

International Literacy Day - September 8, 2017

This year marks the 51st anniversary of International Literacy Day which UNESCO is celebrating under the banner 'Literacy in a digital world'. In conjunction, the Canadian Federation of University Women highlights this important day in the series on the Sustainable Development Goals. Our purpose is to overlay a recognized Theme Day with the SDG lens in order to shine a light on and bring the conversation to everyone.

The SDG series provides a critical opportunity to discuss the interconnections between quality education and achieving gender equality to empower all women and girls. We believe change begins with consciousness at all levels of understanding. To go deeper with this topic, our team shares personal accounts using prose and poetry to bring to the surface meaningful or memorable life experiences that others may be able to relate to.

For International Literacy Day, we are intentionally making connections to SDG #4, and #5 (However, connections to any other SDG may be implied).



The 50/50 by 2030 Agenda is an agenda for all, and achieving it requires action at all levels. In the spirit of the 2030 Agenda, speakers from the grassroots, youth, International Non-Government Organizations have offered an account of International Literacy Day.

You Are Enough

While women can claim the statement “ I am enough” to overcome feelings of insecurity and imbalance in one’s personal sense of self, this does not transfer to situations where the individual lives in a world of darkness. Being illiterate means to literally be in the dark.

Our traditional perspective of literacy is to be able to decode the world around us, which includes text, numbers, symbols, media and social situations. However, literacy in the digital world has a different construct for navigating and creating in the world of symbols. Digital literacy presents itself more as a communication pathway which can enable instant contact through forums like Skype and Facetime allowing immediate access to another communicator. It can also be static, as with platforms like Facebook and Twitter which hold participants at arms length by making them observers. Most dramatically, the absence of digital literacy skills in the 21st century can shut one out of community and affect one’s status and opportunity to thrive.

As we contemplate our place on the digital literacy continuum and our engagement therein, what is not obvious is how safe and secure the association is, or how much control the individual has. The Avatar at the other end may be real or mechanical, friend or foe, genuine or fake. To Navigate this world it is as important to be able to read the road signs in order to drive safely in community. And that will take instruction and practise.

The global conversation on women’s economic empowerment addresses the use of digital tools to maximize initiatives. That is very enterprising and 21st century but have we discussed digital citizenship? Are those with technology aware of those without? Do we know how big our digital footprint is? Do we know who is mining our data? Do we care that for some, they have not yet cracked the code on digital literacy? Are there universal programs in place to build skills for women in both developed and developing countries?

Until we have equity and inclusion for all in the sphere of digital literacy I suggest that we have much work to do so that everyone can indeed state, “I have skills to navigate the digital universe for social, political and economic empowerment therefore I am enough”.

Cheryl Hayles, VP International Relations, Canadian Federation of University Women

758 Million Adults Lack Basic Literacy Skills

Since its founding in 1966, International Literacy Day (ILD) has been celebrated every year on September 8. Despite multiple national literacy campaigns, International Literacy Year (1990), and an International Literacy Decade (2003-12), illiteracy is still prevalent in the world. Consider:

- at least 758 million adults lack basic literacy skills
- two thirds of the adults are women
- illiteracy is related to poverty and many other socio-economic factors especially levels of education

Article 26 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948, reads in part:

"Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory."

Literacy as an essential skill is a right, a foundation for lifelong learning and should lead to better well-being and livelihoods for all. As technological innovations change the way people interact with the world, different kinds of literacies have been emphasized - financial literacy, environmental literacy, geographic literacy and so on. For 2017, the theme chosen for ILD is "Literacy in a Digital World". People who lack access to digital technologies and the knowledge, skills and competencies required to navigate them, can end up marginalised in increasingly digitally driven societies. This marginalization is exacerbated when literacy skills are poor or have not been acquired.

Irina Bokova, UNESCO's Director-General, stated on ILD, 2016 - then the 50th anniversary of ILD:

The world has changed since 1966 – but our determination to provide every woman and man with the skills, capacities and opportunities to become everything they wish, in dignity and respect, remains as firm as ever. Literacy is a foundation to build a more sustainable future for all.

In terms of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), literacy fits within SDG 4 which has 10 targets encompassing many aspects of education. There are seven outcomes and three means of achieving these targets by 2030. There are also education elements in the targets of several of the other 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

References: <http://en.unesco.org/themes/literacy-all/literacy-day> and <https://en.unesco.org/node/265600>

Audrey M. Thomas, Member of the International Relations Committee

Time to Learn...

Technology seems to be everywhere and in everyone's hand. However, there are signs to indicate it's time to work on proficiency and build skills to work effectively in the digital world. If you find yourself making the following statements then it's time to seek help.

