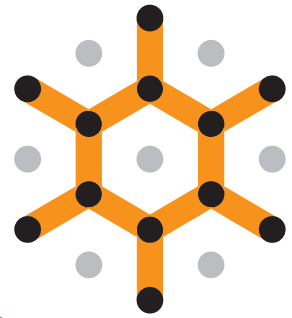


Media Literacy in Palestine



Developing a Professional Learning Community for Media Literacy in Palestine

Renee Hobbs, Bilal Younis, Nibal Khalil,
and Yonty Friesem.

October 15, 2024 – June 30, 2026
Report Date: July 30, 2026

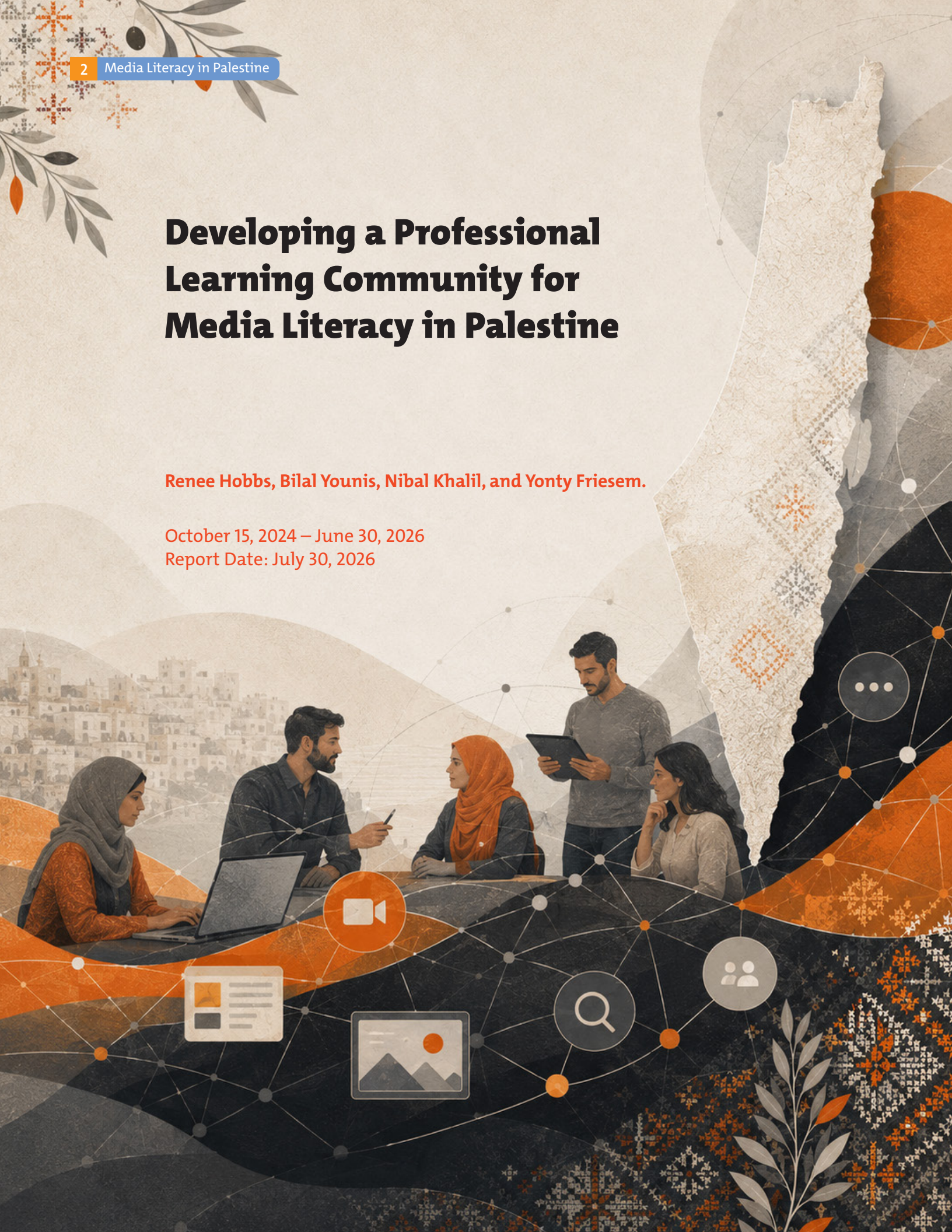
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1. Executive Summary

People in the West Bank have long hoped that a ceasefire in Gaza could lead to a united Palestinian future. But wartime creates an information vacuum that misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda easily exploit. When people feel strongly about something, they seek out information that confirms what they already believe, and false information spreads rapidly. For those in crisis zones, the barrage of digital content can be overwhelming. Educators can help young people sort and evaluate information and spot the point of view and biases embedded in all media messages. Media literacy education ensures that young people have the knowledge and skills to be responsible media consumers and creators.

This report describes “Media Literacy: Critical Thinking for an AI World,” a program that engaged 17 Palestinian educators and 210 Palestinian youth from across the West Bank. A social media campaign featuring the creative works of young Palestinians who participated in the program reached an additional 4,904,355 people in the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem through Instagram.

Over 21 months, West Bank educators took part in an online professional learning community, studying media literacy theory and practice and applying instructional techniques suited to Palestinian young adults growing up in an AI-saturated world. Nine three-hour youth workshops gave young adults knowledge combined with structured dialogue and discussion experiences to help them examine the power of social media influencers and conflict entrepreneurs, networks of trust, and the unreal realities created by generative AI. The program aimed to strengthen youth’s ability to apply media literacy skills to information, entertainment, and persuasion by building educators’ capacity to deliver media literacy programs to Palestinian youth ages 16–25 from across the West Bank.

The Program



Media Literacy: Critical Thinking for an AI World



21 Month Program



West Bank



Who it Reached



Higher Education Professional Development Program: 17 Educators



Youth Workshops: 138 West Bank youth ages 16 - 25



Social Media Campaign: 4,904,355 views on Instagram



596,251 individuals living in the West Bank and Gaza.

1.1 Headline Results

Palestinian educators recognize that social media platforms are central to the lives of young adults and perceive both a skills and a knowledge gap.

An initial email and Facebook recruitment campaign delivered 1,251,283 impressions in the West Bank, reaching 272,780 unique people, with 11,767 click-throughs to the program page.

44 highly qualified Palestinian educators were recruited—middle school, high school, and college teachers, professors, media professionals, and government officials from the West Bank. 39 started the program and 20 were retained when the program relaunched in November 2025 after the pause, meeting the original target. A total of 17 educators completed the entire program.

Faculty participants significantly increased their knowledge, confidence, and skills in teaching media literacy and were highly satisfied with the professional development program’s quality.

Nine youth workshops reaching 138 youth from across the West Bank ran as online programs April 1–9, 2026, after war forced a pivot from in-person delivery. Youth reported that participation in the program will have a positive impact on their future careers.

Nine faculty teams created a culturally grounded adaptation of media literacy education for the Palestinian context, drawing upon relevant Palestinian news, entertainment, and persuasion to inspire critical thinking, discussion, and creative expression.

Youth created social media posts to represent their understanding of media literacy’s benefits. Across the youth-created posts, eight recurring themes emerged, from “seeing is no longer believing” about AI-generated images, to media literacy as a personal “shield,” to “stop, think, verify” before sharing.

Faculty participants came to view media literacy as a survival skill rather than an academic exercise. When anchored in family and community trust, emotional self-regulation against “conflict entrepreneurs,” and a “learning by doing” pedagogy, media literacy education offers practical ways to connect the classroom to current events and contemporary culture in a time of conflict.



Program Visibility

1,251,283
Online Recruitment

+

4,904,355
Youth Social Media Campaign

=

6,155,638
TOTAL REACH



By the Numbers

1,251,283
Campaign impressions

272,780
Unique people reached

11,767
Clicks to the program page

44
Educators recruited



2. The Challenge and the Program

2.1 Problem Statement

Media literacy education in Palestine sits at the intersection of three fast-evolving developments: (1) the globalization of media literacy as an educational movement; (2) the transformation of news and current-events discourse under war; (3) the challenge of teaching young people to navigate influencers, propaganda, and so-called “fake news”; and (4) the role of media literacy specifically in the Palestinian context. Situating this project within U.S. public diplomacy efforts requires understanding how media literacy’s meaning is evolving and what it can accomplish, especially for a population whose access to information, infrastructure, and representation is itself contested.

Globalization of Media Literacy

“Media literacy” is an inclusive label for a cluster of competencies—accessing, analyzing, evaluating, creating, reflecting on, and taking action using media in all its forms (Hobbs, 2010). Overlapping traditions have used terms like media education, media and information literacy, news literacy, digital literacy, critical media literacy, and now AI literacy. Media

literacy education has expanded from nationally bounded curricular experiments into a transnational movement, propelled by intergovernmental organizations, professional networks, and the urgency of the digital information environment (Livingstone, 2004). An important engine of globalization has been UNESCO (2021), which consolidated parallel traditions of media education and information literacy into the composite framework of Media and Information Literacy (MIL).

Because globalization is not neutral, media literacy educators examine the political economy and power relationships that structure media systems. A tension runs between protectionist, reception-oriented approaches and those that position people as active participants and producers (Hobbs, 2025). As digital platforms lowered the barriers to creating and circulating media, some educators emphasize the competencies of the producer and networked citizen, not only the discerning consumer (Mihailidis, 2014). But producing and circulating media presupposes infrastructure, bandwidth, and freedom from surveillance, and these forms of infrastructure are unevenly

Context of the Media Literacy Initiative



Wartime Disruptions

Propaganda, disinformation, and fake news along with military censorship affect public opinion in the region



Arab Universities

Media literacy expanded from almost no university programs two decades ago to more than 150 across the Arab region



Gaps in Palestine Education

Media literacy is largely absent from the national curriculum and only weakly represented in higher education

distributed and (in occupied or conflict-affected settings) actively constrained. For Palestine specifically, media literacy education remains largely absent from the national curriculum and only weakly present in higher education (Makawi, n.d.).

A growing body of regionally grounded work contends that the global MIL framework carries assumptions ill-suited to settings shaped by authoritarian governance, conflict, and foreign intervention. Melki (2013) documented the rapid institutionalization of media literacy across Arab universities (from virtually none two decades ago to well over 150), tracing the role of initiatives such as the Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut, founded after the 2006 war, in seeding curricula across the region. In the Arab context, educators must reckon with oppression as a structuring condition rather than treating misinformation as a merely cognitive problem (Melki, 2018).

