
Global MIL Youth Online Hackathon & 4-Week Follow up Programme Report 2018

CONTEXT

Within the framework of UNESCO's thematic action, Pluralistic media institutions are facilitated, including by adoption of gender-sensitive policies and through support for strengthened community media policy and practice, while citizens, and particularly youth, are empowered through enhanced media and information literacy (MIL) competencies.

It is essential to bring youth voices to the fore and to encourage young people to take action. To speak of meaningful youth engagement is to develop inclusive partnerships with them, involving them and their organisations in all aspects of programme planning, development, execution and monitoring/evaluation.

In the framework of the UNESCO's Youth Spaces Initiative, under the supervision of Alton Grizzle and in close consultation and collaboration with UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector, Global Media and Information Literacy Youth Hackathon project was designed and coordinated by the Individual Consultant Ms. Aleksandra Mangus (Bodekhina) (Vendor number 4500381421).

Global Media and Information Literacy Youth Hackathon project was a 3-day online event introduced in the framework of the Global MIL Week 2018, supported by UNESCO, with an objective to engage young audiences in a new form of a collaborative and results-oriented activity, while also educating these audiences about MIL.

Several international partners supported and collaborated on this project to create and boost awareness of the hackathon: UNESCO MIL Programme and UNESCO MILCLICKS, Global Student Square (USA), University of Latvia, Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania) and Tampere University (Finland). The hackathon was conducted fully online in English and the participation was open for all young people from anywhere in the world that qualified to their country-specific age criteria for youth - a requirement introduced by the UNESCO MIL team to keep the focus on their young audiences.

The hackathon was organised online between October 24th and 26th, 2018, involving more than 80 remote participants from 23 different countries, and resulted in 13 team projects, 9 of which were chosen by a committee of UNESCO and invited GAPMIL representatives to continue on to a follow-up 4-week programme funded by UNESCO Youth Spaces Initiative. The aim of the programme was to develop the teams' projects further and prepare the Concept Note document (CN) to be presented to the evaluation committee for final selection and funding.

Objective and alignment with the YSI framework/criteria

The Hackathon has been designed in line with the UNESCO Youth Spaces Initiative (YSI) vision of an enabling environment where young women and men are actors and partners in finding solutions to the issues they face.

The main aim of the hackathon, was to become an activity that would engage online audiences and produce feasible results with a long-term vision - concepts of new products and services that have potential to solve current societal challenges related to media and information literacy.

METHODOLOGY/PROCEDURE OF THE HACKATHON

Before the hackathon

The preparation period for GlobalMILHack started in May 2018 and lasted until the start of the event in late October. It involved:

- selecting and defining the most relevant issues connected with media and information literacy;
- opening a call for registrations for the hackathon via a press release on UNESCO official website;
- building a website with the necessary information about the event and the online sign-up form to collect the registrations;

The Individual Consultant, Professor Sirkku Kotilainen from Tampere University and the UNESCO MIL Programme team agreed on the possible themes for the hackathon challenges - the three key issues, in which MIL play a big role:

- 1) Children and Youth in Media
- 2) Disinformation
- 3) Media Immigrants

and two opportunity areas that concern MIL:

- 4) Sustainable Development Goals
- 5) Dialogue

For each of these five challenges a brief description was written and displayed on the website along with corresponding links to an online registration form. Website constructor [wix.com](https://www.wix.com) was used for building and hosting of the website. The website visitors were invited to choose one challenge out of the five and register via the form. The form was built with Google Forms cloud software and recorded demographic data about the participants, their professional background and reasons for joining the hackathon. The official call for registrations was made with the published press release on the official website of UNESCO on October 4th (UNESCO, 2018) and the followed social media posts on Facebook and Twitter. At the same time a Facebook event to promote the hackathon was created to promote the hackathon in social media. Registrations for the hackathon were accepted until the deadline 23:59 CET on 21st of October 2018 and then were exported to an Excel sheet and screened for age criteria. The screening process resulted in accepting 72 registrations out of 88 that came in before the deadline. Applicants whose age was above the stated criteria and whose background has shown substantive professional experience in media, information technology and education were invited to participate as mentors to the teams. Instead of assigning them to a team, they were asked to provide the facilitator with the time slots during the days of the hackathon when the teams would be able to contact them for advice via email.

