SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND MYANMAR

RECONCILIATION IN MYANMAR: BRIDGING THE DIVIDES WITH CULTURAL EXPRESSION

FINAL EXTERNAL EVALUATION

Community Dialogue and Mobile Screening of The Team Myanmar, Mon State

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I. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CGA – Common Ground Approach
DM&E – Design, Monitoring and Evaluation
EVD - enhanced Versatile Disc Player
FGD – Focus Group Discussion(s)
IDP – Internally Displaced Person(s)
KII – Key Informant Interviews
MaBaTha – Association for the Protection of Race and Religion
MRTV – Myanmar Radio & Television
MID – Myanmar Institute for Democracy
MIT - Myanmar Institute of Theology
NLD – National League for Democracy
SFCG – Search for Common Ground
3 R-Approach – Reach, Relevance, Response Approach
TSA – The Search Approach
YFS – Yangon Film School
II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Search for Common Ground’s (SFCG) first Myanmar-based project, Reconciliation in Myanmar: Bridging the Divides with Cultural Expression launched its country office. Funded by the European Union, over 32 months the project used media, arts and culture - television, radio, documentary film and participatory theatre - to support the national peace process in Kachin, Kayah, Kayin and Mon States, as well as Yangon and Mandalay. The project was designed and implemented in partnership with two local organisations: Nyein Foundation (Shalom) and the Yangon Film School (YFS).

The project’s overall objective was to facilitate a process of reconciliation across ethnic, political, generational and gender divides by strengthening relationships among interethnic and interreligious individuals and groups, to strengthen the capacity of CSOs, media professionals and cultural actors to integrate cultural content promoting intercultural dialogue and reconciliation, and to foster greater awareness among the general population about cultural diversity and expression representative of all ethnic and religious groups. While the project activities generally focused on the most marginalised, divided and polarised members of society, including ethnic and religious minorities, youth and women, the television and radio programs targeted young males from the majority Burman ethnic group.

The project was anchored in the following core Theory of Change: “If writers, dramatists, and filmmakers work together to create stories—with cultural content that humanises the “other” and with role models who seek relationships with people from across dividing lines—audience members will emulate the attitudes and behaviours portrayed. When attitudes and behaviours transform, it promotes tolerance and value for a multi-ethnic society on a broader societal scale, ultimately creating cultural drivers of peace.”

The evaluation team was tasked with generating results that demonstrated the extent of the project’s success against the set objectives, including highlighting its contribution to harmony and mutual respect among divided Myanmar communities and against the project’s indicators, and emphasising practices and lessons learned for the future. The end-of-project evaluation was conducted two years after the baseline study and conflict analysis, 15 months after the historic November 2016 parliamentary elections, and close to one year after Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy party assumed power.

KEY FINDINGS

Data from the viewership and listenership survey, complemented by relevant information gathered during the focus group discussions and key informant interviews, as well as from case studies and stories, informed the evaluation’s key findings in terms of relevance, program effectiveness (intended results and specific objectives), peace effectiveness, mutual reinforcement/coherence, EU value-added, and sustainability.

The project activities and approach were widely viewed as relevant and as targeting the right populations at the right period of time. There was strong interest in the use of art, culture and media for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. SFCG was seen to have made a unique contribution to the field of media content production, and the Common Ground Approach and participatory theatre were deemed to be strong tools that could cross-cut future projects and programs.

With regards to program effectiveness: the project activities were completed within the designated 32-month period. The three partners have strong reputations, skill sets, knowledge and experience,
and many of their challenges were similar to those experienced by other organisations working during the same time period.

The evaluation team found evidence that individual and group relationships between ethnic and religious groups, particularly among people directly involved in the project, had strengthened (specific objective 1), and that civil society, media professionals and cultural actors had developed greater capacity to integrate cultural content for the promotion of intercultural dialogue and reconciliation (specific objective 2). Although specific cases of increased awareness among the greater population about cultural diversity and expression representative of all ethnic and religious groups were noted, this area proved more challenging to document and to achieve over one project period (specific objective 3). Sustained project work is recommended so that SFCG can continue working towards these goals.

Almost all of the people interviewed in the ethnic states said they had experienced strong resonance vis-à-vis the participatory theatre performances, and in some specific cases, response (i.e. children going to school instead of working and neighbours working together). The Team Myanmar viewers interviewed also indicated resonance and response (i.e.: saying that the stories had resembled their own lives and cultures and their experiences with conflict, that they had participated in discussions about identity, respect, and friendship, and made new friends from other cultures and religions).

