

BBC
MEDIA ACTION

Evaluating the impact of radio drama on social cohesion and peace-building in Myanmar

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BBC Media Action

- ▶ BBC's international development charity
- ▶ Media and communication: informing, connecting and empowering people to transform lives
- ▶ Reaching over 100 million people through over 100 local partners (across 20+ countries)
- ▶ Media development intrinsic to our work



Governance
and Rights



Health



Resilience and
Humanitarian
Response

Conflict prevention, conflict management/resolution and peace-building

BBC Media Action uses mass media and communication to support peace across a range of fragile and conflict-affected settings

- **Conflict Prevention** – e.g. addressing deeper societal conditions that generate tensions such as the exclusion of vulnerable populations
- **Conflict management and resolution** - includes the provision of accurate, credible and balanced information, modelling of non-violent ways to resolve conflict and the dispelling of myths and mis/disinformation
- **Peacebuilding/ State-building** – e.g. convening national public conversations that help to discuss grievances and post-conflict state-building



Myanmar context

- Myanmar is a country rich in ethnic and cultural diversity. While the large majority of people are Buddhists, a significant minority are Christian, Muslim or Hindu.
- There are long-existing inter-community, religious and ethnic tensions (fuelled by hate speech), ongoing conflict in the northwest and northeast of the country and a stalling peace-process.
- Many people have limited exposure to ethnic and religious groups other than their own – particularly in rural parts of the country.



Tea Cup Diaries

- BBC Media Action has been producing and broadcasting *The Tea Cup Diaries*, a 15-minute weekly radio drama aimed at rural audiences, since 2014 - funded by USAID and DFID
- Aired on MRTV radio, the national broadcaster, since 2014 – now on 7th series
- It focuses on the family and community around a local tea shop in the outskirts of Yangon
- Listeners follow the funny, heart-warming and realistic stories of various characters that reflect Myanmar's religious and ethnic diversity



Tea Cup Diaries

Project objectives

- Increase audiences' understanding, openness and respect for people from different backgrounds in Myanmar
- Break the 'us and them' barrier by challenging negative portrayals of different groups in Myanmar society
- Encourage discussion around themes covered by the programme, particularly around diversity
- Increase understanding of the need to think critically about an individual's role in consuming and sharing information



Research approach

Qualitative Research

Collect feedback on engagement and influences of the drama against project outcomes

FGDs and IDIs with TCD listeners in

2015, 2016, 2018

Audience Panel

Understand engagement and response to series 6 content over time

30 regular TCD listeners

Aug–Dec 2018

Quantitative Studies

Reach and engagement measured as part of broader media landscape survey

3000 interviews (nationally representative)

2016 & Dec 2018

Understand engagement and impact of the drama against project outcomes in focus State

800 interviews (400 TCD listeners, 400 non-listeners)

December 2018

Informing programming – formative research and panel study

- Previous qualitative research had shown that **audiences were not picking-up on the subtle indicators** of religious/ethnic diversity in characters
- We wanted to **test audience recognition of and reaction to more explicit storylines** about different religious groups
- Also **examine impact on knowledge** of different religious practices and **test measures of/impact on attitudes**
- A **panel methodology** was employed, gathering feedback from 31 listeners over a four-month period through regular interviews conducted by BBC Media Action researchers both in person and over the telephone
- Baseline, tracking and endline measurement



Panel study – what did we learn?

- The **inclusion of religious themes in the drama was welcomed by a majority of panellists**
- Throughout the 4 month research period, the **storyline about the central Muslim character was the most recalled**
- When comparing responses to questions on knowledge of Islam between the baseline and endline, **some listeners showed more in-depth understanding of practices associated with the religion**
- Engagement with characters in series six **encouraged some listeners to feel more open to those of different religions**
- However there was **confusion about ethnicity vs religion** and frequent use of the term ‘Kalar’

