cyber hygiene; privacy management; cyberbullying prevention; understanding reporting rights.	Students, parents, educators, public servants
7. Problem Solving and Innovation	Leveraging digital tools for critical thinking, innovation, and civic engagement.	Real-time data analysis; civic tech use; gamified learning; data-driven decisions.	Youth, CSOs, entrepreneurs, policy innovators
8. Lifelong Learning	Continuously developing digital skills and adapting to evolving technology environments.	MOOCs participation; digital mentoring; advocacy via social media; content monetization.	Adult learners, teachers, digital professionals

Table 2: Overarching Skill Strands

Skill Strand	Embedded Across Domains
1. Photo-visual Literacy	Interpreting and creating visual media in digital environments
2. Reproduction Literacy	Remixing and reusing digital materials meaningfully
3. Branching Literacy	Navigating hyperlinked, non-linear digital environments
4. Socioemotional Literacy	Ethical interaction and emotional intelligence in online spaces
5. Real-time Thinking	Processing and acting on dynamic digital inputs efficiently

4.3 Cross-Cutting Competency Dimensions

The MIL framework also includes five cross-cutting competency dimensions that integrate technical, cognitive, emotional, creative, and critical skills—ensuring learners apply MIL in real-life, ethically and effectively.

Table 3: Cross-Cutting Competency Dimensions

Dimension	Description
1. Technical-Procedural	Basic operational skills and digital tool use
2. Cognitive	Critical thinking, evaluation, synthesis, and reflection
3. Emotional-Social	Interpersonal communication, empathy, ethical behaviour
4. Creative	Innovation, expression, and design thinking
5. Critical	Power and bias awareness, civic consciousness

4.4 Proficiency Levels

To ensure clarity in learning outcomes, the MIL framework defines three proficiency levels—Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced. These levels provide a progressive roadmap for learners, educators, and institutions to assess growth, tailor instruction, and align competencies with real-world digital demands.

Table 4: Proficiency Levels

Level	Competency Description
1. Basic	Able to perform simple digital tasks, access information, and follow safety protocols.
2. Intermediate	Can independently engage in digital collaboration, evaluate content, and create media responsibly.
3. Advanced	Capable of innovating, training others, leading MIL projects, and influencing digital policy and culture.

4.5 Implementation Pathways

To translate the Strategy into action, targeted implementation pathways have been identified across key sectors. These pathways outline how MIL competencies can be applied, adapted, and scaled through relevant use cases—ensuring sector-specific relevance, intergenerational reach, and long-term impact.

Table 5: Implementation Pathways

Sector	Use Cases
1. Education	Curriculum integration, teacher training, textbook localisation, MIL clubs, and peer learning networks
2. Policy and Governance	National MIL roadmap, integration into Five-Year Plans, policy alignment with digital rights and citizenship laws
3. Community and Youth	Youth fellowships, community media labs, mobile learning kits, peer-led campaigns, and rural digital champions
4. Media and Journalism	Source verification protocols, citizen journalism platforms, ethical reporting standards, and newsroom MIL training
5. Workplace and Economy	Upskilling for digital productivity, data security workshops, content creation for e-commerce, and AI fluency initiatives

5. ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION FRAMEWORK

An effective assessment and certification framework is essential to ensure that MIL competencies are consistently developed, measured, and recognised. This framework provides mechanisms to assess learners' knowledge, skills, and attitudes while promoting lifelong learning and supporting the integration of MIL into education, professional development, and community learning.

5.1 Assessment and Certification Overview

A robust assessment and certification system is vital to measure the effectiveness of MIL learning. This section outlines key tools—from competency rubrics to digital badging—that ensure learners are evaluated fairly and recognised meaningfully. The framework also aligns with global standards to enhance credibility and mobility.

Table 6: Assessment and Certification Overview

Element	Description
1. Competency Rubrics	Structured level-wise rubrics to evaluate performance based on defined MIL proficiency tiers
2. Digital Badging	Issued upon demonstration of competencies in each domain, tracked via a national recognition platform
3. Project-Based Evaluations	Real-world assessments through multimedia content creation, digital portfolios, and civic engagement tasks
4. Alignment with Global Standards	Benchmarked against UNESCO MIL framework and DigComp standards for cross-border skill portability

5.2 Assessment Suggestion

MIL assessment in Bhutan will focus on real-world application, combining global best practices with local relevance. Inspired by initiatives like the Google News Initiative, DataLEADS, AFP, and Reuters MIL programmes, the approach will integrate project-based tasks, digital portfolios, and community engagement to measure both skills and social impact.

- **Project-Based Evaluations and Digital Badging:** Learners will complete capstone projects—such as short videos, blogs, or community campaigns—and compile digital portfolios demonstrating domain-specific competencies. Assessed using national rubrics, learners will earn digital badges as formal recognition, supporting their educational and professional pathways.
- **Verification and Fact-Checking Modules:** Hands-on tasks will train learners to verify images, videos, and news content, focusing on misinformation detection and deepfake identification. Bhutan fact-check initiatives and CSOs will conduct workshops and quizzes using localised case studies. These modules will be integrated into formal MIL programmes and supported by multilingual verification hubs.
- **Empowering Content Creators and Citizen Journalists:** Training will help content creators produce ethical, accurate, and impactful media. Assessments will evaluate originality, accuracy, and community relevance. Mentorship and publishing opportunities will be supported by BMF, CSOs, and media partners.
- **Competency Rubrics and Certification Frameworks:** Standardized rubrics aligned with UNESCO and DigComp frameworks will guide both formative and summative assessments. Learners will be certified at Basic, Intermediate, or Advanced levels, with quality assurance maintained by accredited trainers and institutions.
- **Integration into National Systems:** MIL certification will be aligned with the Bhutan Qualifications Framework (BQF) and recognised by universities, civil society, and the public service sector—ensuring institutional sustainability and value.

6. IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

Implementation requires a phased, multi-agency approach. The timeline below identifies key activities, responsible agencies, indicative timelines, resource requirements, and milestones for translating the Strategy into action.