The accepted registrants were informed of the selection results and of their assigned challenge and team via email on the same day. Those emails also invited the recipients to join their respective team chats on Facebook Messenger by clicking on the link inside the email. Overall, 20 teams were formed by the start of the hackathon and each team had own Facebook Messenger team chat that included five people on average and allowed sharing multimedia content as well as audio and video group calls. The Individual Consultant personally facilitated and monitored the chat conversations, answered requests and provided daily agendas for teams to work on.

During the hackathon, the Methodology

The hackathon followed a scenario which is outlined in the Double Diamond Design Process Model. The double diamond diagram was developed through in-house research at the Design Council in 2005 as a simple graphical way of describing the design process (Design Council, 2008). The model is presented in the figure 2 below:

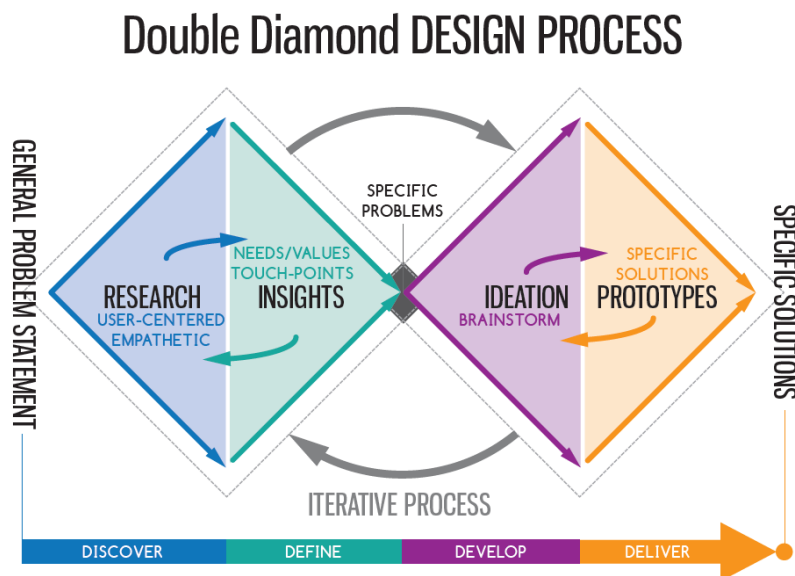


Figure 2. Double Diamond Design Process Model (Source: Service Design Vancouver)

In Double Diamond Design Process Model the design starts with posing general problem statement - the challenge that represents the main theme and problem connected to it. In this sense GlobalMILHack had five general problem statements expressed in the five above listed challenges. Each of those five challenges had a challenge description presented to the teams on the 1st day of the hackathon in the form of an online Google Document. The descriptions were more detailed than on the ones on the website, but general enough leaving enough space for individual interpretation by the participants. The reason for this was that the participants had to discuss the challenge theme with their team members and share their own perspective on the case. Teams had to diverge their the views on the problem, share opinions and experiences, look for more data on the problem, collect and sort the information. The aim was to make the participants gain a transcultural understanding of the problem on a bigger scale. This corresponded with the first stage of the Double Diamond Model - *research*.

The second stage of the DD design model represents *insights* and requires convergent thinking about the problem, narrowing down to very specific problems including local-level perspective of the problem. Here the teams had to decide on the particular audience and its pain point which they were going to address in their project. The assignment that followed this stage was a fill-in Google form where they had to give their own team interpretation of the challenge from the bigger perspective and explain which specific problem in particular and on which level are they going to solve.

Third stage - *ideation* - involved divergent thinking again, but this time - for generating as many ideas for the problem solution as possible. Alternatively, this stage is called brainstorming. This practice is largely used in design thinking because it sets the creative minds free and helps arrive to sometimes unexpected, out-of-the-box creative ideas. One rule that the participants had to obey at this stage was to accept and record all the ideas with no exception or criticism. Thus, all team members had a chance to speak and express their views.

Last stage is the one the teams had to spend most of the time on. The task of the *prototypes* stage was to choose few of the ideas from the brainstorm stage, validate them by collecting feedback from the targeted audience(s) and visualise them in the form of digital prototypes and presentations. There was intentionally no requirement for the level of technical complexity of the expected solutions because the organisers wanted to see whether there would be any non-technical solutions presented at all. In case of GlobalMILHack most emphasis was put on idea validation step - teams had to collect evidence that their idea is viable and that there is a demand for it in public. The work process at this stage of the design model is expected to be very iterative: as the ideas evolve and get tested out in the audience, teams collect positive and negative feedback which prompts them to elaborate the idea further taking in account audience's concerns and test it again. The work process, therefore, goes in loops, as shown in Figure 3, and the more loops the team makes at this stage, the more tailored and precise their solution becomes in the end.