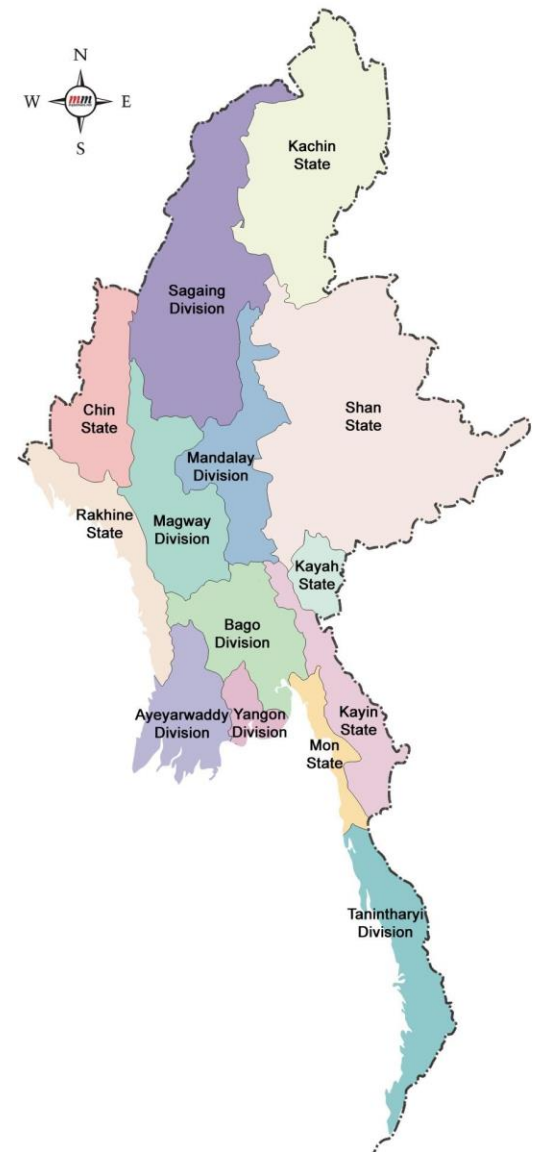


Panel study limitations

- **Sample size and location** – Location chosen for high concentration of listeners, but in a diverse country the transferability of findings limited.
- **Exploring religion** – Religion can be a particularly contentious subject to discuss in Myanmar. Interviews were conducted individually to increase likelihood to share honest answers and avoid potential ‘group think’. Panellists did not appear to feel inhibited in sharing their honest opinions.
- **Research effect of listener engagement** – All panellists were already frequent listeners but the majority of panellists said they listened more carefully to the drama as a result of being in the panel study (some even said they had been taking notes).
- **Relationship with interviewers** – Panellists met BBC Media Action interviewers who come from a range of backgrounds. This may have influenced and/or decreased panellists' likelihood to express negative views towards people from ethnic or religious groups other than their own.
- **Priming effect of regular contact on consistent themes** – Using tools addressing the same issues on a regular basis, we expected to see some influence on the response of the participants, i.e. panellists becoming more aware of the issues that the research was interested (with possible biasing impact).

Measuring reach and audience profile of programme

- Nationwide f2f household survey in late 2018
- Adults 15+
- Multistage Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) sampling approach across the 15 states and regions in Myanmar
- A minimum of 100 interviews was allocated to each state and region to ensure analysis could be completed at the state/region level
- Remaining interviews were allocated based on the population distribution reported in the 2014 Myanmar census
- Each state and region was sampled based on the urban/rural split of that location
- Gender was split 50/50 across the study
- Computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) by an external research agency



Measuring reach and audience profile of programme

Tea Cup Diaries	2016		2018	
Source: BBC Media Action Nationally Representative Surveys (n=3000)	%	Millions	%	Millions
Reach	21.4%	7.7m	15.2%	5.4m
Regular Reach	14.8%	5.3m	8.1%	2.9m

- TCD is reaching 41% of all radio listeners in Myanmar
- Over one fifth (22%) of listeners are tuning in regularly (at least every other week)
- TCD reaches rural audiences particularly well – its audience is 87% rural, compared with 70% of the overall population
- It reaches men and women at a near equal rate
- TCD is especially good at reaching people from lower income groups: 14% of the audience is made up of the poorest people in Myanmar (this group makes up 11% of the overall population)

Measuring impact on outcomes

- f2f household survey in late 2018
- Respondents were 15+ years of age and had to have access to radio, with a focus on rural audiences.
- Sample of 800 respondents from the Ayeyarwaddy region
 - 400 participants were Tea Cup Diaries listeners
 - 400 had not listened to the drama
- Measure differences in outcomes around knowledge, discussion and attitudes to religious and ethnic diversity
- Assessed if there were differences between listeners and non-listeners
- Understanding if levels of engagement with the drama influenced these outcomes
- Regression models controlled for a wide range of factors including: gender, income, education level, social networks (how large and diverse a respondent's social network was), location etc.