Table 7: Implementation Timeline and Milestones

Strategic Goal	Action Area	Activity	Lead Agency	Timeline	Resources Needed	Key Milestones
1. Goal 1: Lifelong Learning	Curriculum & Pedagogy	Develop full MIL curriculum and teacher guides	MoESD, BCSEA, RUB, BMF	Q4 2026 – Q4 2028	Curriculum developers, writers/MIL experts	Curriculum drafted and piloted
	ToT Rollout	Train master trainers and educators	DoMCIIP, BMF, MoESD, RUB	Q1 – Q2 2027	Training modules, facilitators	50 trainers certified; 500 educators trained
2. Goal 2: Institutional Capacity and Governance	Cross-sector coordination platform	Establish a National MIL Coordination Body	DoMCIIP, BMF	Q4 2026	Secretariat, Core funding	MoUs signed, platform operational
	Financial alignment	Integrate MIL into 13th FYP	DoMCIIP, MoF, OCAS	Q3 2026 – Q2 2029	Alignment with national planning and budget priorities	MIL reflected in relevant national plans and budgets
	Policy Alignment	Incorporate MIL into Draft National Media and Information Policy	DoMCIIP, MoICE, OCAS	Q2 2027	Legal advisors, policy experts	Legal recognition of MIL
3. Goal 3: Competencies and Certification Systems	AI Competence	Build MIL-AI learning modules	RUB, GovTech Agency, MoESD, BMF	Q1 2026 – Q4 2027	AI experts, workshops	Modules tested with educators
4. Goal 4: Inclusive Access and Localized MIL Resources	Rural Infrastructure	Expand broadband & learning technologies	GovTech Agency, BICMA, Telecos, LG	2027 –2029	Infrastructure, telco support	50% rural digital coverage
	Localized resources	Create MIL content in Dzongkha, minority languages, and accessible formats.	DoMCIIP, BICMA, MoESD, BMF, CSOs, content creators,	Q1 2027 onwards	Funds, trainings	Localized content created and disseminated
5. Goal 5: Ethical Media Use and Combat Misinformation	Awareness Drive	Run national MIL campaigns via media, schools, community	BMF, CSOs, DoMCIIP, media houses	Q4 2026 – Q2 2029	Media slots, design content, sensitization, & celebration of Global MIL Week	70% awareness coverage
6. Goal 6: M&E Systems	M&E Framework	Create indicators, scorecards, certification models	DoMCIIP, MoESD, RUB, BMF	Q4 2026	M&E experts, digital tools	National MIL Reporting launched

7. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Effective implementation requires clear leadership, defined institutional responsibilities, and sustained collaboration among government agencies, educational institutions, media organisations, civil society, communities, and development partners. This framework sets out the principal roles and coordination arrangements for implementation.

7.1 Roles and Responsibilities

This section outlines the specific responsibilities of stakeholders ensuring that each partner contributes meaningfully to a shared national vision for media and information literacy.

7.2 Summary of Strategies

To provide a clear overview of Bhutan's MIL roadmap, this section summarizes the key strategic focus areas and their corresponding objectives. It serves as a high-level snapshot of how the strategy integrates policy, education, infrastructure, community engagement, and evaluation into a unified and actionable national framework.

Table 8: Roles and Responsibilities

Stakeholder	Roles & Responsibilities
1. Department of Media, Creative Industry and Intellectual Property (DoMCIIP)	• Lead the establishment and operationalization of the National MIL Coordination Body. • Align all MIL initiatives with broader national priorities and the existing media and ICT policy frameworks. • Embed MIL funding within government budgets. • Design and execute national MIL awareness campaigns. • Develop inclusive guidelines for accessible MIL content (e.g., Braille, audio formats) and fact-checking protocols. • Implement standardised M&E systems to assess programme effectiveness.
2. Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD)	• Integrate MIL into national curricula. • Develop MIL teaching resources and assessment tools to support classroom delivery. • Conduct ToT programmes for educators and curriculum developers. • Monitor MIL implementation through school-based evaluations and national assessments to track progress and outcomes. • Work with BCSEA and teacher training institutions to ensure effective pedagogical integration. • Align MIL with broader national learning strategies and embed MIL components in the digital skills curriculum. • Prioritize children, women, and educators with strategies addressing digital access and skill gaps.
3. Royal University of Bhutan (RUB)	• Embed MIL modules into degree programmes, particularly in teaching, journalism, and ICT programmes. • Facilitate MIL-related academic research, theses, and innovation projects. • Build faculty capacity and institutionalize MIL outcomes. • Support student-led MIL initiatives.
4. Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority (BICMA)	• Ensure content quality, ethical standards, and digital accessibility across all media formats. • Accredit training institutions, educators, and content providers to maintain national MIL standards. • Support national efforts to advance MIL and critical engagement with media across all population groups. • Coordinate with government agencies, media, educational institutions, and CSOs to align media regulation, content governance, and MIL initiatives under a unified national framework.
5. GovTech Agency	• Improve internet and device access in schools, NFE centres, and rural areas. • Develop e-learning platforms and mobile apps for MIL delivery. • Integrate MIL into national digital citizenship programmes. • Support hybrid delivery models through online/offline infrastructure. • Establish clear guidance on reporting digital harms, misinformation, and violations.
6. Ministry of Health (MoH)	• Embed MIL principles in health campaigns and crisis communications. • Train healthcare professionals on misinformation detection. • Promote screen-time awareness and digital mental health in schools. • Partner with MoESD and relevant actors on cross-sector digital safety education.

Stakeholder	Roles & Responsibilities
7. Bhutan Media Foundation (BMF)	• Support the National MIL Coordination Body through managing logistics, multi-stakeholder coordination, and strategy reviews. • Design, publish, and update standardized MIL toolkits, digital verification guides, and open-access learning platforms. • Deliver competency-based training for educators, journalists, civil society, and youth networks. • Provide mentorship and mobilize funding for community journalists and digital content creators. • Co-create culturally resonant MIL content with youth and creative professionals, using gamification, animation, and digital storytelling. • Collaborate with national media houses to produce and broadcast dedicated MIL programming across platforms.
8. Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD)	• Conduct workshops for youth, women, civil society, and rural communities in local languages. • Facilitate community storytelling and local MIL initiatives. • Distribute inclusive resources through local networks and CSOs. • Bridge grassroots implementation with national strategy through civil society engagement.
9. Journalists' Association of Bhutan (JAB)	• Provide ethics training and workshops on MIL and misinformation detection for journalists. • Support development of a national media ethics curriculum. • Co-lead fact-checking campaigns and citizen journalism programmes. • Mentor young journalists and content creators through MIL-aligned initiatives.
10. Educational Institutions (Schools, Colleges, Institutes)	• Embed MIL across subjects and extracurricular programmes. • Provide professional development workshops for teachers and faculty. • Support clubs, projects, and inter-school competitions related to MIL. • Assess students using national rubrics and share data with MoESD. • Collaborate with CSOs and partners to create rich MIL environments.
11. Media Houses	• Uphold ethical standards and ensure factual integrity in all content. • Host MIL programming including fact-checking segments, shows, and community radio initiatives. • Partner with DoMCIIP and CSOs to reach underserved populations. • Provide platforms for youth voices and citizen storytellers.
12. CSOs and Youth Networks	• Conduct localised MIL training in rural and marginalised communities. • Co-create MIL content with community input for linguistic and cultural relevance. • Train youth leaders and volunteers as MIL facilitators. • Identify digital gaps and pilot inclusion initiatives using feedback loops.