Transformation of News and Current-Events Discourse Under Conditions of War

Depictions of conflict are not merely representations of events but a feature of warfare itself, as image, narrative, and perception have all become strategic objectives. Because war reshapes the production, circulation, and interpretation of news, journalistic norms of verification, balance, and independence are compromised, and reporters are easily drawn into military and state information management (Allan & Zelizer, 2004). Audiences encounter conflict through multiple positions, and official framing, eyewitness accounts, and international perspectives are each differentially amplified

through platforms like Google, WhatsApp, X, and Facebook (Hobbs, 2020). Social media is now central to digital diplomacy as countries manage narratives about themselves for both domestic and international audiences (Ku, 2025).

These dynamics are acute in Israel and Palestine. Whenever unequal antagonists compete for media attention and favorable framing, the weaker party faces structural disadvantages in setting the terms of news discourse even when it attracts coverage (Wolfsfeld, 1997). Researchers have documented patterns in Western reporting that shape audience understanding in ways many viewers do not consciously register

(Philo & Berry, 2004). For educators who teach about media influence and propaganda, this scholarship establishes that “bias” is not a matter of individual prejudice to be corrected but a product of institutional routines, source dependencies, and framing conventions that operate at the system level (Hobbs, 2020).

The rise of pan-Arab satellite broadcasting, Al Jazeera in particular, reconfigured the flow of news about the region by offering viewpoints that departed from Western outlets and giving Arab audiences alternative vantage points on conflicts in which they were directly implicated (el-Nawawy & Iskandar, 2003). For Palestinians, the coexistence of Israeli, Western, pan-Arab, and Palestinian sources makes the constructed nature of news unusually visible. This creates rich opportunities for media literacy, but it also heightens the difficulty of teaching critical evaluation. After all, when credibility is so plainly bound up with political alignment, the question “Which source can be trusted?” cannot be settled by appeals to professional authority alone. With the rise of Palestinian influencers who broadcast their lives in real time, the information, entertainment, and

persuasion they produce become “sources of open-source intelligence—or obfuscation” (Manfredi, Arredondo & Danzek, 2024, p. 79).

Teaching Influencers, Propaganda, and “Fake News”

As trust in institutions weakens, trust in individuals deepens. A growing literature explores how young people pay attention to influencers, propagandists, and even the purveyors of “fake news.” Scholars situate these phenomena within a broader “disinformation order,” in which disruptive communication degrades the authority of legacy institutions and the shared informational basis of democratic life (Bennett & Livingston, 2018). This framing matters pedagogically because it does not blame people for their gullibility or poor choices, but instead examines the reward systems embedded in contemporary communication platforms and algorithms.

Propaganda education has a long lineage within media literacy, and recent scholarship updates it for a participatory digital culture in which audiences are also producers



and propaganda circulates through memes, influencers, and peer networks rather than only state broadcasters (Hobbs, 2020). A central tension concerns how to teach analysis of persuasive and manipulative communication without sliding into either cynicism or naive debunking (Buckingham, 2003). The influencer economy complicates this further because internet celebrity blends authenticity, intimacy, and commerce in ways that destabilize older distinctions between advertising, editorial content, and personal expression (Hobbs, 2025). Research on networked youth shows that young people's media practices are deeply social and identity-driven, not reducible to deficits in critical reasoning (boyd, 2014). Many forms of online manipulation now exploit the gaps and incentives of platform infrastructures (Marwick & Lewis, 2017).

Evidence on media literacy's intervention efficacy is mixed and instructive. Experimental and quasi-experimental studies suggest targeted instruction can improve learners' ability to discern misinformation, yet effects are sensitive to design, dosage, and context, and gains do not always transfer or persist (Huang, Jia & Yu, 2024). Research with educators consistently surfaces a gap between what media literacy is supposed to accomplish and what classroom realities permit, citing limited teacher training, inadequate resources, and the difficulty of addressing politically charged content (McDougall et al., 2018). Scholarship on political reasoning also finds that the capacity to evaluate contested informational claims is entangled with prior partisan and identity commitments, so motivated reasoning can blunt the protective effect of analytic skill (Kahne & Bowyer, 2017). These findings caution against any expectation that media literacy can serve as inoculation against falsehood, independent of the political and affective worlds in which students live.



Media Literacy Education in the Palestinian Context

Because Palestinians increasingly use digital media platforms to challenge dominant representations, share alternative perspectives, and participate in public discourse, a context-specific approach to media literacy integrates critical thinking, digital competencies, ethical media practices, and awareness of the media's role in shaping social and political realities. We reviewed scholarly literacy in Arabic to better understand conceptualizations of media literacy in the Palestinian context. Its development begins from an educational concept that morphs into a practice connected to social and political transformations, no longer limited to developing students' abilities to analyze media content, but more deeply connected to identity, civic engagement, and the creation of public narratives (Masharqa, 2024). Although greater institutional efforts are needed to embed media literacy as a component of contemporary education, there is a consensus among educational and media specialists about the importance of effective implementation, which requires structured curriculum frameworks, appropriate teaching strategies, and professional development for teachers (Al-Maghari, n.d.; Makawi, n.d.).

Key Insights from the Needs Assessment



Integrated Dimensions

Participants value critical thinking, digital competencies, ethical media practices, and awareness of media influence



1,050+

Content Suppression Cases

Documented removals and restrictions affecting peaceful Palestinian content on Instagram and Facebook



3

Implementation Pillars

Students value structured curricula, innovative teaching strategies, and professional development for teachers

Certainly, the inequality between Israelis and Palestinians affects how media literacy is conceptualized, as media literacy education generally presumes a liberal-democratic context of relatively free expression and trustworthy institutions. A “media literacy of the oppressed,” by contrast, treats critical media analysis as inseparable from an analysis of power, dispossession, and structural violence, asking not only how to detect falsehood but whose interests the prevailing information order serves (Melki, 2018). Teaching about propaganda becomes especially delicate when there are competing national narratives, and when students may reasonably perceive any framing of events as itself a form of propaganda.

One study examined the views of Palestinian school students and the role of educational institutions in developing media literacy skills through a survey of 400 students aged 12–18 in schools in Ramallah and Al-Bireh, finding that students were confident in their ability to analyze and evaluate news and information sources to distinguish between reliable and unreliable content. They were less active in digital engagement and self-expression, primarily due to concerns about privacy risks and limits to freedom of expression online (Abu 'Arrah, n.d.). Posting and sharing content, formulating opinions, and documenting the

ordinary aspects of daily life all carry risks of takedown, account suspension, and even detention (Faththalla, 2026). Human Rights Watch (2023) documented over 1,050 takedowns and other suppression of peaceful content on Instagram and Facebook that had been posted by Palestinians and their supporters, including about human rights abuses. Acts that are understood as civic participation in one setting may invite punishment in another.

Understanding the tensions educators must navigate in teaching news, propaganda, and “fake news” can advance the field and help practitioners reconcile the aspirations of global media and information literacy with the conditions of occupation and inequality. Because media literacy must be situated within a society’s education and media systems, teacher professional development is the most effective way to ensure the fidelity and sustainability of media literacy initiatives. This project examines that practice directly: an initiative in which educators teach about news, influencers, and AI-generated media under conditions of war, helping students reason about influence and manipulation in an information order many experience as structured against them.



2.2 Program Rationale and Approach

We drew on extensive experience delivering media literacy professional development worldwide and followed the recommendations of the U.S. State Department (2022), which stresses aligning project objectives with strategy and developing deep contextual understanding. We worked in close partnership with local Palestinian educators and used an approach—to both professional development and direct service—that built in opportunities to test, iterate, and refine. Most importantly, we met educators and youth where they were, with appreciation for their current knowledge, skills, and habits of mind, and offered individualized coaching to provide the right support at the right time.

During initial planning (January–March 2025), a needs assessment combined a focus group of 15 university students with detailed interviews of 5 experienced faculty and school principals. Key insights:

- Youth use platforms for distinct purposes: YouTube as a learning tool (tutorials for coding, graphic design); Instagram for visual connection, trends, and cultural exchange; Snapchat for informal global communication, especially popular among young women; Telegram for news and real-time updates, particularly in emergencies; and TikTok for entertainment and creative sharing.
- Faculty noted gender differences in platform use: men more often use Facebook for national and political discussion, while women gravitate toward Instagram and Snapchat for social engagement.
- Media shapes youth aspirations and self-identity. Many see social media as a source of inspiration and growth, exposing them to career paths they had not considered; one respondent said it widened their horizons. Yet constant exposure also has adverse effects: some reported feeling demotivated and distracted by comparison to others' portrayed success, leading to anxiety and self-doubt that affect their academic and professional focus.
- Youth have varying media literacy skills. They have practical experience in basic content creation (video editing, media management), engage in online discussion and debate, and are becoming more familiar with cross-referencing and fact-checking.
- Significant gaps remain, however. Critical analysis and credibility evaluation are underdeveloped; many rely on intuition or unverified sources rather than systematic critical thinking. Digital-security practices, journalistic ethics, and the strategic use



of platforms for career growth are also insufficiently developed, and faculty noted that youth-created content is often not professionally presented.

- Confidence in identifying credible information varies, and few feel confident discerning reliable sources. Some cross-reference facts and check multiple perspectives before sharing; others struggle, given how fast misleading content spreads. As one participant noted, the pace of digital content makes it hard to apply critical judgment effectively.

Youth and faculty agreed that critical thinking is the most significant need—the ability to analyze and interpret media content, avoid superficial judgments, and make informed decisions.

Youth also value technical proficiency, seeing mastery of digital tools as crucial for the job market, and want advanced skills such as AI-driven content verification and mobile journalism. Both faculty and youth see public speaking and persuasive communication as essential for

articulating ideas in discussion and professional settings. Youth with prior workshop experience described it as highly beneficial, particularly when programs emphasized hands-on, real-world work like creating digital content and using AI for fact-checking. One praised the chance to work with media professionals, which boosted confidence and provided practical insight.

Focus groups and interviews also highlighted barriers to high-quality media literacy education. Resource limitations are significant: many communities lack the infrastructure and training centers needed, and youth from marginalized areas have fewer opportunities for hands-on learning.

Sociopolitical constraints matter too: restricted media freedoms limit access and breed skepticism, making open, unbiased discussion difficult. Constant media exposure during conflict also creates intense psychological pressure, and anxiety has intensified since October 7. Based on the needs assessment, we identified the following goals and objectives.