Measuring engagement - approach

- Evidence suggests that **dramas and soap operas can change attitudes or beliefs** in line with those expressed in the story
- However **high engagement is key to achieving this impact**
- So our **research looked to understand and measure listener engagement** with the drama
 - Use of qualitative panel tracking listener engagement and feedback & testing potential 'engagement' survey measures
 - Inclusion of attention and emotional engagement measures in our quantitative surveys
 - Development of an 'emotional engagement scale' using factor analysis
 - Providing all listeners with an emotional engagement score and using this in our regression analysis

MEASURING EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

1. I felt sorry for some of the characters in Tea Cup Diaries
2. I could imagine myself or people in my community facing similar situations
3. The story affected me emotionally
4. The events in the story were relevant to my everyday life
5. During the program, when a main character succeeded I felt happy, and when they suffered in some way I felt sad.

Measuring engagement – what we found

- We found a **high level of attentional focus among regular listeners** (55% said they give the programme their full attention when they listen)
- The main reasons listeners engage with the drama is because they find it **educational** (they reported learning from the drama about a range of areas such as conflict resolution, women's economic empowerment), the **characters and storylines resonate with their own lives** and they find it **entertaining**
- Listeners say it is a unique drama – especially in terms of **authentic voices** – for example the use actors from different areas of Myanmar with genuine accents
- Listeners like the way the **drama reflects the same key life events** that are happening in the real world – such as festivals and seasons.
- The audience appreciate the **high production values**



Understanding social networks

- Previous formative research revealed that most people in Myanmar have often very limited interactions with people from different backgrounds to their own.
- Overall, it is not the norm to have close personal relationships with people from different ethnic or religious backgrounds
- We wanted to control for social contact in our regression models
- So we asked participants *'Do you have any 'Other religious group/Other ethnic group' who are FAMILY/FRIENDS/NEIGHBOURS/CO-WORKERS'*
- **Diverse social networks relatively limited**
- More likely: non-Bamar groups, non-Buddhist groups, urban groups and men



Measuring attitudes to others

- In previous studies carried out by BBC Media Action, research participants responded to general attitudinal statements about people from other groups overwhelmingly positively - suspected **high social desirability bias** or **social norms not to express negative attitudes** may be at play
- We also knew from previous research that it would **too sensitive to ask respondents their opinions about specific religious or ethnic groups** and that it was **challenging for people to name different ethnic and religious groups**
- **Challenging to design the survey to measure attitudes towards specific ethnic or religious groups** (i.e. how people felt about Muslims as opposed to Christians).



Measuring attitudes to others

- We decided to draw on the **Bogardus 'social distance'** scale - a psychological testing scale created to measure **willingness to participate in social contacts** of varying degrees of closeness with diverse social groups
- The degrees of social distance were chosen as the types of **interactions most often role-modelled** in the Tea Cup Diaries.
- **Pilot testing with our panel** using a scale response but participants found this confusing
- For full survey we **adjusted the questions to be binary** and asked yes/no questions instead

SOCIAL DISTANCE QUESTIONS

Awareness: Which [ETHNIC/RELIGIOUS] groups, other than your own, do you know live in Myanmar?

Knowledge: What do you know about people from this group?

Source of information: Where have you learned about them?

Social distance: If you met someone who is [ETHNIC/RELIGION], would you be willing to...? (Yes/No)

- Work with this person
- Be friends with them
- Help this person if they were facing difficulties