Table 9: Summary of Strategies

Strategic Area	Objective
1. Policy & Governance	Establish a unified, legally backed framework for MIL, with a national coordination body and integration into Bhutan's Five-Year Plans.
2. Education & Training	Institutionalize MIL across formal, non-formal, and lifelong learning systems, with age-appropriate curricula and educator training.
3. Content Creation & Delivery	Develop inclusive, localised, and multimedia MIL content, accessible in Dzongkha, minority languages, and assistive formats.
4. Community Engagement	Activate youth, CSOs, educators, and grassroots actors to lead MIL outreach, storytelling, and peer-to-peer learning.
5. Infrastructure & Access	Invest in ICT infrastructure and hybrid delivery models (online/offline) to bridge the digital divide and promote equity.
6. Evaluation & Accountability	Implement robust M&E frameworks with clear indicators, certification models, and annual review mechanisms.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Effective implementation requires systematic identification, assessment, and management of risks that could affect delivery and sustainability. The framework below identifies principal risks and corresponding mitigation measures.

8.1 Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategy

To ensure sustainability and preparedness, the National MIL Strategy of Bhutan employs two tools:

- **Priority Matrix:** Guides the phased implementation of MIL by identifying high-impact, high-urgency actions. It helps prioritise curriculum integration, infrastructure, policy alignment, and capacity building.
- **Project Risk Matrix:** Identifies key risks—policy delays, funding gaps, outreach challenges—and offers mitigation pathways including legislative advocacy, inter-agency coordination tools, and hybrid content delivery.

Table 10: Priority Matrix

Priority Area	Stakeholder Group(s)	Key Challenges	Recommendations	Priority level	Impact	Notes
1. Digital Literacy & Access	MIL Participants (Rural, Elderly, Disabled)	Limited access, affordability, language and ability barriers	Expand localised MIL content (Dzongkha, sign language), mobile teaching units, offline delivery kits	High	High	Ensure gender, disability, and rural inclusion
2. Curriculum Integration	MIL Practitioners (Educators)	Lack of curriculum, training, resources	Develop Bhutan-specific curriculum, teacher manuals, ToT programmes; include primary to tertiary levels	High	High	Pilot-based approach in phases
3. Policy & Governance	MIL Policymakers	Fragmented platforms, lack of legal framework	Establish national MIL coordination platform, integrate into Five Year Plan and national laws	High	High	Needs cross-sector consensus
4. Verification & Trust	All Stakeholders	Misinformation, lack of verification tools	Strengthen Bhutan Fact-check, create accessible multilingual verification hubs	Medium	High	Tie in with BBS and official portals
5. AI Literacy & Emerging Tech	Practitioners, Policymakers	Limited AI awareness and ethics frameworks	Develop AI literacy modules and ethical AI use guidelines, integrate in teacher training	Medium	High	Proactive area of future risk
6. Inclusive Content Outreach	Women, PwDs, Rural Populations	Low reach, lack of customized content	Community-led co-creation, mobile units, assistive content formats	High	Medium	Requires local partnerships
7. Capacity Building	Practitioners, CSOs	Budget and HR constraints	Allocate budget lines, train focal MIL officers, technical capacity support	High	High	Base for sustainability
8. Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)	DoMCIIP, MoESD, BMF	No national MIL metrics or feedback loops	Develop indicators, certification standards, adaptive M&E systems	Medium	Medium	Feed into future strategy refinement

Table 11: Project Risk Matrix

Risk Category	Is there a risk? (Yes/No)	Description of Risk	Risk Mitigation Measures
1. Policy Adoption and Legal Framework	Yes	Delay or failure to adopt the MIL Strategy into formal policy or integrate into the 13th FYP may block budget access and national rollout.	Strengthen advocacy with Parliamentarians and OCAS; ensure alignment with constitutional rights and education law.
2. Inter-agency Coordination	Yes	Ambiguity in roles among BMF, BICMA, MoESD, and DoMCIIP may lead to duplication and inefficiency.	Use a clear MoU and RACI matrix to define agency responsibilities and coordination protocols.
3. Curriculum Development	Yes	National curriculum integration may lag behind strategic finalization, delaying school-level implementation.	Begin with interim MIL modules and parallel curriculum testing; engage BCSEA early in design.
4. Financial Sustainability	Yes	Risk of insufficient long-term funding or reliance on short-term donor grants.	Secure allocation in the 13th FYP and explore PPPs and donor support for CSOs and training hubs.
5. Outreach to Marginalized Groups	Yes	Risk of MIL not being accessible to people with disabilities, linguistic minorities, or rural communities.	Develop inclusive formats (e.g., sign language, oral content); co-create with grassroots CSOs and pilot rural outreach labs.
6. Civil Society and Youth Engagement	Yes	Under-utilization of CSOs and youth could undermine grassroots ownership and scale.	Launch MIL Youth Fellowship and CSO Engagement Hub for co-creation, training, and content validation.
7. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)	Yes	Absence of a formal M&E framework may hinder tracking and impact assessment.	Apply UNESCO MIL indicators; integrate data collection with NSB surveys; establish certification benchmarks.
8. Digital Infrastructure	Yes	Limited internet or tech access in rural areas can restrict MIL participation.	Use hybrid models (radio, offline content, mobile outreach units); partner with telcos for subsidized access.