2.3 Program Goals and Objectives

As stated in the Project Proposal, these are the program objectives:



Objective 1: Recruit 20 educators/trainers and design a program relevant and meaningful to them



Objective 3: Participants implement 8 media literacy workshops for 100+ youth in Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Hebron



Objective 2: Develop and implement online media literacy education for trainer participants



Objective 4: Demonstrate impact through research and social media messaging

2.4 Program Content and Delivery

The professional development (PD) program, Media Literacy in Palestinian Territories, is a train-the-trainer leadership initiative that prepares Palestinian educators to teach media literacy and then lead their own media literacy workshops for youth. It was designed and facilitated by Renee Hobbs, Bilal Younis, and Yonty Friesem — in partnership with Palestinian educators and the Yatta Institute for Higher Education.

Participants were a cohort of Palestinian educators, university lecturers, schoolteachers, and media professionals drawn from institutions across the West Bank, including Hebron and Ramallah. The program was explicitly framed as leadership development: facilitators described investing in participants as leaders, with the ultimate goal that each would design and deliver media literacy programming for young people. The program was organized in three phases:



Phase 1 — Online

Professional

Development: nine synchronous online sessions building participants' own media literacy knowledge and teaching capacity



Phase 2 — Coaching &

Preparation: small-group coaching to plan, recruit for, and prepare the youth workshops



Phase 3 — Youth

Workshops & Social Media

Outreach: participant-led, full-day in-person workshops for youth, followed by a social media outreach campaign

The program blended synchronous online instruction with independent practice and hands-on production. Its defining features:



Bilingual delivery. Sessions and materials were provided in both Arabic and English, with language-specific breakout rooms so participants could discuss in their preferred language



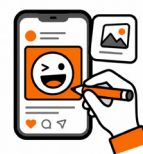
Live online sessions.

Meetings were held via Zoom, typically in the evening (18:00 Jerusalem time), and combined short presentations, whole-group discussion, and small-group breakouts



Between-session

homework. Each session assigned readings, short videos, and interactive tasks — most often posting to shared Padlet walls, analyzing a media artifact, or creating an original post or meme



Active, production-based

learning. Participants repeatedly created media themselves (social posts, memes) rather than only analyzing it, modeling the pedagogy they would later use with youth



Embedded evaluation.

Pre- and post-test surveys (via Qualtrics) and a learner question-generation activity were built into the program to support formal evaluation



Recurring tools & resources.

The “ML Smartphone” discussion tool; the set of critical analysis questions (below); Padlet walls; the Mind Over Media propaganda platform; “Spot the Troll”; and the IMGflip meme generator

Context of the Media Literacy Initiative

A single set of eight critical questions recurred throughout the program and became the analytic backbone participants applied to propaganda, AI-generated images, influencers, and free-speech cases alike: emotional response; reality check; private gain vs. public good; values check; reading between the lines; stereotype alert; oversimplified “easy” solutions; and what has been left out or how the message was constructed.

Table 1. Summary of Online Professional Development Program Content

Session	Title	What was Taught
1	Why Media Literacy Matters	Introductions and program orientation; participants named the media issues that matter most to them and mapped their “love–hate” relationship with media and technology; program learning outcomes and the “ML Smartphone” analysis tool introduced.
2	Feelings and Facts	How emotion drives belief and sharing; the structure of conspiracy theories (hero / villain / victim / conflict); why stories are more memorable than facts; active listening and empathy as tools for dialogue across difference.
3	Relaunch Program	Program re-launch after a pause: revised timeline and expectations, addition of AI literacy to the learning outcomes, guided practice with the ML Smartphone, and choosing real media texts (incl. AI-generated images) to analyze with students. Baseline pre-test administered.
4	Conflict Entrepreneurs	The economics and profit motives of social media; how platforms amplify conflict for attention; the idea that “conflict entrepreneurs” exploit conflict for power, pleasure, and profit; how this concept applies in the Palestinian context; conflict as potentially beneficial or harmful.
5	Targets of Propaganda	Multiple definitions of propaganda and the premise that propaganda can be beneficial or harmful; where propaganda appears (politics, advertising, news, entertainment, education); how AI, geo-fencing, and personalization target audiences; recognizing being personally targeted.

6	The Power of Two	Combining media literacy with empathy and compassion; co-teaching and collaboration; “creative control” shared between teacher and student across content, format, access, and distribution; resisting false binaries; analyzing the “unreal realities” of AI-generated media.
7	Teaching Media Literacy	The AACRA competency framework (Access, Analyze, Evaluate, Create, Reflect, Act); the love–hate relationship with generative AI; modeling the three-part structure of the youth workshop; using critical questions to analyze a post and drafting a promotional social media post.
8	The Influencers	How influencers persuade through authority and authenticity; “rage bait” and engagement-driven outrage; distinguishing human influencers from AI bots (incl. reporting on automated networks targeting pro-Palestinian accounts); trust and credibility; creating memes as commentary.
9	Free Speech & Censorship	Freedom of expression, hate speech, and censorship; applying the critical-questions protocol to free-speech cases; large-group discussion of what participants value about free expression and where its limits lie.

Core Components of Media Literacy Education

The program’s teaching model was built on the AACRA framework of media literacy competencies, which defines media literacy as a set of interlocking capabilities rather than a single skill. Participants learned to teach across all of its dimensions:



Access — finding, navigating, and managing information; understanding algorithms, digital tools, and online learning communities



Analyze — identifying author, purpose, genre, and point of view; noticing stereotypes; comparing sources; recognizing how power shapes what circulates



Create — writing, producing, and remixing media for a purpose and audience; collaborating; distributing and promoting one’s work responsibly



Reflect — applying ethical judgment and social responsibility; weighing benefits, risks, and harms; respecting rights such as privacy and copyright



Act (Impact) — using media to make a difference: participating in communities, speaking up against injustice, and engaging in civic and democratic life

Youth Workshop Components

After the online sessions, participants moved into small-group coaching (offered in alternating time slots to fit schedules). Coaching focused on two areas: recruiting and event planning, and teaching strategies and social media outcomes. Teams of Palestinian faculty developed an original plan for their workshop structure, refined their chosen discussion topics, and prepared logistics for online delivery. In the final phase, Palestinian faculty participant teams used “the power of two” model to deliver three-hour, online media literacy workshops for youth (roughly ages 16–25) in Hebron and Ramallah. Each workshop followed a consistent three-part design that mirrored what participants had experienced themselves:



Getting to know each other

— welcome and orientation, the pre-test, and the “love–hate relationship with media” activity to surface participants’ views



Analyze messages & discuss

— introducing a chosen topic, presenting discussion questions and guidelines, and facilitating small-group analysis and debriefing



Media production & assessment — youth create original social media content, receive feedback, revise and publish it, document their posts, and complete the post-test

The workshops fed directly into a social media outreach program, in which youth-created content was shared publicly to extend the reach of the media literacy messages beyond the workshop room.



3. What Made This Program Innovative

3.1 Train-the-Trainer Program Inspires Nine Localized Teaching Frameworks

After participating in a training program offered by American and Palestinian program leaders, Palestinian faculty participants worked collaboratively to adapt the professional development program into a youth program for Palestinian young adults ages 16–25. Each pair of facilitators localized media literacy into a framework of their own, synthesizing the 22 hours of instruction they received in the PD and coaching program into a three-hour program for young people. Their choices about the analytic vocabulary of media literacy are worth noting:

- The Magenta team created a seven-step influencer-analysis model contrasting two forms of credibility: authority and authenticity.
- The Red team used a shaping metaphor, “Zoom In, Zoom Out.”
- The Purple team built a four-pillar definition.
- The Green team compressed everything into a golden rule—“Stop, Think, Verify”—plus three self-protection principles.
- The Blue team focused on the problem of “conflict entrepreneurs.”
- The Orange team explicitly taught the four stages of access, analysis, evaluation, and production.
- The Brown team used the eight questions from the media literacy smartphone apps to examine social media influencers.
- The Aqua team paired the five questions with a prompt-engineering workflow for testing AI.
- To evaluate information, the Yellow team created an acronym, CAPSS—Creator, Audience, Purpose, Structure, Source—that participants invoked letter by letter.



These analytic vocabularies are functionally overlapping but pedagogically distinct, and that distinctiveness offers useful insight into cultural adaptation. Palestinian faculty were tasked with adapting media literacy concepts to the needs of young people in the West Bank, and “Stop, Think, Verify,” “conflict entrepreneurs,” and CAPSS all resonated with them.

Faculty teams also made distinctive choices about instructional strategy. The Green team used games like Kahoot to introduce verification heuristics before applying them to real cases. The Yellow team’s CAPSS acronym relied on a single analysis activity that strengthened students’ confidence across media genres. Other teams (Magenta, Purple, and Blue) leaned into production, asking students to create memes, short videos, and posters for peer critique. The Orange team used a debate-forward pedagogy. The Aqua team relied most on demonstration, following each framework immediately with a case for analysis. The Brown team was the most carefully scaffolded, laying definitions in the first session before applied work in the second.

Many of these choices reflected the backgrounds of facilitators and students. The Orange team included working journalists, who turned every exercise into a critique of their own industry. The Green team had many accounting and

engineering majors, who produced unusually calibrated judgments about source credibility. The Red team, predominantly young Palestinian women, foregrounded the media’s impact on identity and personal influence. The Magenta team’s education students moved fluidly between using the frameworks personally and in the classroom.

Media literacy was deliberately adapted to the Palestinian context through a train-the-trainer model with a youth media production and outreach component. Although faculty drew on some examples modeled in the PD program, they selected media artifacts themselves—grounding the work in the present moment, where coverage of Gaza, settler violence, Ministry of Education decisions, fuel shortages and economic pressure, and the misuse of AI during war were live issues for all. Verification skills were not taught on neutral cases and then pointed at the world; instead, students worked directly on the images and claims they were already encountering, sharing, and arguing about online. That grounding gives the work real ethical weight. Notable examples follow.

Noteable Examples from the Youth Workshops

In the Green team, faculty selected content that pushed youth to compare an official news source, a credible international NGO, an emotionally potent but unverified political clip, and a deliberate scam exploiting institutional trust and Ramadan-timed hardship. Small groups analyzed: (1) an Anadolu (Turkish state) headline reporting 13 Palestinians killed in strikes on tents and a school; (2) a Save the Children report of 20,000 children killed in 23 months, “one every hour”; (3) a video attributed to Hamas spokesman Abu Obeida but shared via Algerian football commentator Hafid Derradji; and (4) a WhatsApp link offering a fake 1,080-shekel Ramadan aid payment from the Palestinian Ministry of Religious Endowments.