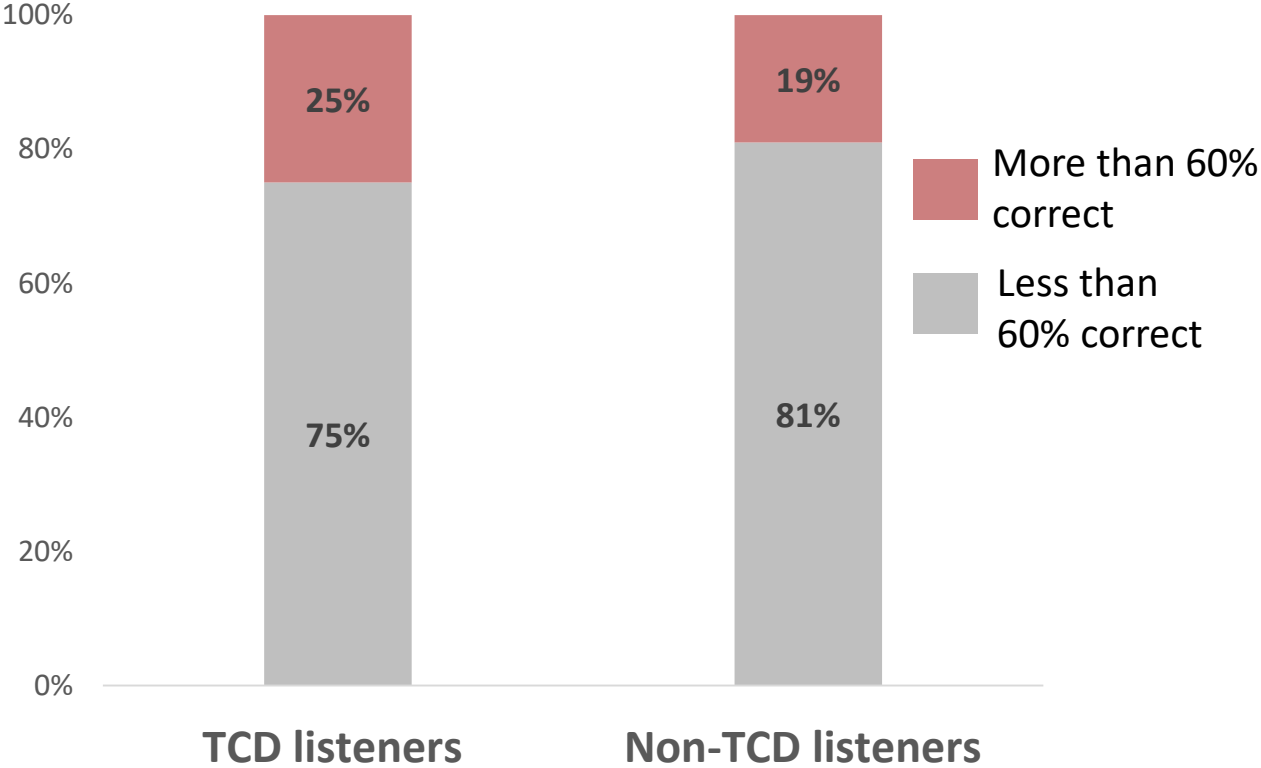
Social distance: Why do you say that?

What have we learned

- The evaluation has helped **to test some of the insights which have been gathered over the course of the project qualitatively.**
- It is evident from this research evaluation, conducted nearly four years after the drama first started, that **the show is having an impact**, however this is **mediated by the level of emotional engagement** listeners have with the show.
- Tea Cup Diaries is **having an influence on people's knowledge of others**, as those regularly reached by the show displayed higher levels of knowledge of other religious groups and practices – especially Muslim practices which had been showcased through the most recent series.
- **Tea Cup Diaries listeners who were more emotionally engaged with the show were more likely to be discussing issues around accepting 'others'**, compared to those who were less emotionally engaged (1.6 times as likely)
- They were also **more likely to demonstrate more accepting attitudes towards other religious and ethnic groups** (1.9 times as likely compared to non-listeners)