Project staff, mobilisers and actors were exposed to different ethnicities, religions and viewpoints which in some cases was transformational. They also developed sustainable peacebuilding, conflict resolution and communication skills, as well as technical skills in the field of arts, culture and media. Friendships and working relationships that cross ethnic and religious lines have continued beyond the project period. This speaks to the sustainability of the project. Interviewees and survey respondents also indicated that they would like to see more mobile screenings and theatre performances; a sustainable interest in the project was thus created and should be exploited. One of the greatest challenges was ensuring that the television, radio, theatre performances and films reached large and diverse audiences beyond the individuals and groups directly involved in project activities. This means there is significant scope for their use beyond the project period.

According to the EU, the project is a good example of a reconciliation project and has positively informed other actions, thereby playing a broader role. During the project period the EU funded other complementary and mutually reinforcing projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

*To strengthen relationships among interethnic and interreligious individuals and groups, and to increase awareness among the overall population about cultural diversity and expression representative of all ethnic and religious groups.*

*New project design:* Ensure longer-term project activities and a more substantive engagement in the locations where they were conducted; pro-actively link relevant activities and media products to enable increased reach and resonance; design new activities that continue to utilise the media products produced during SFCG’s first project; integrate media products into educational programs and curricula; stick with what works i.e. everyone appreciated the participatory theatre so integrate it into future project design; experiment with productions from the point of view of ethnic minorities; create new activities/programming that focus on young Burman males; create new activities linked to music.
Programmatic approach and implementation: enable strong and creative collaborations between all of SFCG’s partners: move activities and outreach beyond the traditional SFCG, Shalom and YFS networks.

Partnerships: explore partnerships with new broadcasters to ensure SFCG’s media products and messages reach larger audiences; explore partnerships with the Myanmar government with a view to cost-share future educational activities and foster the sustainability of individual initiatives; develop effective tools for communication between partners, as well as processes that enable effective financial management for all partners

To build the capacity of local CSOs, media professionals and cultural actors to integrate cultural content promoting intercultural dialogue and reconciliation

Project design: enable a longer-term, substantive commitment to the teams and individuals that produce, perform and screen project activities; develop activities to identify undiscovered talent and potential

Programmatic approach and implementation: focus on young people in the ethnic states; move beyond volunteerism as a means for implementing activities

Partnerships: explore long-term partnerships with, and support for, the creative teams and individuals involved in SFCG’s first project

III. BRIEF CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Written in February 2015, the conflict analysis conducted for this project pointed to the crucial role of the November parliamentary elections: “This critical event will shape the country’s political landscape as it seeks to consolidate the reform efforts which have been led by the current government. The national-level politics are unfolding in a highly divided society which is rife with both violent and nonviolent conflicts. The ethnic, political class and other divisions are intensified by the country’s complex history, and rich diversity. Multiple and deep rifts entrench enmities across the country’s various states and divisions. However, the opening of the country to new cultural ideas and influences is currently challenging these discords.”

Drawing upon research conducted in four ethnic states - Mon, Kayin, Kayah and Kachin - as well as in Yangon and Mandalay, the report cited three key findings: minorities and non-recognised groups face continued exclusion; there are multitudes of entrenched societal divisions (inter-ethnic, intra-ethnic, religious, generational, and government-civil society); and common grounders act as forces for peace (via interfaith activities, civil society initiatives, social work, and other activities aimed at building bridges across dividing lines).

The end-of-project evaluation was conducted two years after the conflict analysis and scoping mission, 15 months after the elections, and close to one year after Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy party assumed power. The three key findings that informed the project are still valid. The premise – and promise - that parliamentary elections would
precipitate a period of consolidation of reform efforts instituted by the previous quasi-civilian administration is arguable, and in some sectors, including media, unrealised.

Promising to prioritise peace and national reconciliation, in August 2016 Myanmar’s State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi convened the 21st Century Panglong Conference. An homage to the 1947 summit led by her father Bogyoke Aung San, the 2016 conference sought to tackle issues linked to sustained armed conflict and calls for a federal democratic union. In the run-up to the parliamentary elections, President Thein Sein’s quasi-civilian administration failed to convince all of the major ethnic armed organisations to sign the National Ceasefire Agreement. Bringing them to the table, alongside political parties, military officials and government representatives, is now a key component of the NLD’s peace process. However, worsening conflict and military escalation in, notably, Kachin and north-eastern Shan State are jeopardising efforts. Observers note that conflict in the ethnic states has increased since the NLD took power; this is less a reflection of the NLD government than the strategy of the military to undermine it.

Stateless Rohingya Muslims are also attracting renewed attention. A crackdown by the military in October 2016 resulted in mass deaths and the displacement of tens of thousands to Bangladesh. UN Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee called for an independent investigation; a UN report released in February 2017 also detailed serious human rights violations by Myanmar’s security forces.