The Blue team asked students to supply their own examples through open prompts. One noted how clipped video snippets distort public figures’ positions; another described COVID-vaccine rumor debates and the coordinated attacks on Masafer Yatta (home invasions, assaults, theft of livestock, destruction of property); another described panic-laden coverage of fuel and weather; and another a Saudi influencer’s take on fast food. As students analyzed content they had identified, facilitators introduced concepts—conflict entrepreneurs, framing, hidden agendas, source credibility—exactly when the examples made them concrete.

The Orange team had youth reflect on who influences their understanding of the world: whom they trust, whom they avoid, who combines authority with authenticity, and whom they themselves influence. Participants moved from general frustration with misinformation to calibrated judgments about specific figures, contrasting Wael Al-Dahdouh’s sustained positive influence through Gaza coverage with more mixed views of photojournalist Motaz Azaiza, whose coverage they felt grew more self-focused over time.

In the Blue team, students analyzed a Friday sermon video claiming Arabs read a quarter of a book per year while Japanese people read eighty. They identified the imam as a high-trust influencer with a legitimate goal (calling for a productive rather than consumer society). But when the instructor flagged a mathematical error, discussion turned to whether a noble goal justifies inaccurate numbers. Youth answered with a resounding no, explaining that an influencer’s credibility depends on accurate sources even when the intent is constructive.

These examples show an approach that speaks in the community’s own references, dignifies its concerns, and treats verification as an act of responsibility toward neighbors living through the same events. These examples show an approach that speaks in the community’s own references, dignifies its concerns, and treats verification as an act of responsibility toward neighbors living through the same events.



The workshops were built to pull every participant into the conversation rather than letting a few voices dominate, and the record shows both young women and young men taking the frameworks further than their facilitators did. In the Red team—largely young Palestinian women—youth turned the abstract idea of “influence” toward the relationships they actually hold, naming the doctors, teachers, and peers who shape them and identifying Gaza content as the clearest case of media with real impact on their behavior. One student boldly redefined influence as “the ability to change behavior, not just attract attention,” a reframing the whole group adopted.

Across other cohorts, women’s contributions repeatedly became the room’s reference points. A Magenta student offered the motto that “not everything you see is as it appears, and not everything that appears is as you see.” In the Yellow team, one participant named the ambivalence around #Blockout2024—the movement to block celebrities and organizations over their silence on or support for Israel in the Gaza war, which led to multiple account suspensions—and another challenged the assumption that relatability requires a shared dialect or nationality. In the Brown team, female participants opened the second day by

defining media literacy and digital influencers in their own words.

Young men, too, were given room to disagree with faculty and peers alike. In the Orange team, one youth pushed back on the idea of confirmation bias, and facilitators deliberately let the argument run rather than resolving it. The most mixed-gender cohorts (Magenta, Purple, and Brown) moved easily between personal and classroom uses of digital media, while the Red team showed that a women-centered room produces its own relationally grounded insights. The participatory, non-lecture format made this possible: live polls, breakout cases, team productions, and returned-to-the-group contributions gave quieter participants structured ways in, and a relational co-lead kept attention on who had not yet spoken.

Youth workshop participants demonstrated their identities as civically engaged critical thinkers and creators. Transcript data show two patterns of change. First, participants articulated changes in their own behavior—in the Magenta team, for example, valuing “analyzing from several angles before reacting emotionally.” Second, participants noted how their “questions have become deeper” in the

revisited-image exercise. In every group, at least one participant extended a facilitator's framework beyond where the facilitator had taken it—strong evidence that the content was internalized and owned rather than merely received.

A distinctive feature was the certificate gate, which made the civic dimension concrete. To finish, participants published one to three public posts carrying the program hashtag, putting their own verified, thoughtful media into the same public sphere they had just

learned to scrutinize. Some teams emphasized production more than others (Purple, Blue, Yellow, and Brown); the youth-created media is analyzed below. One team had participants critique their own creations in the room, so the move from critic to ethical maker happened live, with peers. By design, the workshop ended with each participant standing on both sides of the screen at once: someone who can take apart a manipulative message and someone now responsible for what they add to the public conversation. That double identity—alert reader and accountable creator—is what the program is ultimately trying to build.

3.2 Youth Workshop Participants Express and Share What They Learned

We conducted an inductive thematic analysis of 210 posts contributed by Palestinian youth to the Padlet wall “Youth Media Creative Work.” Unlike a deductive codebook, which begins from a predetermined framework and asks how the data fit, an inductive codebook begins with the data and asks what patterns, metaphors, and concerns the participants make visible. We identified eight themes, named wherever possible in the participants’ own words, with recurring Arabic phrases serving as each theme’s native-language name and an English gloss following. Each is illustrated with short Arabic excerpts and English translations; where a theme maps to a recurring visual metaphor (shield, filter, mirror, microscope), the metaphor is made explicit.

Table 2. Core Themes Present in Youth Created Media

#	Theme (English)	Dominant image or move
1	“Not everything you see is true”	Critical eye; the AI microscope
2	“Awareness is my shield”	Armor, shield, weapon, defense line
3	“Pause before you share”	Stop, think, ask, verify
4	“Emotion is the bait”	Feelings as attack vector
5	“Followers don’t equal credibility”	Influencers under the microscope
6	“I am not just a follower”	Passive consumer ▶ active analyst
7	“A turning point in my thinking”	Before/after personal transformation
8	“Satire as teaching”	Memes, fake headlines, parody

“Not everything you see is true” — the crisis of visual truth in the AI era



Participants foreground the collapse of the old equation between seeing and believing, naming AI, deepfakes, edited images, and fabricated news as forces that make visual and textual surfaces unreliable.

Example:

“We have entered an era in which seeing is no longer proof of truth. AI today does not only produce images; it produces a parallel reality that deceives the senses.”

— Yasmine Abu Shuqra, Group 9

“Awareness is my shield” — media literacy as armor and defense



Posts use metaphors of protection, weaponry, or fortification—shield, armor, filter, first line of defense—to describe what media literacy does for the participant.

Example:

“Media literacy is your shield in a world crowded with information. Don’t be an emotional receiver; be a critical eye.” — Participant graphic, Group 8

“Pause before you share” — the discipline of slowing down



Posts name a specific, repeatable move: stop, think, ask, and verify before reacting or forwarding. The theme is about pace—the discovery that speed is part of the problem.

Example:

“A single second of thought before pressing ‘post’ can protect a whole society from disinformation.” — Nariman Al-‘Umleh

“Emotion is the bait” — how feelings are weaponized



Posts identify how anger, sadness, fear, or outrage short-circuit reflection and drive impulsive sharing. The hallmark is metacognitive: participants treat their own emotional reaction as data about the content.

Example:

“I learned how emotion can be used as a tool of influence, and how feelings like anger and sadness can stop logical thinking and push us to react without awareness.” — Sarah Askar

“Followers don’t equal credibility” — influencers under the microscope



Posts decouple popularity from credibility, scrutinizing influencers, verified accounts, and the “electronic armies” of bots and fake accounts.

Example:

“Many heated debates on social platforms are not between real people; they are run by fake accounts and electronic armies.” — Bashar Hmaidat, April 9, 2026

“I am not just a follower” — reclaiming agency in the digital space



Posts announce a shift in the participant’s own online identity: from passive receiver to active analyst, from consumer to citizen.

Example:

“You are not just a follower! You are the capable critical analyst. Media literacy is your shield in a world crowded with information.” — Dalal Alwhiedy, public post, #MLP

“A turning point in my thinking” — narratives of personal transformation



Posts narrate a before/after arc centered on the workshop, using words like turning point, journey, changed my thinking, and opened my mind.

Example:

“It was not just a course; it was a journey that changed the way I think and my view of the media around me.” — Hala Hammad, Group 3

“Satire as teaching” — media literacy enacted through memes and parody



Posts are creative artifacts—memes, fabricated breaking-news stories, parody headlines—produced to teach a media literacy point by example. The participant demonstrates the very moves the workshops taught them to detect.

Example:

“Breaking: Cristiano Ronaldo has been struck by a serious illness leading to his death. (A meme created to demonstrate fake news.)” — Group 9

3.3 Media Literacy in Palestine as a Survival Skill

Two complementary sources illuminate the program's value: eight semi-structured interviews with participating educators, and structured observations of all nine youth workshops by a Palestinian participant-observer. The themes below are inseparable from the political, infrastructural, and social conditions of Palestinian life.



Media literacy is a survival skill, not an academic exercise.

The most distinctive framing across the interview data is that media literacy in Palestine is understood in existential rather than merely educational terms. Educators repeatedly described it as a condition of safety and agency in an information environment saturated with propaganda, manipulated imagery, and emotionally charged political narratives, calling it variously “a survival skill,” “a civic competency,” “a tool for critical awareness,” and “a form of social resilience.” This vocabulary—survival, resilience, resistance—reframes a skill that elsewhere might be a media-studies elective into something closer to a defensive necessity.

That necessity is tied to the Palestinian context. Interviews found media literacy “deeply connected to” politics, identity, digital environments, youth

empowerment, social participation, and “resistance to manipulation.” Nisreen captured the analytical core—media literacy “is not a limited concept but a broad one that helps us read beyond the surface”—while Mahmoud Makhamrah grounded it in verification: “understanding media content and verifying whether it is correct or misleading.” The observation data show this taking root: across the nine groups, “verification before sharing is increasingly internalized,” and the campaign frame “Verify Before You Share” recurred in youth media production. The educators’ conviction and the youths’ habit-formation are two ends of the same thread.



Trusted influencers include both media and family.

Faculty report that influencers now hold more sway than schools, formal media, or educators themselves. One

stated plainly that “influencers play a major role in shaping political and economic opinions”; another offered a skeptical reading, describing influencers as “paid actors who shape public perception”; and a third noted that influencers “strongly affect people, including parents and youth.”

The observation data add a revealing nuance: when asked who actually influences them, youth across every group most often named not a celebrity but family, followed by friends and peers, then teachers, and only then selected social-media influencers. The observer recorded that “family and close social circles remain key influence sources,” especially in the Red and Brown teams. This matters pedagogically: trust here is relational and communal before it is institutional. The observer found that “trust in influencers is conditional, not automatic”—a discernment filtered through tightly knit family and social networks rather than abstract source-credibility rules. Any curriculum that treats trust as a purely individual cognitive judgment misses the social fabric in which Palestinian youth evaluate information.



Considering feelings and facts in relation to the “conflict entrepreneur.”

Interview and observation data reveal that managing emotion is a core media literacy task, particularly amid war. Educators emphasized the relationship between “feelings and facts”—the need to help youth separate factual analysis from “emotionally charged political content” and the “use of conflict and fear in media narratives.” Youth were observed to be “aware of emotional manipulation in media,” one of the most consistently developed skills across groups.