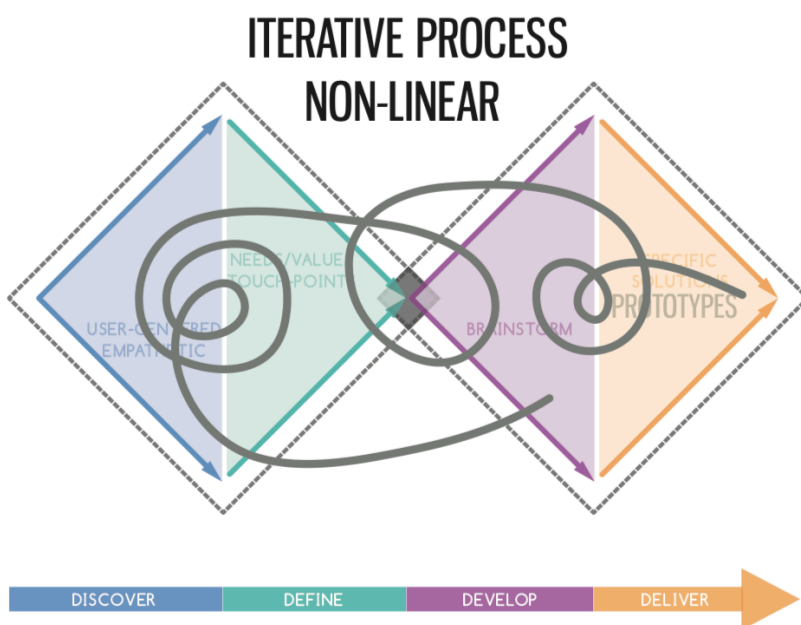


Figure 3. Iterative Process Non-Linear (Source: Service Design Vancouver)

For making the final presentations in video and PowerPoint formats (pitch decks) teams were provided with a template and an example script. The requirement for the latter one was to record a video in MP4 format

with a maximum length of three minutes explaining the core problem, the solution, the evidence of validating and collecting feedback from the chosen audience, and presenting the hackathon team.

After the hackathon

The hackathon resulted in 13 teams turning in their final presentations which then were summarised and presented by the Individual Consultant in-person to the audience at the Youth Forum at the University of Latvia in Riga on October 26th, 2018. That presentation along with the rest of the forum programme was live-streamed on Facebook and the hackathon participants were invited to watch it online. In the end of the presentation a member from the UNESCO MIL Programme announced that the team projects were going to be reviewed more closely and the results would be announced later in November 2018.

After reviewing the 13 hackathon projects, the commission comprised of UNESCO MIL Programme team, the GAPMIL Representatives and the Individual Consultant made the decision to offer the selected nine teams to proceed onto a 4-week online “incubation” programme in order to elaborate their ideas further and present them again in the new format that the UNESCO and YSI accepts for funding. Although this part was not initially planned for, all the teams had accepted the offer. At this point the selected teams as well as the other four were given certificates for their participation in the hackathon, but were not awarded with any funding. In between the end of the hackathon and the start of the programme all participated teams were asked to fill in a hackathon feedback survey via Google Form.

During the 4-week online Programme teams developed current concepts into concrete budgeted action plans in the form of Concept Note documents to be presented to the evaluation committee for final selection and funding. The nine teams selected for the Programme accounted for a total of 43 participants based in 13 cities across 11 countries stretching from Cuba to India. About half of them came from different African states. The vast majority of participants were in their mid-twenties and were doing Bachelor and Master level studies as well as working part-time. Their backgrounds were very different: many were studying and working in digital spheres (data science, security, analytics, digital media), in spheres of education and social work (various youth organisations, university teaching). One particular participant was a refugee living in Palestine and working as a dentist. It is important to note here that few teams were comprised of participants based in the same location, as for example were the teams from Cuba, India, and Palestine, while other teams had their members spread across borders and time zones.