International Crisis Group calls the emergence of the armed group Harakah al-Yaqin (“Faith Movement”) in northern Rakhine State a potential ‘game-changer’: “Although the Rohingya have never been a radicalized population, the government’s heavy-handed military response increases the risk of spiraling violence. Grievances could be exploited by transnational jihadists attempting to pursue their own agendas, which would inflame religious tensions across the majority Buddhist country.”

Observers widely agree that freedom of expression has deteriorated under the NLD government. This is particularly true in the digital sphere where section 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law has been wielded to arrest, prosecute and imprison those who are critical of the government and military. In the ethnic states a growing number of defamation cases brought by local authorities, businessmen, military, government and ethnic armed groups are also being used to silence media and other critical voices. Civil society actors add that their access to the current government and to parliamentarians is more restricted than it was under the previous quasi-civilian administration.

In a media monitoring report released on 16 February 2017, the Myanmar Institute for Democracy (MID) noted that while private media continue to offer the most pluralistic and balanced coverage, critical and analytical reporting is still rare. A substantial share of the coverage in both private and state media is devoted to government officials, primarily to State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. There are few in-depth stories or voices from the grassroots, including from Myanmar’s diverse cultural, ethnic and religious communities.

The NLD’s legal advisor and prominent constitutional lawyer U Ko Ni was assassinated on 29 January 2017. A Muslim, U Ko Ni was committed to democratic reform inclusive of all religious beliefs and ethnicities. Advocating that the Myanmar constitution protects the right to religious freedom, he vigorously lobbied the NLD government to respect and protect the interest of all religions, not only Buddhists.

U Ko Ni’s death was considered a devastating blow for human rights, social justice, and rule of law in Myanmar. Yet the fact that thousands of people from different ethnic groups and religions gathered peacefully at his funeral also presents a strong message of unity, peace and hope. This message embodies the values of the aforementioned ‘common grounders’ and the core purpose of the SFCG project. State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi’s oft-cited commitment to educational reform also
presents new opportunities for collaboration at the nexus between education, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

IV. PROJECT INTRODUCTION

“Reconciliation in Myanmar: Bridging the Divides with Cultural Expression” was Search for Common Ground’s first Myanmar-based project and launched the opening of its Myanmar Country Office. Funded by the European Union, this 32-month project used a combination of culture and media - television, radio, film and theater - to support the national peace process in, notably, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin and Mon States, as well as the urban centers of Yangon and Mandalay. While the project focused on the most marginalised, divided, and polarised members of society, including ethnic and religious minorities, youth and women, the television and radio program targeted young males from Myanmar’s majority Burman ethnic group. The decision to focus on this latter group was taken in the wake of SFCG’s National Curriculum Summit which found that the attitudes and behaviours of young Burman men needed to shift.

The project is anchored in the following core Theory of Change: “If writers, dramatists, and filmmakers work together to create stories— with cultural content that humanises the “other” and with role models who seek relationships with people from across dividing lines— audience members will emulate the attitudes and behaviours portrayed. When attitudes and behaviours transform, it promotes tolerance and value for a multi-ethnic society on a broader societal scale, ultimately creating cultural drivers of peace.”

SFCG designed and implemented the project in partnership with two local organisations: Nyein Foundation (Shalom) and the Yangon Film School (YFS). SCFG founding president John Marks and Nepal Country Director Serena Rix Tripathee conducted an assessment mission. A baseline study and conflict analysis laid the groundwork for peacebuilding and democratisation initiatives that sought to build and strengthen constructive narratives, counter stereotypes, and catalyse attitude, knowledge and behavior changes. Specifically, the initiatives aimed to support cultural and media actors working to promote reconciliation across dividing lines. The analysis informed the methodology for each media/arts stream, as well as the production of television and radio dramas, short documentary films, and participatory theatre performances.

The project design was informed by Nyein Foundation’s (Shalom) peacebuilding expertise, the Yangon Film School’s filmmaking prowess, and Search for Common Ground’s global expertise using cultural expression as a peacebuilding tool via radio, films and television drama. SFCG’s media wing, Common Ground Productions (CGP), provided technical oversight for the production and development of the television programming.