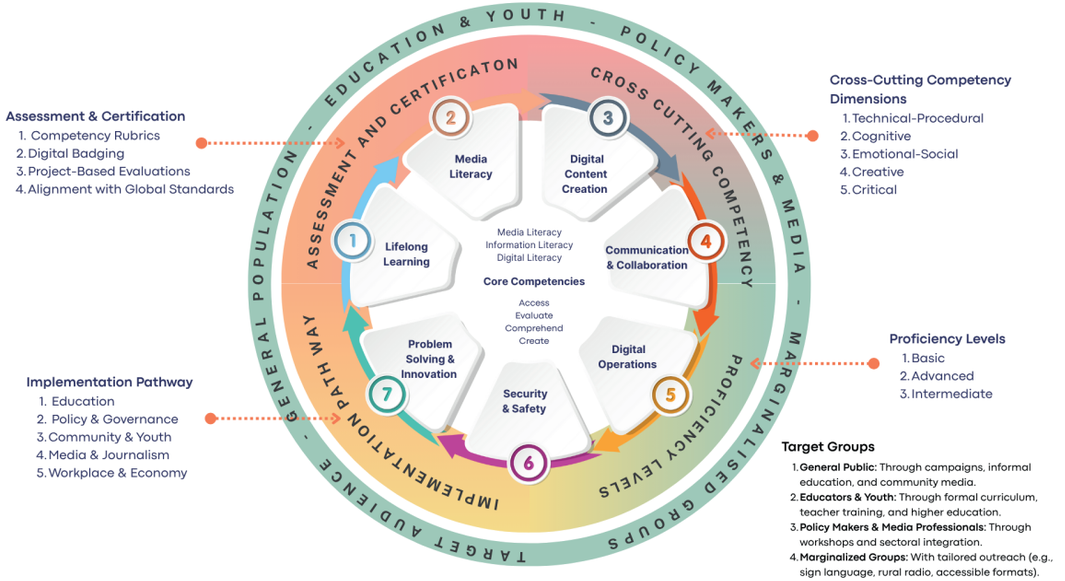

Figure 1: Media and Information Literacy Action Model

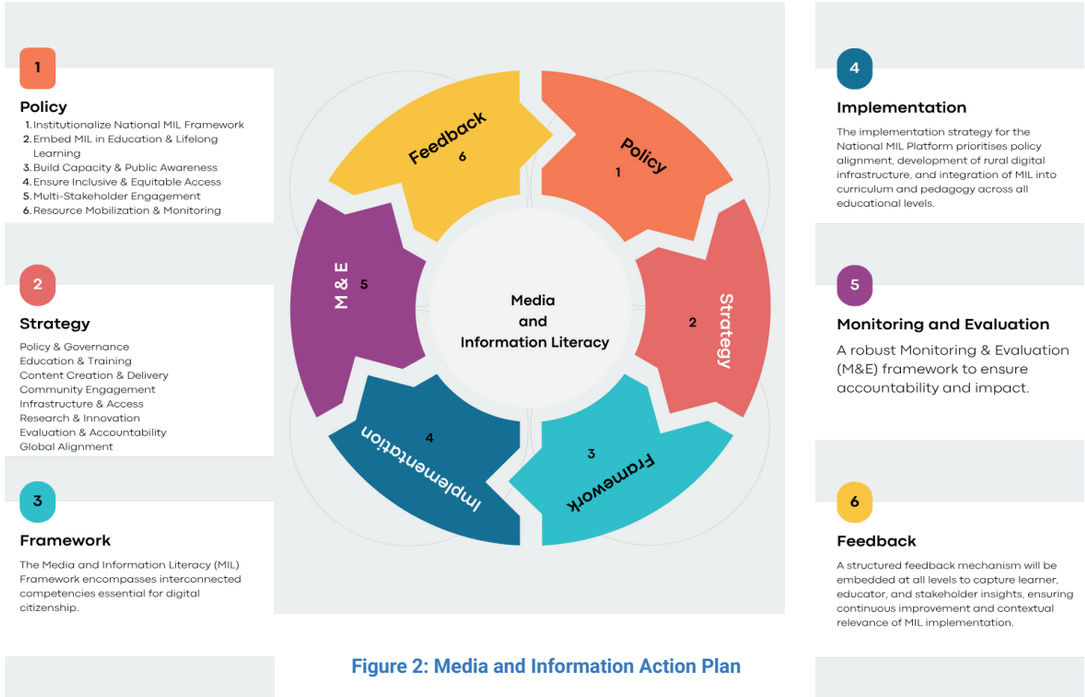

Figure 2: Media and Information Action Plan

9. PRIORITY MATRIX

The Priority Matrix provides a forward-looking framework for strengthening and sustaining Bhutan's MIL ecosystem. It identifies emerging opportunities, strategic directions, and long-term actions needed to expand MIL beyond initial interventions and establish it as a core national capability. The focus is on scalability, inclusion, technological adaptation, and institutional sustainability to ensure that all Bhutanese can participate confidently and responsibly in the digital society.

9.1 Key Ideas and Future Directions

Building on successful pilot models, the National MIL Strategy of Bhutan envisions nationwide rollout and institutional embedding through the following forward-looking pathways:

- **Scalability:** Pilot experiences and lessons learned will be documented to inform replication across dzongkhags and gewogs, adapting to local needs and capacities.
- **Cybersecurity and Digital Awareness:** Future modules will integrate online safety, fraud detection, and content verification, developed in collaboration with law enforcement and tech partners.
- **Advanced Financial Literacy:** With increasing use of digital payments, MIL will include modules on UPI, mobile banking, and financial protection—especially for low-income households.
- **Women-Centric Tools:** Targeted training on mobile apps and digital services for women and girls will be delivered via health workers, CSOs, and women's groups.
- **Paperless Governance:** MIL will support Bhutan's digital governance transition, helping families access services online and promoting paperless panchayat operations.
- **Digital Gram Sabhas:** Community-level governance meetings will be digitized to increase participation from citizens, including those living abroad.

- **Youth Skilling and Startups:** Public-private partnerships and CSR funds will support digital hubs focused on emerging technologies, coding, AR/VR, and entrepreneurship.
- **Library Innovation:** Public libraries will be revitalized as digital literacy hubs, equipped with e-resources, internet access, and local orientation sessions.
- **Inclusive Tech Policies:** Bhutan's ICT policy will emphasize multilingual content, assistive technology, and remote service delivery, ensuring no one is left behind.

These future directions are anchored in Bhutan's values of equity, community well-being, and compassionate leadership. Together, they aim to transform Bhutan into a resilient, informed, and digitally empowered society.

9.2 Integration and Sustainability

Sustaining the impact of the National MIL Strategy of Bhutan requires alignment with national priorities, institutional mandates, and long-term community engagement. This section outlines a roadmap to embed MIL as a lasting national capability.

9.2.1 Alignment with National Frameworks

MIL reinforces Bhutan's key development goals:

- Royal Kasho on Education Reform emphasizes critical thinking and civic values, which MIL supports through ethical media use and content verification.
- 13th Five-Year Plan focuses on digital transformation and inclusive education, providing a platform for MIL integration.
- National Education Policy emphasises twenty-first-century competencies, including digital literacy, critical thinking, civic participation, and the ability to assess and use information effectively.
- Kingdom of Bhutan Digital Economy Development and Transformation Strategy promotes digital inclusion, digital skills, and safe and responsible participation in digital spaces.
- MIL reflects GNH values by bridging digital divides and encouraging informed, compassionate digital participation.