Indeed, the “conflict entrepreneur” framework is where Palestinian specificity becomes sharpest. Interviews treated it as “highly relevant because conflict-related content is heavily monetized and circulated on digital platforms,” pointing to “social media profit motives,” “engagement-based algorithms,” and the “political exploitation of conflict.” This was not hypothetical: the theme was the explicit focus of Group 4, drawing on “good contextual examples (AI, COVID-19, Palestinian context).” For young people living inside a conflict that is itself a content commodity, learning that platforms profit from polarization is a politically literate act, not only a media-literate one.

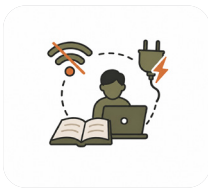




“Learning by doing” is valued over abstract theory.

A methodological consensus runs through the data: theoretical, lecture-based instruction is less effective than experiential, participatory learning. In interviews this was nearly unanimous—all eight educators emphasized practical learning and “strongly rejected purely theoretical teaching approaches,” reaching for the same phrases: “learning by doing,” “practical application,” “hands-on learning.” Karima put it directly: “learning by doing is the best method”; Mahmoud held that “practical training like workshops is the most effective”; Rana favored “face-to-face simulation of real situations.”

The observation data function as an empirical test. The observer found: “When instructors used long explanations, participation dropped. When instructors used open-ended questions plus naming of relevant concepts, participation increased. When participants used group work, engagement improved significantly.” The most engaged groups (Green, Orange, Yellow, Magenta) had interactive facilitation, while the lecture-heavy groups (Blue, Aqua) showed “heavy instructor dominance” and “limited spontaneous discussion.” The strongest engagement drivers were visual stimuli, group work, meme creation, and real-life Palestinian examples.



Limited infrastructure is a pedagogical condition.

A theme that distinguishes this program from work in better-resourced settings is the degree to which infrastructure shaped what was possible. Among workshop lowlights, six of eight educators cited technical problems—“Internet instability,” “Electricity interruptions,” “weak online connectivity”—and the observer recorded “technical difficulties in Padlet” in the Green, Brown, and Aqua teams. Asked what is needed to sustain the work, participants linked quality directly to “broader infrastructural conditions in Palestine,” listing “Internet and electricity stability” alongside funding. A stable connection is not a precondition assumed away but a contested resource, and the recurring preference for face-to-face delivery is partly a response to the fragility of the online alternative.



Imagining sustainability and localization.

Faculty insisted that next steps include systematic teacher training, and seven urged that media literacy be embedded in formal curricula, arguing that “isolated workshops are insufficient without systemic educational integration.” Omar argued media literacy “should become part of regular classroom curricula rather than remaining an extracurricular activity,” and Nisreen called for “expanding the program to reach more teachers and schools across Palestine.” The demand for localization was explicit as educators requested “localized Arabic-language resources” and “youth-oriented educational materials,” reflecting that imported toolkits must be adapted to Palestinian youth, language, and circumstance to be usable. A core feature of media literacy leadership is consensus-building about what needs to happen inside schools for media literacy practices to gain traction.

4. Impact and Results

4.1 Participants

Faculty Participants. We had 44 highly qualified Palestinian educators (middle school, high school, and college teachers, professors, media professionals, and government officials from the West Bank) who were accepted to participate in the program, and 39 of them started the program. After the pause, 20 participants were retained when the program relaunched in November 2025, meeting the original target. A total of 17 educators completed the entire program. Participants are teachers in Palestinian secondary or higher education. One-third taught at the college or university level, 17% prepared future teachers, and more than one in four taught younger adolescents (15% high school, 13% middle school).

The program's rigor and unexpected length affected faculty participation. The program set a high bar for participants to receive a stipend: attending 10 (of 11) 90-minute webinars, completing 4 surveys, creating an Implementation Plan, and co-delivering a three-hour online youth workshop. Among completers, 35% were ages 25–34 and 29% ages 35–44; older participants (45–54) were more likely not to complete. Among the 39 who began, 31% were in Education and 26% in the Humanities; among completers, 35% were in Education and 24% in the Sciences.



44 ▶ 39 ▶ 17

Faculty Participation

44 educators were accepted, 39 began the program, and 17 completed all requirements



10 Webinars + 4 Surveys

Rigorous Completion Requirements

Participants also created an implementation plan and co-delivered a three-hour youth workshop



138 Youth

Youth Participation

138 young people aged 15–25 joined nine online workshops, producing 113 valid survey responses



65% Women

Broad and Diverse Reach

Participants came from multiple West Bank governorates and represented diverse educational, professional, and academic backgrounds

The participants represented a geographically diverse cross-section of the West Bank, with the largest concentration coming from Hebron and Ramallah Governorates as well as applicants from Jenin, Tulkarm, Bethlehem, Nablus, and other areas. The cohort includes both women and men from different educational and professional backgrounds, with a strong representation of university students, recent graduates, teachers, media and communication professionals, NGO staff, entrepreneurs, accountants, healthcare workers, and job seekers. This mix reflects participants at different stages of their academic and professional journeys, creating a dynamic learning environment that encourages peer exchange and cross-sector collaboration. The wide range of occupations and places of residence

demonstrates strong interest in media and information literacy across diverse communities, while all applicants confirmed access to a smartphone or laptop, ensuring they have the necessary digital resources to actively participate in the program's practical and online learning activities.

Youth Participants. We had 148 applicants who were recruited through social media networks. A total of 138 youth ages 15 - 25 participated in the program, joining one of nine small group online programs led by two faculty members. A total of 25 students chose not to complete the survey, so we had 113 valid participant responses. Since we were aware of concerns about privacy, we did not collect demographic information, but 65% of participants were female.



4.2 Evaluation Methodology

To assess the program's impact on faculty, we used a mixed-method approach, adjusting the research plan after the pause to gather quantitative and qualitative data from faculty at four points: pre-test, re-start, post-PD, and post-youth program (12 months total). Youth data were collected at the program's conclusion via Qualtrics under URI IRB protocols. We also conducted 8 semi-structured interviews and focus groups with faculty and students to examine beliefs and attitudes about motivation, AI literacy, and reliable-information instruction. We assessed fidelity of implementation and cultural adaptation by analyzing transcripts of nine three-hour workshops—more than 300 pages of transcribed Arabic—and

measured engagement through LMS analytics (Pathwright, Q3), Padlet post-counts (Q4 onward), and thematic analysis of youth-created media. Outreach impact was measured through social media engagement data (views, likes, clicks, shares, followers).

In assessing the program's impact on youth, we were sensitive to concerns about privacy and data security during a time of intensified conflict and decided not to use a pre-test. Instead, we used a post-only questionnaire at the completion of the program, which provides general information about youth perspectives on their learning.

4.2 Growth in Faculty Knowledge, Confidence, and Skills

We report group-level survey results for the cohort of Palestinian educators in the professional learning community. Participants completed a common instrument at four points: a pretest (April 12, 2025) and three posttests (January 20, 2026; mid-April 2026; and May 13, 2026). The analysis compares mean responses across waves to describe how self-reported knowledge, classroom implementation, attitudes, and program reception shifted over time.

Participants reported clear, consistent growth across the program: media literacy knowledge, confidence in applying it, classroom implementation, and the perceived relevance of core topics all rose. Enthusiasm was high—participants rated program quality and willingness to recommend at or near the top of every scale.

Faculty reported growing confidence in core media literacy practices. Across the four waves, participants self-rated confidence (7 = highly confident, 1 = not at all) in instructional

practices modeled in the program: (1) teaching critical thinking about media and technology; (2) exploring multiple, diverse, and competing interpretations; (3) preparing students to express themselves emotionally, critically, and creatively; (4) connecting media literacy to their content area; (5) using storytelling to promote civic participation; and (6) collaborating with others to advance media education.

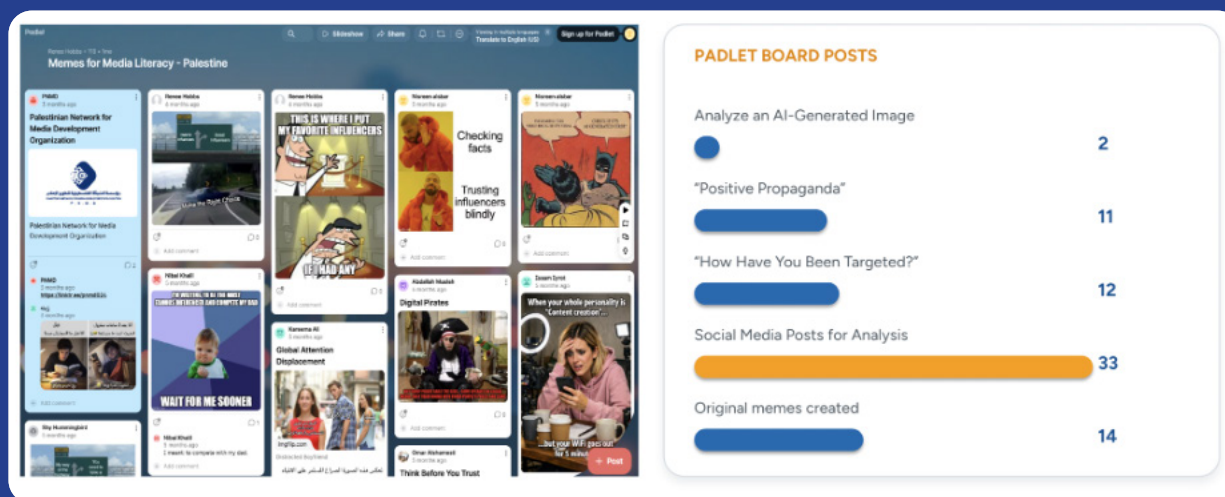
Table 3 shows confidence rose for all items, with the strongest change in collaboration (+1.24). Participants valued how their “hands on, minds on” experience producing a three-hour youth program with a partner improved their confidence in collaboration—a change we also read as leadership development. Notably, confidence in content creation (“preparing students to express themselves”) showed the smallest gain (+.41), which we attribute to participants’ differing academic backgrounds: communication and media faculty may be more comfortable preparing students to express themselves emotionally, critically, and creatively than those from math and science.