IV.1 OBJECTIVES, KEY INDICATORS & INTENDED RESULTS

The overall objective of the project was to facilitate a process of reconciliation across ethnic, political, generational and gender divides in Myanmar. Key indicators included the number of people surveyed in the project target areas who report building relationships across dividing lines (ethnic, political, religious, generational and gender), and the number of people in each target district who demonstrate respect for people from a different identity group (ethnic, political, religious, generational and gender)
**Specific objective 1:** To strengthen relationships among interethnic and interreligious individuals and groups. *Key indicators:* # of cultural activities implemented by multi-ethnic diverse groups and individuals to promote intercultural dialogue at the local level as a result of the project; % of people in project target areas who report having positive relationships with at least two people/families/groups from a different ethnic or religious identity (disaggregated by ethnicity and religion); and at least 2 case studies from each project target area of improved relations and collaboration across dividing lines.

**Specific objective 2:** To build the capacity of local CSOs, media professionals and cultural actors to integrate cultural content promoting intercultural dialogue and reconciliation. *Key indicators:* % of participants in capacity building events who demonstrate increased capacity on various aspects of intercultural dialogue and reconciliation, including the Common Ground Approach; # of trained participants who integrate the Common Ground Approach (CGA) into their work; # of intercultural events in each target community that promote intercultural dialogue and reconciliation.

**Specific Objective 3:** To increase greater awareness among the overall population about cultural diversity and expression representative of all ethnic and religious groups in Myanmar. *Key indicators:* % of people surveyed who report learning at least one positive new piece of information about the culture of other communities as a result of the project; % of viewers/listeners of The Team Myanmar (TV and radio) program who report resisting stereotypes about another identity group (ethnic, religious or political) in their community.

**Intended results:**
- Strengthened individual and group relationships between ethnic and religious groups
- Increased capacity of civil society, media professionals and cultural actors to integrate cultural content to promote intercultural dialogue and reconciliation
- Increased awareness among the greater population of Myanmar about cultural diversity and expression representative of all ethnic and religious groups in Myanmar.

**V. METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS**

The final evaluation team was tasked with generating results that demonstrate the extent of the project’s success against set objectives, highlighting its contribution to the promotion of reconciliation, harmony and mutual respect among divided Myanmar communities and against the project’s indicators, and emphasised practices and lessons learned for the future.

With reference to the original context analysis conducted two years ago, the evaluation includes a brief comparative context analysis. OECD DAC criteria was used to evaluate conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

**V.I FIELD RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The evaluation methodology was informed and inspired by the following approaches and tools: inclusiveness (a wide range of viewpoints); mixed method approaches (qualitative and quantitative methods, including a listenership/viewership survey using the 3-R approach: Reach, Resonance, and Response, and KIIS and FGDs with community stakeholders and key people); and case studies/stories demonstrating improved inter-identity groups, relationships, and collaborations across the divide, as well as learning and transformation.
With reference to the aforementioned baseline study and conflict assessment, as well as the overall project objective, three specific objectives, intended results and keys indicators, the objective of the field research was threefold: to track viewership/listenership rates; to investigate how the television and radio dramas, mobile screenings, participatory theatre, and short films empowered target audiences for social change and transformation; and to analyse findings against the original baseline indicators.

3-R FRAMEWORK

*Reach* – geographical coverage & listener demographics (tool: listenership and viewership survey)

*Relevance* – the extent to which issues raised in the program, and the overall format of the program, are relevant with regards to local socio-political dynamics (tool: FDGs & KIIs)

*Response* – changes that have occurred as a result of the programs & the ways in which the target audiences are adjusting their behavior and/or taking specific actions to address conflict issues as a result of the programs (tool: case studies)

GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

While the radio and television programs were broadcast across the country, the baseline survey and outreach activities were conducted in four targeted ethnic states - Kayah, Kayin, Kachin, and Mon - as well as in Yangon and Mandalay. The final external evaluation focused on three of these ethnic states: Kayah, Kayin and Kachin. Mon State was not included for reasons of time and cost; as well, the contextual situation was similar to Kayin State, and the Kayin and Mon cultural actors and other groups had close coordination so the data was likely to be similar. As SFCG seeks to understand how cosmopolitan Bamar think about the targeted issues and programs, Yangon was also included in the evaluation.

The viewership and listenership survey locations were determined in collaboration with SFCG’s partner Nyein Foundation (Shalom) and were all included in the project’s baseline survey. The demographics of the four targeted townships ensured a diversity of urban, regional and rural audiences and respondents; so that the survey had the largest possible geographical reach within each township, the enumerators were assigned to a variety of towns, wards and villages.

The evaluation team reached out to various stakeholder groups, including artists, civil society organisations, cultural actors, and media professionals, as well as the most marginalised, divided and polarised demographics (e.g. women, youth, ethnic and religious minorities).

V.II RESEARCH TOOLS

DESK REVIEW

The desk review included relevant project documents (proposals, baseline survey and conflict analysis reports, monitoring reports and data, quarterly reports, etc.), as well as relevant external research and literature, and media reports.