9.2.2 Institutionalization in Policy and Governance

To institutionalize MIL:

- A National MIL Coordination Body under the DoMCIIP, MoICE will guide implementation and inter-agency coordination.
- MIL mandates will be embedded in DoMCIIP, MoESD, RUB, BICMA, and CSOs through formal agreements.
- Budget lines will be included in sectoral and national plans to ensure sustainable financing.

9.2.3 Capacity-Building and Continuity

To ensure sustainability:

- Focal officers will be trained across agencies.
- MIL will be included in teacher training, university programs, and media education.
- A phased rollout will begin with pilot testing, allowing for feedback-based adjustments.
- A national certification system will formally recognize MIL competencies.
- An Annual National MIL Reporting will be instituted.

9.2.3 Inclusive and Intergenerational Implementation

MIL will be accessible to all:

- Delivered through schools, community centers, monasteries, and CSO-led outreach.
- Targeted programs for rural communities and minorities.
- Youth-led intergenerational learning like training elders is inspired by Kerala's successful model.

9.2.4 Digital Inclusion and Technological Adaptation

To close access gaps:

- MIL content will be low-bandwidth, offline-friendly, and multilingual.
- GovTech Agency and telco partnerships will improve connectivity and device access.

- Digital hubs and mobile units will ensure rural outreach.
- Content will evolve to cover AI ethics, platform accountability, and digital safety.

9.2.5 Community Ownership and Partnerships

To strengthen local engagement:

- Youth, CSOs, and libraries will lead campaigns and training.
- Media and startups will co-create and disseminate MIL content.
- A multi-stakeholder model will embed MIL as both a learning goal and a lived community practice.

Annexure I: Core Writing Group and Reviewers

Core Writing Group

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Annexure II: Stakeholders Consulted

1. National Council of Bhutan
2. National Assembly of Bhutan
3. DoMCIIP, MoICE
4. Royal Institute of Management
5. BICMA
6. Royal University of Bhutan
7. Department of Education Programmes, MoESD
8. Department of School Education, MoESD
9. GovTech Agency
10. Zhung Dratshang
11. Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health
12. ROM Tech
13. Bhutan Telecom Ltd
14. Starlink Services Pvt. Ltd
15. Nano
16. Journalists' Association of Bhutan
17. Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy
18. Disabled People's Organization of Bhutan
19. Handicraft Association of Bhutan
20. Bhutan Transparency Initiative
21. Evaluation Association of Bhutan
22. Bhutan Kidney Foundation
23. Taxi Association of Bhutan
24. BCCI
25. Royal Thimphu College
26. Motithang HSS
27. Pelkhil HSS
28. Druk School
29. Yangchenphug HSS
30. Business Bhutan
31. Gyalchi Sarshog
32. Bhutan Times
33. Kuensel
34. BBS
35. Kuzoo FM
36. iBest Institute
37. KW International
38. Farmers' Group

Annexure III: Situation Analysis of MIL in Bhutan

To inform a targeted and responsive national policy framework, the National MIL Strategy of Bhutan is grounded in a multi-method evidence base developed between April and December 2025. The evidence-gathering process combined a review of national and international literature, a nationwide online survey that received 369 valid responses and three stakeholder consultations involving 51 participants. Together, these sources provide quantitative and qualitative insights into digital access and use, media consumption, information behaviours, awareness and practice of MIL, institutional capacity, and key priorities for strengthening Bhutan's MIL ecosystem.

The findings provide the basis for identifying existing strengths, gaps, challenges, and opportunities and for informing the strategic priorities and actions of the National MIL Strategy. Findings from the online survey and stakeholder consultations were subsequently presented and reviewed during validation workshops involving 32 representatives from key stakeholder groups. The validation process helped assess the relevance of the findings and inform the priorities and recommendations of the National MIL Strategy.

1.1 Online Survey Analysis Summary: MIL in Bhutan

1.1.1 Introduction and Methodology

To inform the development of the National MIL Strategy of Bhutan, a nationwide online survey was conducted to assess the current state of MIL among three key stakeholder groups: the general public (MIL participants), MIL practitioners, and policymakers. The survey explored digital access, media consumption patterns, information behaviours, awareness and practice of MIL, institutional capacity, and priorities for strengthening the national MIL ecosystem.

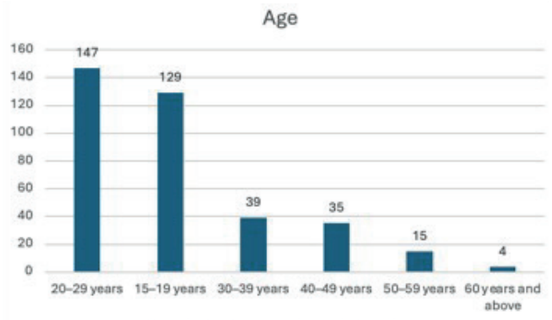
Using a quota sampling approach, the survey initially targeted 200 respondents across 16 occupational groups and received 369 valid responses (188 female, 181 male), exceeding the target sample size. Students were the largest group (198), reflecting a predominantly youth-focused respondent base, followed by teachers and educators (33), highlighting the survey's relevance to educational contexts, private-sector employees (25), and government officials (21). Media professionals (22) and CSO/NGO workers (14) were represented in smaller numbers, alongside unemployed persons (11), self-employed individuals (11), farmers (10), and local government representatives (7). The smallest groups were ICT professionals (6), retired individuals (5), homemakers (3), telecommunications regulators (2), and religious leaders (2). These variations in representation were taken into account during the analysis.

The three sampling groups were defined as:

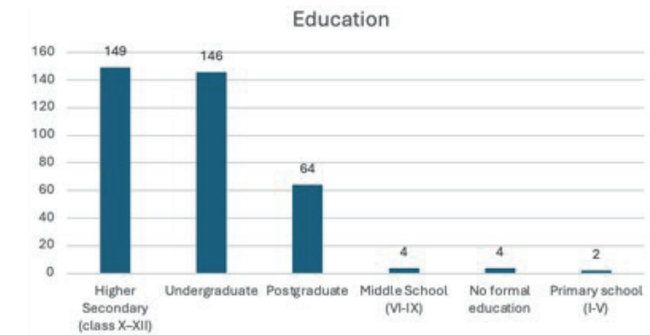
- **General public (MIL participants):** 262 students, retired individuals, homemakers, unemployed persons, farmers, self-employed individuals (shopkeepers, artisans, taxi drivers), private-sector employees.
- **MIL practitioners:** 76 media professionals, educators (primary to tertiary and non-formal), CSO workers, ICT professionals, and religious/monastic educators.
- **MIL policymakers:** 31 government officials, local government representatives, and telecom/ICT regulators.