- How much does it cost to text?
- What, coding? Do you mean my postal code?
- If I put my stuff in the cloud, what happens when it rains?
- Pass me a post-it note, I need to post this.
- I have received an email to say send money to bail my neighbour out of jail in a foreign land. She'll pay me back when she gets home.

Cheryl Hayles, VP International Relations, Canadian Federation of University Women





Literacy in a digital world an extract from the UNESCO webpage (<http://en.unesco.org/themes/literacy-all/literacy-day>)

At record speed, digital technologies are fundamentally changing the way people live, work, learn and socialise everywhere. They are giving new possibilities to people to improve all areas of their lives including access to information; knowledge management; networking; social services; industrial production, and mode of work. However, those who lack access to digital technologies and the knowledge, skills and competencies required to navigate them, can end up marginalised in increasingly digitally driven societies. Literacy is one such essential skill.

Just as knowledge, skills and competencies evolve in the digital world, so does what it means to be literate. In order to close the literacy skills gap and reduce inequalities, this year's International Literacy Day will highlight the challenges and opportunities in promoting literacy in the digital world, a world where, despite progress, at least 758 million adults and 263 million out-of-school children still lack basic literacy skills.

International Literacy Day is celebrated annually worldwide and brings together governments, multi- and bilateral organizations, NGOs, private sectors, communities, teachers, learners and experts in the field. It is an occasion to mark achievements and reflect on ways to counter remaining challenges for the promotion of literacy as an integral part of lifelong learning within and beyond the 2030 Education Agenda.

The Most Powerful Force Is An Idea...

The idea of bringing the SDGs to life on the International Literacy Day, (September 8th, seems a good one. As we are in favour of implementation, we think that we could ask our members if they could communicate on and make visible the impor-

tant initiatives that have been taken in their countries to combat illiteracy, and how this ameliorated the life of the people and of women specially. For instance in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as Anuarite Muyuwa Siirewabo, reported, associations discussed to obtain from local communities that they allow illiterate employees to integrate literacy courses in their working hours . We can imagine the relations between getting instructed and getting better jobs and so better lives, especially for women.

Of course literacy, nowadays doesn't only mean learning how to read, write and count, now people, even in the most remote places have a telephone, and as CFUW-FEFDU has noticed, including digital literacy is really important since even in those places with no electricity the telephone has become a real means of communication, A young African woman, once said that she didn't know how to read and that if her telephone was taken it would be like losing her life, that she couldn't do without it. Yet, telephones can bring unsafe communication so it is necessary that young people (not only them in fact) and specially girls should be taught on its dangers.

Yes, we think that it would be a good way towards the implementation of literacy to make it visible by grassroots associations, especially as we know that governments don't like to be exposed over their bad results and perhaps will be pressed into implementation which could advance the Sustainable Development goals (SDGs).

Association could use all sorts of ways, marches, conferences, films... Anything that could make it visible would be a step forward.

International Alliance of Women representative to UNESCO, Monique Bouaziz

A Thief is a Thief is a Thief ...

As if by chance, here is what arrived in my "In Box" on September 4, 2017. Labour Day no less. The irony that a thief would orchestrate a digital robbery on the day we celebrate hard working people!

Thank you John Hurley III for the example of the importance of Digital Literacy to prudently navigate our everyday experiences.

By the way if someone had 6 million dollars to give me they would have found another way to do so!

See deceptive email below.

Cheryl Hayles, VP International Relations, Canadian Federation of University Women, CFUW

We Apologies, for the delay of your payment and all the Inconveniences And

Inflict that we might have indulge you through. However, we were Having Some minor problems with our payment system, which is Inexplicable, and have held us stranded and Indolent, not having the aspiration to Devote our 100% Assiduity in accrediting foreign contract Payments.

We Apologies once again, From the Records of outstanding beneficiary due for payment, your name was discovered as next on the list of the outstanding Contractors who have not yet received their payments for some years now.

I wish to Inform you now that the square peg is now in square whole and can be vogueish for that your payment is being processed and will be released to you as soon as you respond to this letter. Also note that from my record in my file your outstanding contract payment is \$6,500,000.00 (Six Million Five hundred Thousand United States Dollars). Kindly re-confirm to me the followings:

- 1) Your full name.*
- 2) Direct Phone, fax number*
- 3) Company name, position*
- 4) Profession, age and marital status.*
- 5) Your choice to receive funds.*
- 6) Your Home/Postal address*
- 7) Your clearly scanned Identity Card/Drivers License/Passport*

As soon as this information is received, the processing for your payment will be made to you in a certified bank draft or wired Transfer into your nominated bank account directly or any means you prefer. I anticipate to read your compliance now and in the future as we proceed to make the provision of the funds to you in anyway you prefer to receive it.

Yours sincerely,

Reverend. Mssr. John Hurley III

Professional Security Network

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