LISTENERSHIP AND VIEWERSHIP SURVEY

The viewership and listenership end-of-project survey addressed two core questions: 1) Is the programming reinforcing trust-building techniques applicable in citizens’ daily lives? and 2) Are viewers exposed to different viewpoints and ethnicities that help in resisting cultural stereotypes?

The survey employed non-probability, purposive sampling (i.e. it endeavored to reach a targeted population and predefined groups in a limited timeframe, with an emphasis on gender balance, diverse age groups, and diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds). Given SFCG’s focus on
youth (20-29 year olds), including as a target audience for the curriculum map, where possible particular attention was paid to this age group. Enumerators solicited participation on a voluntary basis, according to the aforementioned criteria, and with reference to the ‘qualify questions’ section of the survey.

SAMPLING

The listenership and viewership survey had 534 respondents: 223 in Yangon (Hlaing Thar Ya Township); 100 in Kayah State (Demoso Township); 111 in Kayin State (Hpa-An Township); and 100 in Kachin State (Waingmaw Township). Three of the interviews conducted in Kayah State, however, were incomplete and not included in the final tally; as such, data from 531 interviews was analysed. The sample size for each township was calculated according to population. The sample size was calculated based on total population aged 15-64 and was proportionately distributed across the four townships covered by the survey. However, any township sample less than one-fourth of the total sample was adjusted to make it at least 25 percent of the total sample, thus increasing the total sample size to 534. With 5 percent confidence level and 5 percent margin of error (confidence interval), the sample size above 384 + 10% NR error (i.e. 422) is statistically valid for the population size of four townships (871198), this survey can be considered representative.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Township</th>
<th>Age Disaggregation</th>
<th>Sample Size for Population</th>
<th>Valid Interviews</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-14</td>
<td>15-64</td>
<td>65+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waingmaw</td>
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<td>Hlaing Thar Ya</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>85,821</td>
<td>871,998</td>
<td>57,168</td>
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The survey served as a tool to address the first component of SFCG’s 3-R Framework i.e. Reach (geographical coverage & listener demographics). The quantitative data was analysed against the qualitative data that was also gathered in the four targeted locations via KII and FGD. Further details about the KIIs and FGDs are provided in the qualitative section below.

Towns, villages and wards where the survey took place:

*Hlaing Thar Ya Township (Yangon):* Street 1, Ward 1, 2, 2/6, 3/5, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 16, Tha Ma Kone Ward, Bogyoke Rd, Factory zone, Mya Yeik Nyo Street, Offices, Pan Hlaing Road, Quarter 5, Sectors 8
ENUMERATORS

Seven local enumerators were hired to conduct the survey in each of the three ethnic states. Given that the sample size was considerably larger, 15 local enumerators were hired in Yangon. A local supervisor monitored the work of each of the enumeration teams. The decision to work with local teams ensured a familiarity with local areas and cultures, as well as local languages.

SFCG’s project partner Nyein Foundation (Shalom) assisted with the identification of local enumerator teams in the three ethnic states; in Yangon, enumerators were proposed by a variety of partners and contacts. Efforts were made to identify enumerators from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds and of diverse ages, as well as to ensure gender balance. (Please refer to Annex XI.IV for more detailed information about the enumeration teams.)

SURVEY QUALITY CONTROL

After the survey was translated into Myanmar language, it was checked by native speakers and then uploaded into the survey tablets. The first team of enumerators in Yangon assisted with a final review and editing of the questions. Prior to conducting the survey, the evaluation team held a Skype call with SFCG’s Asia Regional DM&E Specialist to review policies and practices.

The evaluation team provided a half-day of training for the enumerators in the four locations, including a review of the survey objectives, research ethics and questions, and a technical session on the use of the survey tablets. Enumerators then conducted test interviews.

The evaluation team interviewed the enumerators at the end of the first day, and provided a brief refresher training at the start of the second day. The supervisor in each location remained in telephone contact with the enumerators, made spot checks, and did trouble-shooting.

SURVEY TABLETS

Xavey Research Solutions in Yangon was tasked with scripting (setting the survey), providing the hardware and software platform and, after the surveys were completed, data cleaning and the provision of a data sheet. The evaluation team leased 15 tablets for Yangon and 7 tablets for the ethnic states.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

The locations identified for the survey were reviewed with SFCG and its local partner Nyein Foundation (Shalom), and were deemed safe for local teams. The evaluation team, with assistance from SFCG, monitored security throughout the consultancy and revised plans as needed. The enumerator teams were closely supervised, thus allowing for quick interventions.