The respondent profile reflects a predominantly young, digitally connected population: most were aged 20–29 years of age, followed by 15–19, with representation declining sharply past age 60.

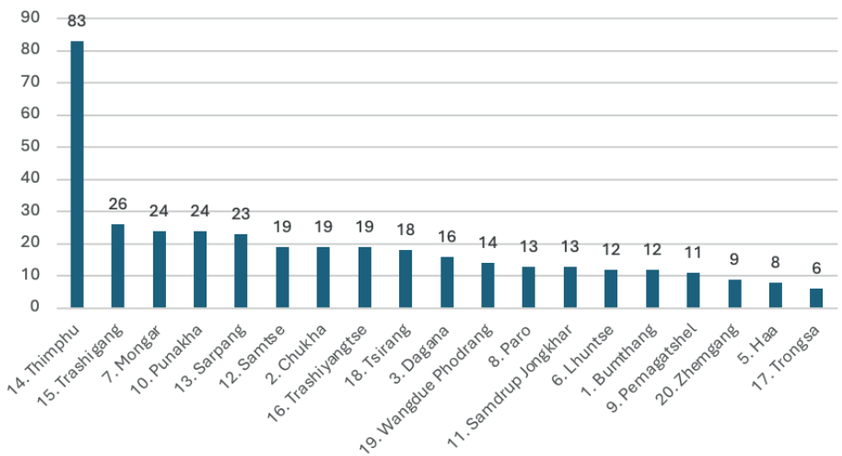
Respondents were generally well educated (most had completed higher secondary or undergraduate education) and urban-concentrated, particularly Thimphu, followed by Trashigang, Mongar and Punakha, while Haa and Trongsa recorded the fewest respondents, with 8 and 6 respectively.



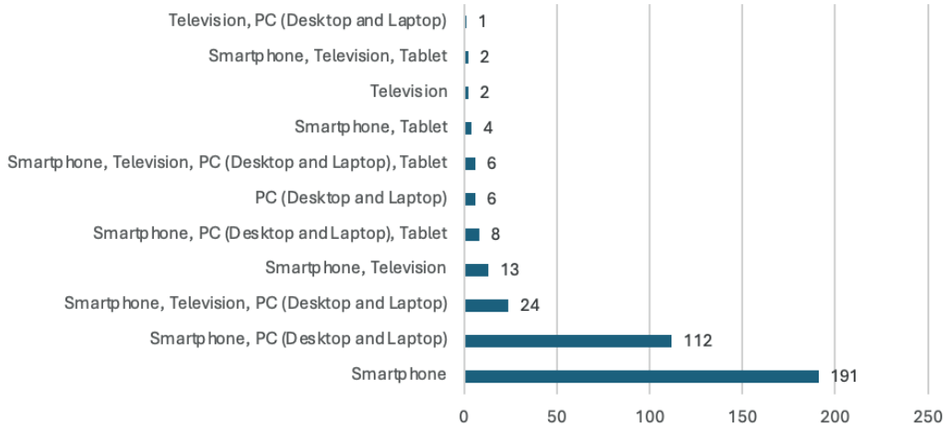
Graph 1. Respondents' Profile



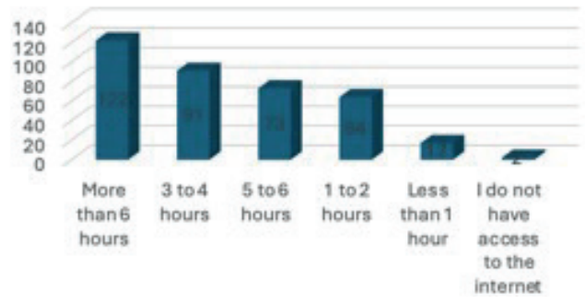
Graph 2. Education



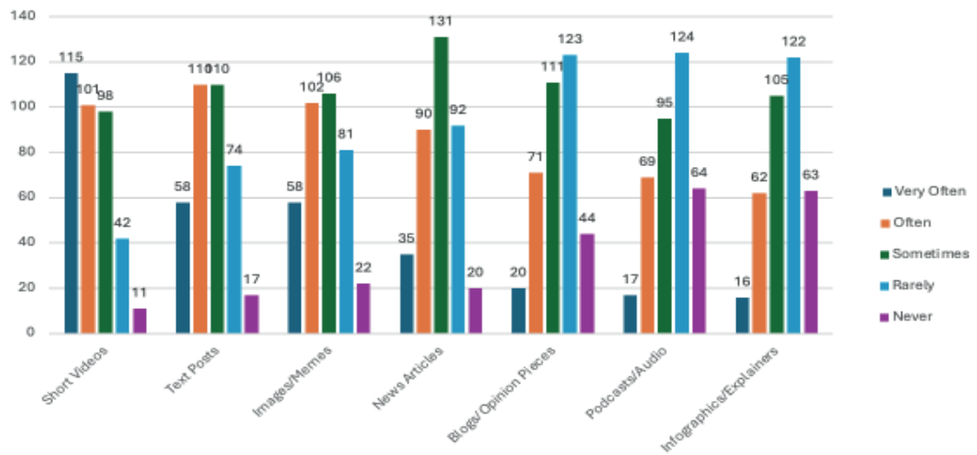
Graph 3: Domicile



Graph 4: Digital media usage behaviour



Graph 5: Time spent on the Internet



Graph 6: Time spent on Digital Content

1.1.2 Digital and Media Access

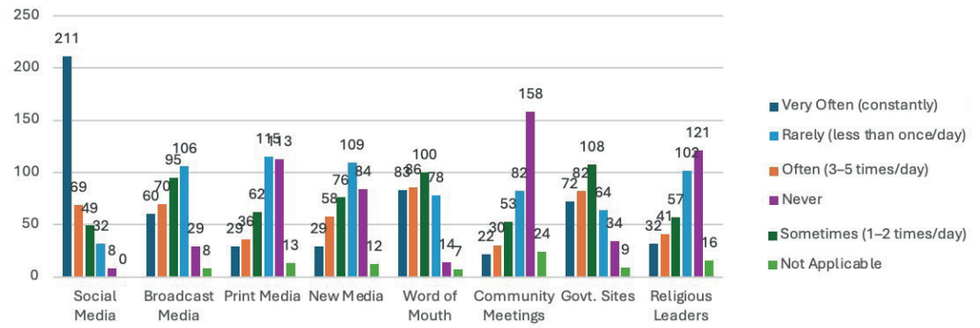
Smartphones dominate media consumption: 191 respondents (51.8%) rely on smartphones exclusively, 112 (30%) combine smartphones with desktops/ laptops, and further 24 (6.5%) using smartphones in combination with televisions and PCs. Only 6 respondents (1.6%) rely on PCs exclusively, and even fewer (2–4 respondents) use only tablets or televisions. Overall, the findings reveal a mobile-first environment where smartphones serve as the primary gateway to information, while tablets and televisions play secondary roles.