Table 3. Changes in Confidence in Using Core Instructional Practices of Media Literacy

Core Instructional Practice	Pretest	Posttest	Pre ▶ Post Change
Teaching critical thinking about media and technology	3.06	3.71	+.65
Exploring multiple, diverse, competing interpretations	3.65	4.35	+.70
Preparing students to express themselves	3.00	3.41	+.41
Connecting media literacy to my content area	3.51	4.24	+.82
Using storytelling to promote civic participation	3.86	4.88	+1.02
Collaborating with others in advancing media education	3.00	4.24	+1.24

Figure 1. Faculty Engagement in Content Creation



Over the course of the program, faculty had five opportunities to engage in media content creation, and their engagement peaked when asked to create social media posts. Figure 1 shows that over the course of the program, faculty grew more active in creative and contributing content to a shared Padlet Wall.

We also observed differences in willingness to create content during the program. In the first month, Pathwright showed 31 of 44 participants enrolled, 25 completing the "About Us" production activity, 24 joining one or more threaded discussions, and 20 continuing independent learning after the pause. After migrating to Google Docs and Padlet, Padlet

engagement grew session over session—33 posts on the "Social Media Posts for Analysis and Discussion" board and 14 participants creating original memes. That not all participants completed content-creation activities suggests a need for further research into how faculty perceive the value of creative media activities for developing media literacy competencies.

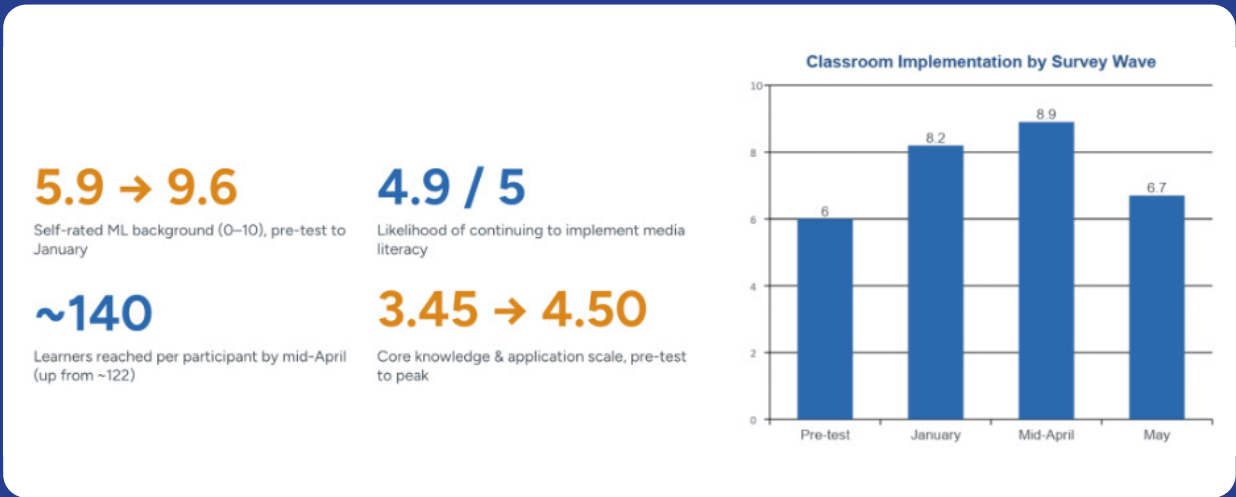
Self-assessed background and training in media literacy peaked immediately after the PD program. On a 0–10 scale (0 = no background, 10 = extremely knowledgeable), scores rose from 5.9 at pretest to 9.6 by January—consistent with participants feeling substantially more grounded once the program was underway

after the pause. A four-item knowledge-and-application scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) likewise showed significant gains in analyzing media and applying that knowledge, climbing from pretest through the mid-April 2026 peak.

Faculty reported steadily increasing classroom implementation and outreach. On a 0–10 scale, self-reported integration of media literacy rose

from 6.0 at pretest to 8.2 in January, peaking at 8.9 by mid-April. The number of learners reached by this implementation also grew in parallel, from about 122 per participant in January to about 140 by mid-April, and participants rated their likelihood of continuing to implement media literacy at 4.9 on a 5-point scale—a strong signal of sustained intent.

Figure 2. Increases in Classroom Implementation of Media Literacy Instructional Practices



Attitudes about relevant content in media, technology, and society also shifted in ways that reflected the program’s core themes. As asked participants to rate the relevance of ten topics on a 4 point scale (1 = least relevant, 4 = most relevant). As Table 3 shows, the topics that gained most were precisely those the program

emphasized—social media influencers, targets of propaganda, conspiracy theories and disinformation, and feelings versus facts. Generative AI in education and using social media in education stayed at the top throughout.



Table 4. Perceptions of Topic Relevance From Pretest to Posttest

Topic	Pretest	Posttest	Change
Social media influencers	2.39	2.88	+0.49
Targets of propaganda	2.46	2.82	+0.36
Conspiracy theories & disinformation	2.75	3.00	+0.25
Feelings and facts	2.85	3.00	+0.15
Why media literacy matters	3.11	3.24	+0.13
Generative AI in education	3.24	3.35	+0.11
Using social media in education	3.59	3.53	−0.06
How people decide who to trust	3.17	3.00	−0.17

Participants rated program components highly (1–4 scale, 4 = very valuable). Every component drew strong marks: email reminders (3.8), program leaders (3.8), faculty presentations and group discussions (3.7 each), collaborative activities (3.6), and creative expression (3.5). Mentor support (3.2) and Arabic translation (3.3) were seen as somewhat less valuable. Perceived quality rose between January and mid-April, and participants gave the program a near-perfect recommendation score of 9.9 out of 10. The people, structure, and materials of the learning community were a consistent strength.

Participants grew in awareness of the limits of their knowledge. After implementing their youth workshops, self-reported knowledge and application scores dipped as faculty recognized those limits. For most measures, scores rose from pretest to a mid-program peak (January–mid-April 2026), then declined at the final May 2026 wave. Classroom implementation moved 6.0 ▶ 8.2 ▶ 8.9 ▶ 6.7, and core knowledge moved 3.45 ▶ 4.31 ▶ 4.50 ▶ 3.82. This dip across nearly every measure is strong evidence that implementing a youth workshop led

faculty to recalibrate their self-perceptions, becoming more realistic about the scope of their knowledge after designing and delivering a program with a partner.

The pattern even appears in self-rated familiarity with digital tools. For example, participants' self-reported familiarity with Google Classroom declined from 3.3 to 2.1, Facebook (3.4 ▶ 2.4), and ChatGPT (3.5 ▶ 2.3) all fell from pretest to the final wave. Since a genuine loss of tool familiarity is implausible, the more likely reading is that, after deeper engagement implementing media literacy pedagogy, participants rated themselves more critically. Because epistemological beliefs shape how people acquire knowledge (Kardash & Scholes, 1996), this may reflect growth in intellectual humility—a virtue relevant to learning. Openness to new information can improve current knowledge, helping people respect others' viewpoints, revise their own when warranted, and not feel threatened by disagreement (Baehr, 2016). Instructors who acknowledge the limits of their knowledge are those who realize they still have something to learn.

Table 5. Changes in Self-Reported Media Literacy Knowledge and Application

Knowledge & Application	Pretest	Jan 2026	Apr 2026	May 2026	Pre ▶ Peak
Analyze media messages	3.45	4.31	4.50	3.82	+1.05
Apply knowledge when using media	3.76	4.23	4.50	3.88	+0.74
Understand how social media affects relationships	4.21	4.54	4.62	4.06	+0.41
Apply social-media knowledge	4.07	4.31	4.50	3.71	+0.43



4.4 Youth Workshop Program Impact

We found strong evidence that participants who completed the program agreed or strongly agreed that they have core media literacy competencies needed to evaluate and analyze media messages, as Table X shows. The statement with the highest level of agreement was concerned about application: “I can apply what I learned from the program in life or

school/university situations” (mean = 4.20). This indicates strong confidence in connecting the theories and practices of media literacy to daily life. Only one concept was shown to achieve a much lower level agreement than other items: “People interpret media messages based on their prior knowledge and beliefs” (mean = 3.79).

Table 6. Youth Workshop Participants Analyze Media Messages, Recognize Interpretation, and Apply What They Learned

Media Literacy Analysis and Application	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
I think about information sources before believing what I see or read online.	4.16	.68	106
I can analyze media messages to understand their potential impact on audiences.	4.03	.65	105
People interpret media messages based on their prior knowledge and beliefs.	3.79	.86	107
I recognize that people may hold different opinions than mine about the media message viewed.	4.08	.78	107
I can apply what I learned from the program in life or school/university situations.	4.20	.64	105

The Youth Workshops also included substantial attention to influencers and conflict entrepreneurs, who amp up controversy and conflict for pleasure, power and profit. We asked questions designed to assess students' understanding of influencer strategies, the attention economy, and the key features of misinformation. As Table X shows, youth workshop participants were most confident

about identifying misinformation (mean = 4.05) and least confident about understanding the ways influencers earn financial profits (mean = 3.82). Evidence from the transcripts reveals that although influencers were discussed by all groups, the issue of how profits were gained was not addressed in all of the youth workshops.

Table 7. Youth Workshop Participants Recognize How Misinformation Spreads

Influencers, Economics, and Misinformation	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
I understand the strategies influencers use to attract audience attention.	3.93	.73	106
I know the ways influencers earn financial profits.	3.82	.73	105
I can identify misinformation in news broadcasts.	4.05	.75	106
I recognize that people may hold different opinions than mine about the media message viewed.	4.08	.78	107

Because the Youth Workshops included substantial attention to dialogue and discussion, participants learned by sharing opinions and experiences and listening to and commenting on the views of their peers. We

asked questions designed to assess students' engagement in sharing beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and opinions and examining their perceptions about the feeling of being respected and listened to, as Table 8 shows.