What have we learned

Overall knowledge of different religious practices

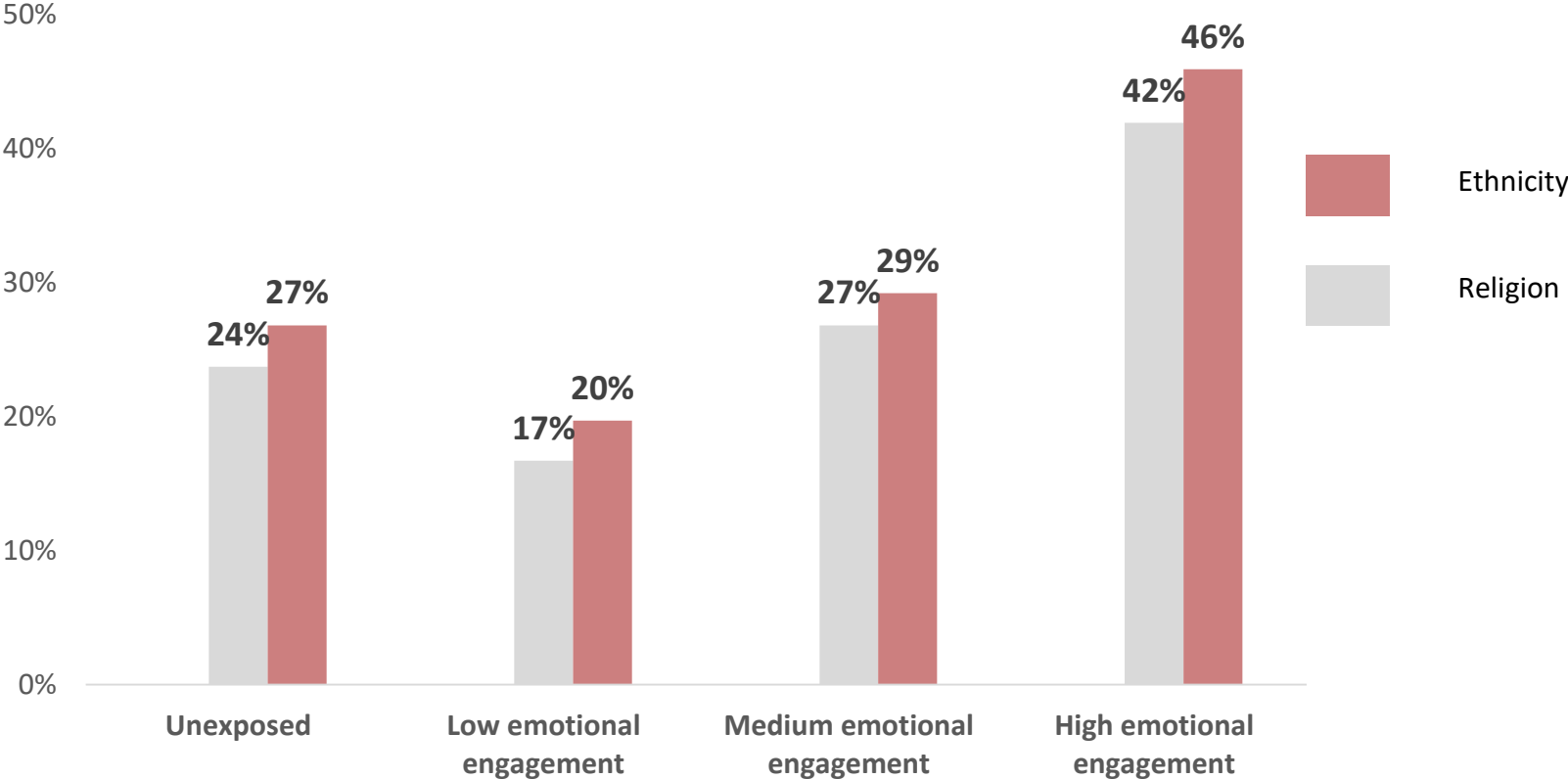


*“I came to know about Mahar Shwe from the drama. In U Hla Myint's religion, they cannot pawn and cannot borrow with interest.”
(Female, Bamar, Younger)*

Q: Which religious group is associated with the following [insert religious practice]?
Source: BBC Media Action TCD Quantitative Impact Study in Ayeyarwaddy Region, Base: All respondents (n=800).

What have we learned

It is very acceptable to marry or be friends with someone from a different ethnicity/religion



Q: How acceptable do you think it is for people from different religions to do the following? Very acceptable (n=206)
Source: BBC Media Action TCD Quantitative Impact Study in Ayeyarwaddy Region, Base: All respondents (n=800).

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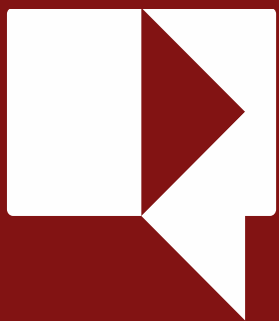
Tea Cup Diaries: Helping communities in Myanmar understand each other

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