Additionally, 94% of respondents have regular internet access, three-fourths using it for over 3 hours a day—reflecting a highly digitally active population. Short-form videos (Reels, TikTok) are the most consumed content type, followed by text posts and images/ memes. In contrast, news articles are consumed only "sometimes," while blogs, podcasts, and infographics are the least accessed, pointing to a strong preference for short, visual, easily digestible content.

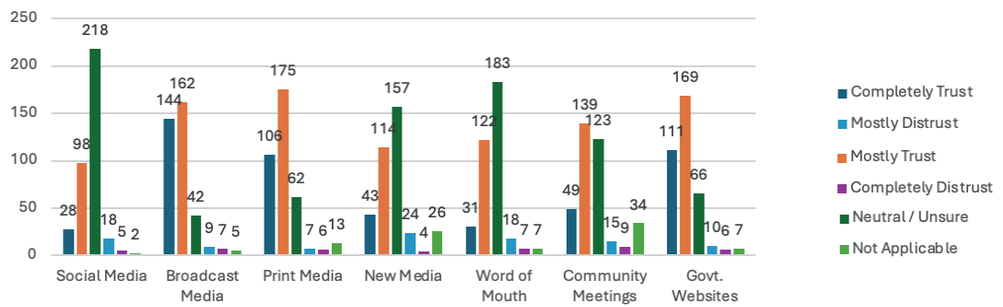
While 53% report no barriers to accessing media and information, 13% cite "no electricity or internet," highlighting infrastructural limitations, 11% identified a digital skills gap, and 4% a lack of devices.

1.1.3 Sources of News and Information

Respondents primarily rely on social media platforms for news and information, with over three-quarters using them frequently. Broadcast media and government websites remain important sources. Print media shows declining usage, while new media (podcasts, OTT) is emerging but not yet widely adopted. Word of mouth is a strong informal channel, whereas community meetings and religious leaders are less commonly used for regular information. Overall, news consumption is digital-first, with a mix of official and interpersonal sources shaping trust and access.



Graph 7: Sources of news and information



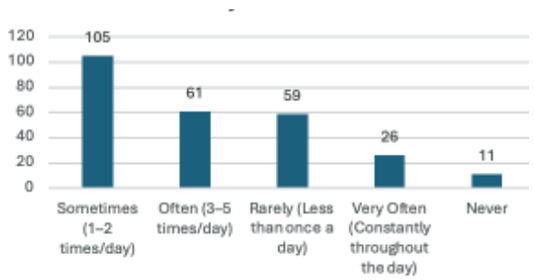
Graph 8: Sources of news and trust

However, trust patterns differ from usage patterns. Respondents report the highest confidence in print media, broadcast media, and government websites, with a clear majority rating them as mostly or completely trustworthy. Word of mouth and community meetings also command high trust, highlighting the enduring value of local and interpersonal networks. In contrast, social media and new media platforms receive more neutral or uncertain responses, reflecting widespread skepticism. Ultimately, while news access has shifted overwhelmingly toward digital spaces, public trust remains anchored in traditional and official institutions.

1.1.4 MIL Attitude and Experiences

1.1.4.1 MIL Participants (General Public)

Verifying Information: 63.4% of MIL participants reported that they verify information either "sometimes" (40.1%) or "often" (23.3%). However, only 9.9% reported verifying information "very often," suggesting that habitual information verification remains limited. A further 26.7% reported verifying information "rarely" or "never." Most who do verify rely on official sources and search engines; dedicated fact-checking tools remain underused, pointing to a gap in awareness of verification resources rather than willingness to verify. The relatively low proportion of frequent verifiers highlights the need to strengthen MIL to promote more consistent information verification.



Graph 9: Verify information

Awareness of Responsible and Ethical Sharing: Overall awareness of responsible and ethical information sharing is moderate, with 37.2% reported being "somewhat aware" and 25.7% considered themselves "moderately aware", and 21.4% "slightly aware." Only 12.6% reported being "fully or very aware." This highlights the need for stronger and more practical education on ethical sharing, focusing on accuracy, content appropriateness, and the consequences of sharing harmful or misleading information.

Exposure to MIL and Awareness Initiatives: Schools and colleges were the primary source of exposure to MIL awareness initiatives, reported by 55% of respondents. It was followed by online platforms (7%), community/NGO initiatives (4%), and public awareness campaigns (3%). 22% reported no exposure at all, and 9% were unsure. Overall, the findings highlight the important role of educational institutions in promoting MIL awareness, however, informal and digital spaces appear to remain underutilised. Expanding outreach through online content, community engagement, civil society initiatives, and public campaigns could broaden access to MIL education beyond formal settings.

Preferred Formats for MIL Learning: School or university classes emerged as the most preferred format, appearing in more than 60% of response combinations, suggesting strong trust in formal education as a foundation for building MIL competencies. Short videos were the second most preferred format—often selected alongside school-based learning, mobile applications, and community-based formats, highlighting the potential of bite-sized, engaging, and platform-native content for promoting MIL. Community workshops and youth clubs appeal to about 25%, particularly relevant for rural and out-of-school populations. Printed Dzongkha/local-language guides (7 mentions) and audio content (6 mentions) serve smaller but important niches—older populations and low-connectivity areas. Overall, the findings support a blended approach combining formal education and short-form digital content with community-based, mobile, print, and audio formats to reach diverse population groups across Bhutan.

1.1.4.2 MIL Practitioners

Understanding of MIL: Most of the practitioners demonstrated a nuanced understanding of MIL, viewing it as encompassing access to information, critical evaluation, responsible creation and sharing, societal impact, privacy, and civic participation.

MIL Training: Among the MIL practitioners, 41% were aware of MIL training or workshops but had not attended, while 20% had never heard of such opportunities. About 35% had participated in some form of MIL training, including comprehensive training (18%) and short or informal sessions (17%). Overall, awareness of MIL training is relatively high, but participation remains limited, suggesting gaps in access and training opportunities.