Table 8. Youth Workshop Participants Value Dialogue and Discussion

Voice and Dialogue	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
I felt comfortable expressing my opinions about media messages.	4.0	.84	111
I want to discuss different viewpoints on social and political issues.	3.9	.66	105
Program participants listened to my opinions and contributions.	4.05	.75	106

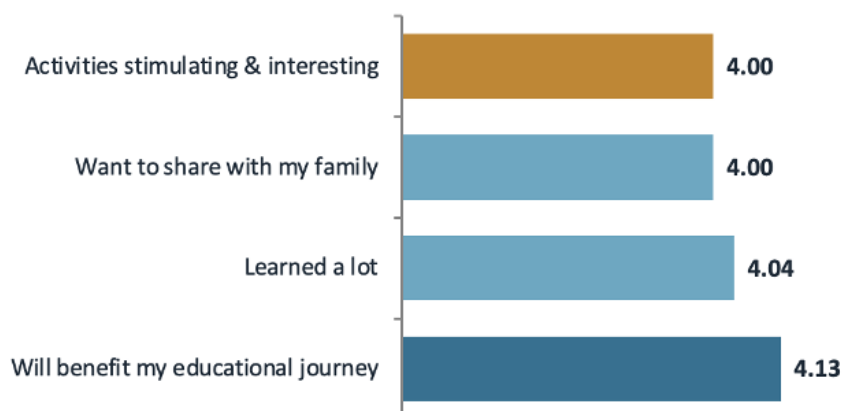


In assessing the overall value of the Youth Program, we asked participants four questions about their perceptions of the value of the program. The item with the highest level of students indicating “strongly agree” was the one that read, “Participating in this program will positively affect my educational journey (mean = 4.13). Here the small standard deviation (SD = .63) gives further evidence that most students strongly believed that the program had value to their future lives and careers. Other items concerning the overall value of the program included statements including: “I learned a lot

by participating in this program” (mean = 4.04, SD = .79); “I want to share what I learned today with my family” (mean = 4.00, SD = .73). The lowest item was “The program activities were stimulating and interesting” (mean = 4.00, SD = .92). Youth were assigned to one of nine different kinds of learning experiences and so the wider variation in responses to this question reflect the variety of learning experience offered by Palestinian faculty, some of which were more (or less) interesting to youth.

Figure 3. Youth Program Participants Believe the Program Will Affect their Future

Program satisfaction & relevance





5. Program Activities

5.1 Recruitment and Planning

We first partnered with Palestinian educators and identified youth and educator needs. The team established an Implementation and Management Plan, launched a Trello workspace to coordinate collaboration, and held weekly meetings with structured reports. Bilal Younis conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups with 15 Palestinian students and 5 educators, documented in a Needs Assessment Report, and the team used these findings to refine the program design and theory of change.

We then developed application and marketing materials and recruited 44 participants with support from the Yatta Institute for Higher Education, a URI-authorized vendor. Marketing assets included an application form, an email letter, a program description, a press release, and a 90-second promotional video. We built an organic list of 151 relevant contacts, and a West Bank-targeted Facebook campaign generated:

- **1,251,283 impressions**
- **272,780 unique people reached**

Recruitment yielded 44 highly qualified applicants (against an original target of 20), including professors, media professionals, government officials, students, and teachers from middle school through college.



20 Participants Consulted

Needs Assessment

Interviews and focus groups included 15 Palestinian students and 5 educators to guide the program design



1,251,283 Impressions

Facebook Campaign Performance

The campaign reached 272,780 unique people and generated 11,767 clicks to the program page



151 Contacts Reached

Targeted Outreach Network

The team built an organic contact list and prepared application, email, press, program, and video materials



44 Participants Recruited

More Than Double the Target

Recruitment exceeded the original goal of 20, attracting educators, professors, media professionals, officials, and students

5.2 Professional Development Program

We developed and delivered an eight-session online professional development program for Palestinian educators, plus one “Relaunch” session, for a total of nine sessions facilitated by Renee Hobbs, Bilal Younis, and Yonty Friesem. Across all nine sessions, participants built the knowledge and confidence to bring advanced media and AI literacy into their classrooms, analyze and evaluate media messages from multiple perspectives, create work products for their students, and join a community of practice.



Gain the knowledge and confidence to use advanced media and AI education practices in the classroom;



Reflect on why and how media education is valuable for learners of all ages;



Analyze and evaluate media messages from various perspectives and values;



Create a set of work products for use with their own students;



Join an online community of learners and build lasting professional relationships

This phase prepared educators to design and lead full-day youth workshops, anchored by recurring tools such as the “Media Literacy Smartphone” and the AACRA competency model (Access, Analyze, Evaluate, Create, Reflect, Impact). By the end, participating educators were expected to:

We produced a program overview, syllabus, and run-of-show documents, with materials approved by the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem. The team built a Pathwright LMS and hired an Arabic translator for real-time sequential translation during all Zoom sessions; participants chose Arabic, English, or bilingual breakout rooms. Because the program was paused for seven months, we added a “Relaunch” session to rebuild continuity. The PD program concluded in late January 2026, with individualized coaching sessions before and immediately after Ramadan—small-group sessions that gave partners time to collaborate and receive feedback from program leaders.

Several recurring methods gave the sessions coherence. The “Love–Hate Relationship with Media and Technology” activity recurred across multiple meetings, helping educators surface their own beliefs and motivations. The Media Literacy Smartphone—a practical questioning tool—was practiced repeatedly and carried into classrooms, using shared critical questions (emotional response, reality check, private gain vs. public good, values, inference, stereotypes, oversimplification, and what is left out) to interrogate social media posts, AI images, and influencer content. The AACRA model provides the underlying competency framework, while Padlet walls and bilingual breakout rooms support shared reflection and community building. Table X shows the program dates and number of participants attending each session.



Table 9. Youth Workshop Participants Recognize How Misinformation Spreads

Date	Topic	Participants	Sample Activities
Apr 12, 2025	What is Media Literacy?	21	Program as leadership development; “Love–Hate” activity; introduces the Media Literacy Smartphone.
Apr 26, 2025	Facts and Feelings	24	How emotion and information interact; conspiracy theories as villain/victim/hero stories; bilingual breakouts.
7-MONTH PROGRAM PAUSE			
Nov 25, 2025	Relaunch	19	Refreshed roadmap and timeline; foregrounds AI; practice with the Smartphone and finding media to analyze.
Dec 2, 2025	Conflict Entrepreneurs	18	Economics of social media; how platforms amplify conflict; application to the Palestinian context.
Dec 9, 2025	Targets of Propaganda	19	What propaganda is and why targeting works; AI’s role via geofencing and fakes; Mind Over Media framework.
Dec 16, 2025	The Power of Two	19	Media literacy with empathy; co-teaching; analyzing AI-generated images with “Unreal Realities” questions.
Jan 6, 2026	Teaching Media Literacy	14	Models the youth-workshop structure; love–hate with generative AI; AACRA model; drafting a promo post.
Jan 13, 2026	The Influencers	16	Influence and trust; Palestinian influencers and rage bait; AI “superbots”; meme-making on one’s own influence.
Jan 20, 2026	Free Speech and Censorship	17	Free expression, hate speech, censorship; bridge to Phase II; reviews the Youth Workshop Planning Guide.

5.3 Coaching Program

Participants engaged in a structured coaching program to develop and execute a high-quality Implementation Plan for their youth workshop. After the first coaching sessions, faculty formed groups around shared goals and interests; in the second, each participant worked with a partner to set objectives, design activities, identify action steps, and monitor progress. Coaches provided ongoing technical assistance, encouragement, and feedback to ensure fidelity and support implementation.

Emphasizing collaboration, accountability, and continuous improvement, the program produced actionable plans and measurable progress. In eight of the nine teams, faculty showed strong collaboration, with a framework lead and an applied or relational co-lead; only the Blue team had a single facilitator. In this “Power of Two” scheme, one person attends to the human dynamics in the room while the other carries content, pacing, and organization.

Table 10. Coaching Program

Dates	Coaching Session	Participants
February 3 & 8, 2026	Recruiting and Event Planning	11
March 24 & 29, 2026	Teaching Strategies and Social Media Outcomes	19



5.4 Youth Workshop Implementation

After coaching, faculty pairs planned and delivered nine online workshops reaching 210 young people ages 16–25 in Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Hebron between April 1–10, 2026. Originally scheduled at American Spaces

venues, the workshops pivoted online as war-related safety concerns intensified. Each comprised two 90-minute sessions, for three hours of learning time. Table 11 lists the faculty facilitators and dates.

Table 11. Youth Workshops

Group	First session (90 min)	Number of participants	Second session (90 min)
Group 1: RED	Lead: Awad · April 1, 5:00 PM	13	Lead: Fatima · April 3, 5:00 PM
Group 2: GREEN	Lead: Alaa · April 1, 6:30 PM	14	Lead: Sajeda · April 3, 6:30 PM
Group 3: PURPLE	Lead: Hilmi · April 2, 5:00 PM	13	Lead: Kareema · April 4, 5:00 PM
Group 4: BLUE	Lead: Farouq · April 2, 6:30 PM	18	Lead: Omar · April 4, 6:30 PM
Group 5: ORANGE	Lead: Mohammad · April 5, 5:00 PM	11	Lead: Afnan · April 7, 5:00 PM
Group 6: YELLOW	Lead: Abdallah · April 5, 6:30 PM	18	Lead: Nisreen · April 7, 6:30 PM
Group 7: BROWN	Lead: Rana · April 6, 5:00 PM	23	Lead: Yousef · April 8, 5:00 PM
Group 8: AQUA	Lead: Isam · April 6, 6:30 PM	14	Lead: Manar · April 8, 6:30 PM
Group 9: MAGENTA	Lead: Nibal · April 7, 5:00 PM	14	Lead: Ahmad · April 9, 5:00 PM
TOTAL	9	138	9

Expectations for youth program content and structure were clear. Faculty addressed one or more of the nine PD topics and used the same three-part structure as the PD program:

1. Modeling the critical analysis of media texts;
2. Dialogue and discussion responding to a question about media influence on individuals and society; and
3. Creating media messages and reflecting on the power of communication to make a difference.

Researchers attended all sessions and observed faculty–student interaction, and program content was transcribed and translated. We also conducted eight semi-structured interviews with faculty after they completed their workshops in late April 2026, exploring their understandings of media literacy, perceptions of urgent needs, pedagogical approaches, classroom applications, workshop experiences, and recommendations for sustaining media literacy education. We analyzed these data to identify common themes and distinctively Palestinian approaches.

Youth Workshop program content emphasized critical analysis of media texts. All faculty foregrounded critical analysis, many focusing on different media types (news, memes, social posts, videos). Some used the Media Education Lab’s Media Literacy Smartphone—with “apps” like “reality check,” “stereotype alert,” and “read between the lines”—to explore authorship, intent, construction, ideology, economics, interpretation, and representation. Every cohort opened with an image in the

first session and returned to it in the second, asking participants to set aside first reactions and write fresh questions. That single move was the program’s built-in assessment: across every group, the second round of questions was sharper, more analytical, and less superficial than the first.

Dialogue and discussion were core features.