Shalom recommended that the survey could be conducted securely in Waingmaw Township; although it is a restricted zone, it was conducted in secure areas. Adjustments were made so that
female enumerators could work in groups of two or, when relevant, with a male enumerator; for cultural and security reasons, when conducting the survey in villages in the ethnic states all of the enumerators travelled in pairs.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
The qualitative research conducted for the final external evaluation sought to capture results based on the aforementioned project objectives, outcomes, theory of change and log frame indicators. It included the identification of case studies demonstrating improved inter-identity groups’ relationships and collaborations across divides, as well as respect between groups (personal transformations as well as attitudes).

As SFCG’s partner Nyein Foundation (Shalom) managed the project work in the ethnic states, it also organised the FGDs and KIs in these locations, with input from the evaluation team and from SFCG. At the request of the Consultant, SFCG assisted with the organisation of interviews in Yangon. The qualitative research was conducted in the same townships as the quantitative research; the locations were selected based on their strategic significance to the national peace process and the presence of an active civil society.

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW SAMPLING:
In addition to interviews with 8 relevant SFCG staff and the project donor, the evaluation team conducted 17 FGD and 31 KI with project partners, stakeholders, CSOs and community groups, ethnic leaders, television and radio audiences, and bellwether observers (individuals with relevant knowledge and experience in the locations and sectors, including other content producers). SFCG’s approach is based on the belief that everyone who participates in the project – from those producing content to those listening to it - is a stakeholder and beneficiary; interviewees thus included partners and project staff that had participated in the radio, television, participatory theater and short film projects, as well as actors, scriptwriters, producers, documentary filmmakers, and mobile screening/participatory theater audience members.

The KI lasted 60-90 minutes on average, and included a total of 34 interviewees. Bringing together groups of people from similar backgrounds and experiences for open discussion and dialogue, the FGD lasted an average of 2 hours and included 92 participants in total (4-12 per group).

The infographic below provides a comparative picture of the KI and FGD by location, type of interviewee, and gender. The majority of interviews were conducted with theatre and mobile screening audience members, followed by project staff and volunteers, CSO, ethnic, religious and youth leaders, and media workers. Interviews were also conducted with a small number of project partners and bellwether observers. The fact that 59 of the interviewees were women (47%) and 67 men (53%) reflects the evaluation team’s efforts to ensure gender balance. That a slightly larger number were men reflects, at least in part, the local reality; for example, the majority of the ethnic, CSO and religious leaders were men, and men were present in the majority of the meetings.
KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

By Gender

- Yangon: Men 14, Women 11
- Kayah State: Men 22, Women 14
- Kayin State: Men 16, Women 16
- Kachin State: Men 15, Women 16

By KII or FGD

- Yangon: FGD 13, KII 3
- Kayah State: FGD 5, KII 7
- Kachin State: FGD 6, KII 7
- Kayin State: FGD 3, KII 5

By Interviewees

- Project partners: 46
- Project staff/volunteers: 36
- TV/theatre audience: 5
- CSO/ethnic, religious, youth leaders/media: 5
- Bellwether observers: 4
The following four infographics provide a more detailed picture of the KII and FGD conducted in each of the four locations.

### 1. YANGON

**Focus Group Discussions**

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Actors from the Team Myanmar television project

Mobile screening audience members from Insein

Participants in the short documentary film activity at the Yangon Film School

**Key Informant Interviews**

Men: 1 researcher (baseline/conflict analysis), 2 content producers/bellwether observers, 1 revere/bellwether observer

Women: 2 project partners (filmmaking), 1 project partner (peacebuilding), 1 radio project participant, 1 scriptwriter, 1 television project participant, 1 music/video producer, 1 teacher (MIT)

### 2. KAYAH STATE

**Focus Group Discussions**

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Participatory theatre audience members

CSO/community leaders

Students/mobile screening audience members

Ethnic leaders

Media workers

**Key Informant Interviews**

Men: 1 participatory theatre actor, 1 writer/bellwether observer, 1 project partner (peacebuilding), 1 filmmaker, 2 religious leaders

Women: 1 mobile screening and participatory theatre mobiliser
3  **KACHIN STATE**

**Focus Group Discussions**

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**Key Informant Interviews**

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<td><img src="image" alt="People Icon" /></td>
<td>Men: 1 monastery/community educator, 1 youth leader, 1 media worker, 1 filmmaker/mobiliser, 1 religious leader, 1 ethnic leader</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="People Icon" /></td>
<td>Women: 1 media worker, 1 researcher/journalist, 1 project partner (peacebulider)</td>
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4  **KAYIN STATE**

**Focus Group Discussions**

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**Key Informant Interviews**