Facilitation of MIL: A majority of respondents (67%) had not yet delivered or facilitated MIL content. Among them, 35% expressed interest in doing so, while 32% did not plan to facilitate MIL. Meanwhile, 24% had some facilitation experience, including 18% who facilitated occasionally and 6% regularly. Overall, the findings indicate a relatively small core of active MIL facilitators, suggesting that structured and sustained MIL facilitation remains emerging and underdeveloped in this context.

MIL Resources Used: The BMF's Social Media Literacy Modules (2021) were the most widely used official resource among MIL practitioners, followed by organisational materials and JAB's Combating Disinformation: A Toolkit (2022). The UNESCO MIL Curriculum, despite its international recognition and comprehensive framework, appeared to be less utilised, possibly reflecting limited awareness or contextual adaptation. The frequent use of self-curated online materials also indicates demand for flexible, updated, and supplementary resources to address emerging topics and gaps in existing toolkits.

1.1.4.3 MIL Policymakers

Engagement with MIL: Most organisations are aware of MIL and engaged in policy and regulatory areas, however, programme implementation and content development lag behind. This suggests a need to formalise and consolidate MIL-related activities that may currently be occurring informally across sectors. Targeted support through capacity-building, content co-creation, and cross-sectoral collaboration could strengthen organisational engagement in MIL.

Value of MIL: Civic participation, misinformation, and digital safety are the top recognised areas where MIL adds value. MIL is seen as a cross-cutting enabler of governance, public discourse, and trust, with room to link it more explicitly to Bhutan's SDGs and GNH narratives by making these connections more explicit in strategy and communication.

Legal and Ethical: Legal and ethical awareness is an important dimension of MIL in Bhutan. MIL efforts are increasingly aligned with national media and communication laws, including the ICM Act 2018. Awareness of digital harms, child online safety, privacy, and content regulation is growing, although greater institutional clarity on cross-sectoral policies is needed. The "Not sure" responses highlight the need for legal and ethical literacy training, particularly among stakeholders beginning to integrate MIL into their work.

Barriers: Organisations face a range of barriers to the effective implementation and promotion of MIL. The most frequently reported response was "Moderate Barrier"—digital access gaps (20 respondents), lack of technical/curricular expertise (17), limited M&E tools (16), and lack of formal policy/mandate or cross-ministry coordination (15 each). Few respondents rated any barriers "critical"—Cross-ministry coordination (1), funding or human resources (1), technical or curricular expertise (1). This indicates that while these issues are serious, they are not yet seen as insurmountable or urgent by most respondents.

Support needed for MIL: There is a strong demand for training and orientation (21 mentions), followed by dedicated budget/funding (17), CSO/academic partnerships (13), practical toolkits and frameworks (9), and cross-government coordination mechanisms (7).

Collaboration: 53% of organisations reported no MIL-related collaboration in the past three years, while 47% reported some collaboration, indicating an underdeveloped but promising network. Enhancing inter-organisational collaboration could be a key lever to advance MIL efforts nationally.

Priorities for Bhutan's National MIL Strategy: The findings identify public awareness and resilience-building (30%), monitoring and evaluation of MIL programmes (23%), integration of MIL into formal education (20%), and regulating online platforms and digital content (20%) as key priorities for Bhutan's National MIL Strategy over the next three years.

Institutionalisation of MIL: The findings indicate strong support for clear institutional mechanisms to coordinate and advance MIL. Integrating MIL into existing digital transformation efforts was the most preferred option (13 mentions), followed by establishing a dedicated institutional lead, such as a lead ministry or specialised unit (11 mentions), to ensure accountability and coordination. Organisational MIL task forces (11 mentions) and multi-agency working groups (8 mentions) were also identified as important mechanisms for strengthening cross-sectoral collaboration.

2.2 Stakeholder Consultation Report: Qualitative Insights

To complement the quantitative survey, three targeted stakeholder consultations were held with 51 representatives from media users (17), MIL practitioners (18), and policymakers (16). The consultations explored how different groups access, evaluate, and use information, while identifying challenges related to misinformation, digital literacy, media trust, and access to credible content. The findings provided evidence-based recommendations for strengthening Bhutan's MIL ecosystem through coordinated policies, education, public awareness, and institutional collaboration.

2.2.1 Perspectives of MIL Participants

The consultation with learners and media users confirmed a heavy daily reliance on highly social media platforms, specifically TikTok, YouTube, and WeChat. A critical finding was that trust in online information is heavily driven by peer recommendations, emotional resonance, or a post's popularity rather than verified sources, while fact-checking tools and official portals are rarely used. Participants showed limited awareness of formal MIL concepts and marked vulnerability to scams, fraud, and misinformation. Language and generational barriers, compounded by inconsistent rural connectivity, further limit elderly and non-English speakers.

Recommendations: Introduce foundational MIL through community campaigns and school curricula, create localised verification tools and Dzongkha-language resources, develop content as short videos, animated explainers, and gamified lessons.

2.2.2 Perspectives of MIL Practitioners

The consultation with media professionals, educators, CSO workers, ICT professionals unanimously recognised MIL not as an optional technical skill, but as fundamental to promoting informed citizenship, democratic participation, and responsible engagement with media and information. Journalists emphasised their ethical duty to produce verified, balanced, and inclusive content, while educators called for formal integration of MIL into school curricula from the primary level, supported by context-specific and interactive learning materials.

Practitioners, however, highlighted significant institutional and structural bottlenecks: no standardised teaching resources, limited access to training, and difficulty adapting content for rural communities and persons with disabilities. Interest in AI and emerging technology is growing, but many acknowledge limited knowledge of their responsible application in education and journalism.

Recommendations: Develop localised MIL curricula and materials; establish national Training-of-Trainers programmes; expand online and community outreach; strengthen technical capacity to produce verified and inclusive content; and deepen collaboration with CSOs and local influencers.

2.2.3 Perspectives of Policymakers

The consultation with government officials, parliamentarians, and regulators recognised MIL as a national development priority, not merely an education issue. MIL is viewed as essential for strengthening governance, democratic participation, public trust, and digital resilience. Despite this recognition, policymakers identified institutional and policy challenges, including the absence of a dedicated coordinating mechanism, limited awareness among decision-makers, fragmented policies, weak inter-agency collaboration, difficulties integrating MIL into national development plans, and limited dedicated funding.

Recommendations: Institutionalise MIL through clear policy, integrate it into the Five-Year Plans, secure sustained budget lines and legal frameworks, strengthen multi-sectoral coordination, address AI literacy and governance within the MIL framework.

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