Among the practices modeled in the PD program, the “Love–Hate” discussion was one of the most used, inviting youth to name what they love and hate about daily media and to reflect on their values. In the Blue team, one student argued that citizen journalism now crowds out trained journalists and that institutions hire by follower count rather than skill—“someone with 150,000 followers can become the public face of an institution.” Another described how Telegram rumors claim a young man has been arrested while he sleeps at home, exhausting journalists and the public; another struggled with enjoying influencer content while recognizing it as “clothes, consumerism, and material things” with no clear message. Across sessions, participants and facilitators came to understand that rapid spread is not evidence of truth, that feelings are real but not proof, that emotion is the primary lever manipulators pull, that fame is not influence, that accuracy matters in every genre—including religious and humanitarian content—and that AI raises the stakes of old habits without changing what those habits should be. Every group framed media literacy as an ethical obligation rather than a personal skill, recognizing that sharing unverified content harms others, and treated critical thinking as a lasting habit rather than a one-time exercise.

5.5 Youth Express and Share Insights on Media Literacy

Youth expressed their understanding of media literacy through creative production. All were asked to consider the social responsibilities of the media maker by creating one to three public posts carrying the program hashtag. Facilitators made effective use of Padlet and WhatsApp for youth to document their work.

The program featured core messages created by Palestinian youth to reach faculty, youth, and the general public. A branding waiver was coordinated with the U.S. Embassy early on.

New Instagram Profile:

[instagram.com/palestinemedialit](https://www.instagram.com/palestinemedialit)



5.6 Social Media Outreach Campaign Strategy and Metrics of Engagement

We developed a 12-week paid social media campaign to introduce media literacy as an essential life skill in the West Bank. The program attracted 4,904,355 views on Instagram from 596,251 accounts in Gaza, Ramallah, Hebron, and Nablus.

The campaign increased awareness of media literacy to a young audience in Palestine. Instagram posts were viewed by 65% women, with 26.3% ages 18 - 24; 31.8% ages 25 -34; 22% ages 35 - 44; and 19.6% ages 45+. Viewers came

from across Palestine, with 20.9% located in Gaza, 12% in Khan Yunis, 11.4% in Ramallah, 8.7% in Hebron, and 4.6% in Nablus. Figure 3 shows the “Emotion is the Bait” post, a series of images in English and Arabic, with quotes from participating youth who remind people about how outrage can stop logical thinking. This promoted post reached 570,000 views and 4,185 engaged Instagram users who clicked on the link to visit the Media Literacy in Palestine website.

Figure 3. Social Media Post “Emotion is the Bait” Reached 570,000 views and 4,185 engagements



Figure 4. Social Media Post “Memes for Media Literacy ” Reached 311,000 views and 2,972 engagements



Figure 4 shows the “Memes for Media Literacy” post, a series of images in English and Arabic created by youth to express a variety of perspectives. This promoted post reached 570,000 views and 4,185 engagement Instagram users who visited the Media Literacy in Palestine website.

Figure 5. Social Media Post “Games for Media Literacy” Reached 557,000 views and 3,553 engagements

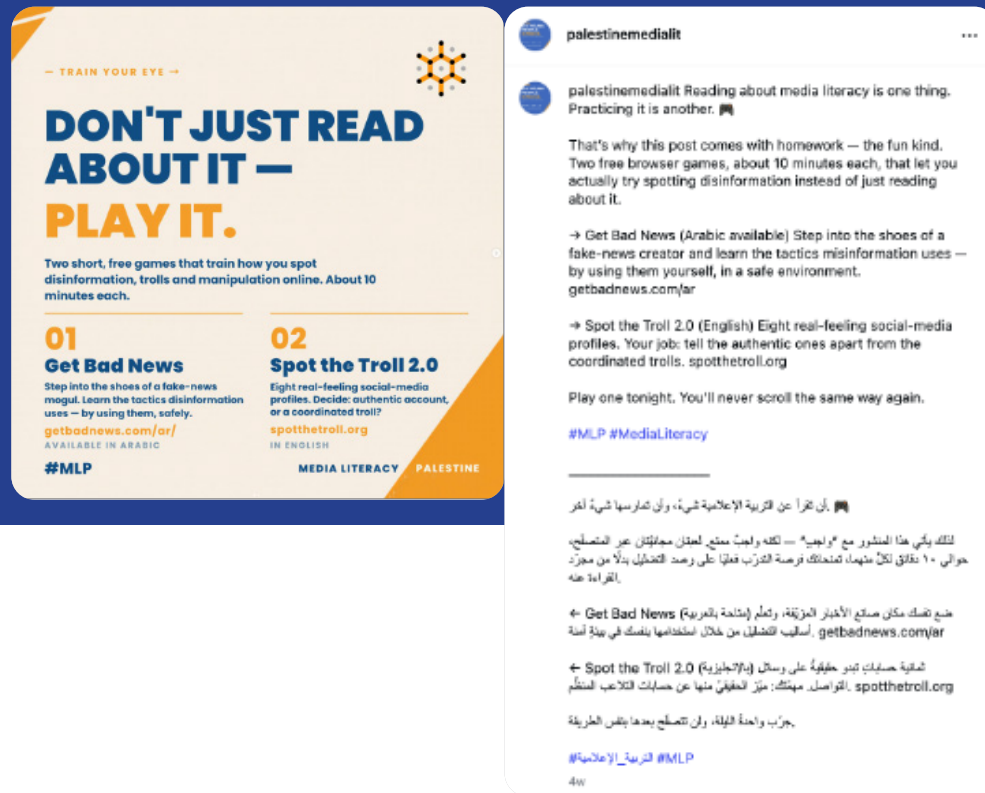


Figure 5 shows the “Games for Media Literacy” post, a series of images in English and Arabic created by youth about their experience playing media literacy games like “Get Bad News” and “Spot the Troll 2.0.” This promoted post reached 557,000 views and 3,553 engaged users who visited the Media Literacy in Palestine website.



6. Lessons Learned

Palestinian educators and youth recognize that media literacy is a form of resilience exercised within a specific political and infrastructural reality—one in which conflict is monetized, trust is filtered through family and community, emotions are deliberately weaponized, and even a reliable internet connection cannot be assumed. The data show that the work succeeds when it is hands-on, dialogic, and grounded in learners' own world, and falters when it relies on lecture or struggles with unstable technology. The clearest mandate is to move toward integrated, locally authored, Arabic-language media literacy education, so that the capacity Nisreen described—to “read beyond the surface”—becomes a durable feature of Palestinian schooling rather than the achievement of a single program.

6.1 Program Challenges

Youth Workshops During Wartime. During March and April 2026, the Gaza war's effects spilled heavily into the West Bank. American Spaces in Hebron and Ramallah closed, and Palestinian schools pivoted online as Israeli military raids, settler violence, and

displacement intensified (Al Jazeera, 2026, April 21). We moved the youth program from in-person to online delivery. Although this required faculty to substantially revise their plans, it also increased registrations, since transportation was no longer a barrier.



6.2 Lessons Learned

The program attracted Palestinian higher education faculty from the humanities, math and science, media and communication, education, and social sciences. Disciplinary background influenced how faculty facilitated sessions, what they emphasized, and the skills participants developed. We noticed the following patterns:



Social sciences (anthropology, political science): focused on the social meaning of media (trust, influence, emotion, identity, and power), strengthening critical analysis within social contexts



Communication and media: highlighted algorithms, AI-generated content, fake accounts, and digital verification, improving understanding of digital systems and online risks



Educational technology and instructional design: emphasized structured learning, interactive activities, digital tools, and practical frameworks, strengthening application through analysis and production



School teaching backgrounds: contributed practical, accessible approaches that connected concepts to daily experience

The “Power of Two” partnership, which paired educators across disciplines, added real value: participants from different fields contributed a distinct perspective on social analysis, technical understanding, instructional design, and practical application. Confidence grew with collaboration. Future programs should create more opportunities for discipline-specific dialogue to promote leadership development in media literacy in Palestine.





7. Sustainability and Future Funding

The Media Education Lab will independently collaborate with the Yatta Institute during the 2026–2027 academic year, after the U.S. State Department-funded project concludes. The Yatta Institute will engage Palestinian educators from the grant-funded program, empowering them to take leadership roles in planning and implementation. At least three webinars will be offered, in which participating educators share insights on young people’s social media use in Palestine and model approaches to integrating media literacy into the higher education curriculum, examining social media’s role as a primary news source that demands constant engagement and presents frequent opportunities for emotional manipulation, misleading content, and AI-generated media.

7.1 Youth Media Partnership with Media Compass in Palestine

To develop youth leadership in media literacy, the Media Education Lab will support the “Media Compass” initiative, developed by Al-Quds Bard College undergraduate Sajeda Manasra, which aims to equip young people to analyze news and distinguish accurate from misleading information. It targets university students, given their social role and heavy social media exposure, through interactive, youth-led workshops grounded in discussion and real-

life media analysis, and through awareness-raising content across digital platforms—while encouraging youth to become peer facilitators and critical thinkers in their own communities. The initiative responds to an urgent need: building an informed generation that can engage with all forms of media critically and protect themselves from misinformation and manipulation.

To execute her vision, Sajeda Manasra will serve as a Fellow of the Media Education Lab during 2026–2027. Her goals include:

- ✓ **Deliver interactive workshops reaching at least 300 Palestinian youth across communities and universities.**
- ✓ **Train 15–20 peer facilitators to independently lead workshops and expand the initiative.**
- ✓ **Develop and publish consistent digital content on media literacy, misinformation, and AI-generated content.**
- ✓ **Establish student-led Media Compass teams at 3–5 West Bank universities, each contributing to workshops and outreach.**

Her project team already includes 3 facilitators, and as of April 2026, 90 participants have been reached through workshops and activities focused on media analysis, misinformation, and digital awareness. Sajeda is also building local and international collaborations, including YOUTHRIVING, Shakkely, Rise for Impact, and the Arab Scout Leaders Union. Local and global networked learning communities can be self-sustaining when participants themselves take responsibility for continuing the work. The results of this project will inform additional grant applications and possibilities for virtual events.

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Visual materials available:

Slide Deck Topline Findings:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1mElX2ClktPsJ8BEXjOpR-28LrI8NXkNI/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=115027467484578342449&rtmpof=true&sd=true>

Slides, ML in Palestine:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ou4XEGvxQji8PZcsqgFJyq025nLrkedi/edit?slide=id.p1#slide=id.p1>



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Archived Materials and Data (Open Science Framework)

All project materials and data are available at the Open Science Framework:

<https://osf.io/zmwkh>

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This work continues.

It continues in classrooms, workshops, digital spaces, and community conversations.

It continues through educators who teach young people to question, analyze, create, reflect, and act.

And it continues through Palestinian youth who are learning to navigate media with confidence, creativity, and care.

Thank You.



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