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<td><img src="image" alt="People Icon" /></td>
<td>Men: 1 community mobiliser, 1 filmmaker, 1 ethnic leader</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="People Icon" /></td>
<td>Women: 1 women rights activist, 1 cultural actor</td>
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V.III RESEARCH SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

- Evidence research is still in the early stages in Myanmar and there is a history of mistrust with regards to answering questions, particularly in the ethnic states.
- The state of linguistics complicated, and in some cases limited, the work of the enumerators in all three locations in the ethnic states (i.e. although they were local, they did not all speak or understand all of the languages).
- This was the first time the enumerators had done surveys, and although there was training and oversight, their inexperience likely impacted on the surveys.
- Although enumerators were instructed to interview young Burman males, the latter were often at school (the evaluation coincided with exam time), or working, and thus were often unavailable.
- Security was an issue in some of the townships; for example, the enumerators could only go to certain villages in Waingmaw where they had prior permission from village heads.

VI. EVALUATION DATA AND ANALYSIS

This next section of the evaluation report takes a closer look at the viewership and listenership survey, and then presents key findings supported both by the quantitative data (relating to the project’s television and radio activities), and the qualitative data collected during the KII and FGD (relating to all of the project activities). The key findings demonstrate the extent of the project’s success against set objectives, as well as lessons learned.

VI.I VIEWERSHIP AND LISTENERSHIP SURVEY

The seven infographics below provide a comparative picture of the viewership and listenership survey data. They are divided into two sections: 1) demographics & viewership, listenership and social media data; and 2) The Team Myanmar data, including audience, resonance, response, and the target audience, young Burman males. (Please refer to Annex XI.VII for a review of the individual survey charts)

Section 1: Demographics & Viewership, listenership and social media data
The first infographic provides a comparative picture of the respondents’ demographics. It indicates, for example, that the majority of respondents (61%) were female; enumerators widely noted that women were generally more available than men, easier to approach, and more willing to participate. Less than half are Burman, Myanmar’s majority ethnic group; a significant number (21%) indicate they are Kayin/Karen. More than half indicate they practise Buddhism, Myanmar’s official religion. Given that Christianity is widely practised in the ethnic states, it is not surprising that 24% say they practise that religion. While the vast majority speak Myanmar, little more than one-quarter are native speakers; this latter finding speaks to the linguistic diversity of the ethnic states.
The next infographic presents a comparative picture of viewership, listenership and social media habits. It clearly indicates that the respondents’ preferred media platform is television, and that the most popular TV channels are government, military and government-private joint ventures. As the country’s broadcast law is not yet operational, there are currently no other options, with the exception of DVB Multimedia that broadcasts via satellite from Thailand.

Drama is the preferred TV format, particularly Korean, Myanmar and Indian. Two percent of respondents said The Team Myanmar was their most favourite drama.

Social media has a slight edge over radio. While Facebook and Viber are the most popular social media platforms, nearly one-half of the respondents say they don’t use social media; as some respondents may not associate Facebook use with social media or with the internet, the percentage of non-users may in reality be significantly lower.

The number of survey respondents that answered the questions included in the following infographic ranged from 521 to 531.
VIEWERSHIP, LISTENERSHIP AND SOCIAL MEDIA HABITS
(521-531 respondents)

Type of media consumed

Most cite television as their main platform: TV 66%
More popular than radio for respondents in Hpa-An & Hlaing Thar Yar
More popular for respondents in Demoso & Waingmaw

Social Media Use

Facebook: 49%
Don’t Use Social Media: 42%
Viber: 20%
YouTube: 8%
Google+Plus: 8%

TV

Channels

Formats

Dramas

Radio

Channels

Formats

Formats

Dramas

Formats
Section 2: “The Team Myanmar”

The following five infographics highlight survey data directly related to “The Team Myanmar” reach (television and radio audiences, including the targeted audience of young Burman males), resonance and response. Critical data has been integrated into the ‘Key Findings’ section of the report.

The first infographic, entitled, THE TEAM MYANMAR TV SERIES provides comparative data about the television program. Interestingly, it indicates that there was a 30% brand recognition. As the survey was conducted in the same four townships as the project’s baseline study, and outreach activities, including mobile screenings and participatory theatre, were conducted in three of the four townships, a decent level of brand recognition was not surprising. Yet in a crowded media marketplace, it can be considered a strong result.

Eighty-five respondents (16% of the total) indicated they had watched the TV program, mostly on television. A modest number of KII & FGD interviewees also said they had watched it, primarily during the mobile screenings.