Achieved results/outcome

The Global MIL Hackathon involved several international partners and more than 80 remote participants from 23 different countries, and resulted in 13 team projects, 9 of which were chosen to participate in the 4-week followup Programme online. In the end of the Programme eight teams delivered their Concept Notes to the committee for evaluation. These projects included digital services and platforms that were focused on promoting Media and Information Literacy to different audiences across the globe:

- 1) Small Refugee (team from Cameroon, Senegal, Nigeria, Palestine, Mali, Ethiopia) - a digital platform that provides multimedia learning resources and online assistance to help refugee children complete their

school studies in their native language. At the same time, the platform aims to provide psychological support and grow community spirit through peer-to-peer learning and highlighting the success stories to motivate students to study and achieve their fullest potential. Focus: Current Syrian refugee children (6-12 years old) living in Turkey and in the longer term - Native Arabic speaking refugee children from Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Iran, and Somalia.

- 2) Gender Conversation: Ending Conflict That Arises From Gender Conversation Via The Internet (team from Nigeria) - a project that centres around providing safe space for gender conversation and rights of women as humans, it advocates gender equality, freedom of speech, mutual respect as basic proof of human decency and aims to create an online space and offline event where women and men talk freely about gender, social role, stereotypes, etc, without disrespecting, bullying or being disrespected or bullied. It does these essentially focusing on and exploring sexism in online conversations; how women are depicted in media/online content, how to detect sexist content, how to respond to sexist content on social media. Primary focus: Nigeria.
- 3) Family 2.0 (team from Cuba) - a community project that aims to influence the way in which children and adolescents (between 6-15 years) use electronic devices and media for their education and learning throughout their lives. This project highlights the role of parents as the main educators of their children and responsible for teaching them the appropriate uses of both information throughout electronic devices and media. Focus: Cuban families with children up to 6 years old and/or adolescence between 6 and 15 y.o.
- 4) MIL Organisation for Peace (team from Morocco and Sierra Leone) - an organisation with the central mission of legally advocating against human rights violations in the Media. In the meantime, raising awareness through campaigns and also developing educational Materials for MIL. The results expected are to lessen the number of people who are victims of Rights violations (especially young women) in Media and Information channels, promote global peace by educating people how to analyse and decode information received, and create a global interest about the importance of MIL to the world peace.
- 5) Pengo Serious Game (team from Palestine) - a game is aimed at building a society that respects the cultures of others. This is a concept of a multi-player game that allows the players to go on missions and perform series of tasks that involve critical thinking, team learning and information gathering and processing. Focus: International youth 10-16 years old.
- 6) Fake News Combat (team from Côte d'Ivoire) - a project consisting of production and dissemination of MIL content via the social media platforms (Snapchat, Instagram and WhatsApp) to young internet users in Côte d'Ivoire aimed at helping them detect fake news and avoid sharing them.
- 7) Be Kid app (team from Palestine) - an app that offers children a safe space in media by streaming them content recommended to and approved by their parent(s) and is suitable to child's age and needs, as well as integrating educational content for parents and children on how to use media wisely. Focus: Families with children 6-10 years old in Gaza, Palestine.
- 8) MIL Awareness Champions (team from Nigeria) - a social project that aims to raise Media and Information Literacy (MIL) champions among the Nigerian youth, who will educate children in their local communities about MIL. The project aims to create a website whereby basic and advanced knowledge on MIL would be learned and evaluated. The final goal is for the children to build the capacity to verify information online and access not harmful educational content.

Synopses of the eight final projects that participated in the 4-week Programme along with the team s' profiles are available on the official website of the Global Media and Information Literacy Online Youth Hackathon: www.globalmilhack.com

After the extended period of judging the results have been announced to the five selected teams that were approved for receiving project funding from the YSI. The final budgets ranged from 5,000 euros to 15,000 euros per project and were restricted for completing the planned activities by the end of 2019.

Another outcome of Global MIL Youth Hackathon and the 4-week follow up Programme is the Master Thesis written by the Consultant on the topic of What can an online youth hackathon bring from maker culture to MIL educational practice? The data used for the study was collected by the Consultant through a series of online qualitative interviews with the participants, online qualitative surveys, teams' final projects (Concept Notes) and Individual Consultant's own research diary. The inquiry for the paper should be sent to aleksandra.mangus@gmail.com.

Next steps

The five teams funded by the YSI are being supervised and managed by the UNESCO MIL Programme. They aim to follow their implementation plans and report on their achievements by the end the year.

The Individual Consultant serves as a Member of the Youth Committee for the planning of this year's Youth Agenda Forum of the Global MIL Week and as the GlobalMILHack Organising Partner for 2019.