The vast majority of survey respondents had watched 1-2 or a few episodes. Many of the relevant KII and FGD participants said they had watched parts of 1-2 programs. Almost all said they wanted to see more.
The infographic below provides comparative data about the radio program. Eleven respondents had listened to the radio program, while 85 had watched the TV program; it is thus evident that the latter had far greater reach. The KII and FGD had similar findings i.e.: only a few of the interviewees indicated they had heard of the radio program or listened to it.
The next infographic provides comparative data about resonance, including the program themes that respondents remembered and the characters that appealed to them. It indicates that the 84 respondents who had watched at least one episode of “The Team Myanmar” experienced significant levels of resonance; they stated, for example, that the program themes resembled their own lives, cultures, and experiences with conflict (65%), and that they had learned something new about a different culture (74%).
The next infographic provides comparative data about response. It highlights a significant trend i.e. that respondents who watched at least one program were personally touched by it, understood the messages, and modified some of their attitudes and behaviours targeted by the project. Among other things, respondents said they had made new friends from other cultures and ethnicities, participated in discussions about friendship, identity and respect, and learned about inspiring leaders and the importance of teamwork. It is interesting to note, however, that in one of the FGD in a village in the ethnic states viewers noted that people on television were able to solve their problems quite easily, but that it was much more difficult in real life.
The next infographic provides comparative data about “The Team Myanmar” target audience i.e. young Burman males, aged 20-29. Of the 28 respondents, 5 had heard of the TV program, 3 had watched it, and 1 had listened to the radio program. The vast majority - 25 - were from Yangon. (SFCG included Yangon in its project so that it could reach young Burman males with a view to shifting their attitudes and behaviours.) This was a small sample; enumerators noted that men in that age group were often not present or available (as the evaluation coincided with exam time, they were often at school or working).
VII. KEY FINDINGS

Data from the viewership and listenership survey, complemented by relevant information gathered during the focus group discussions and key informant interviews, as well as from case studies and stories, informed the evaluation’s key findings in terms of relevance, program effectiveness (intended results and specific objectives), peace effectiveness, mutual reinforcement/coherence, EU value-added, and sustainability.

VII.I RELEVANCE

This section explores the relevance of project interventions in facilitating a process of reconciliation across ethnic, religious, political, generational, and gender divides. This includes targeting the right group of participants with the right set of strategies and activities, the timeliness of project interventions vis-à-vis conflict dynamics, and conflict sensitivity.

There was widespread agreement that SFCG had created a niche at the nexus of arts, culture, and media, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Its contribution to the field of media content production was thus considered unique. Two fellow content producers, BBC Media Action and Pyoe Pin, supported this assessment. There was also acknowledgement by its partner, Nyein Foundation (Shalom), that the Common Ground Approach and participatory theatre were strong, relevant tools that could cross-cut all projects and programs. These can be considered best practices.

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I liked the play very much. I have never seen a play before but I loved this experience! I never considered that problems could be solved in this way. I learned valuable problem solving techniques. This is a great way to teach young people about how to resolve conflict, as the plays are interesting and engaging. These are skills that young people can use as they grow into adults.
- Audience Member, Kayah State

Ma Mu Nan was surprised at how eager community members were to participate in the theatre performances and credits the attention given to collecting data and information in the villages before each event. “We first identified the challenges and conflicts in the community by collecting data and information in the village. Then we created the performance based on the problem. The community was very interested in it. They had a lot of questions. Some wrote to thank us for our performances. Some wrote questions. Truthfully, the communities know what problems they are facing. They just don’t know how to uncover the root of the problem or how to deal with it. When we held the theater performances, we explored the roots of the problem and the ways to a solution.”
- Ma Mu Nan, Cultural Actor, Kayah State

The fact that participatory theatre was enthusiastically embraced by participants in the ethnic states, as well as by the cultural actors that performed it, speaks to the timeliness of that project intervention, and the fact that it was the right strategy and platform for that population. While that activity focused on the most marginalised, divided, and polarised members of society, including ethnic and religious minorities, youth and women, “The Team Myanmar” television and radio program targeted young males from Myanmar’s majority Burman ethnic group. The decision to focus on the latter group was taken in the wake of SFCG’s National Curriculum Summit which found that the attitudes and behaviours of young Burman men needed to shift. This remains a complex and pressing need that SFCG plans to address in future projects. While it is important to manage expectations with regards to the reach, resonance and response associated with a single television
program, the KII, FGD and survey indicated that it did contribute to creating a larger conversation around cultural diversity, inclusiveness, reconciliation, peace and harmony. (Please refer to the Peace Effectiveness section below for further discussion on this issue.)

SFCG’s Myanmar Media Coordinator Ma Swe Zin, who worked on “The Team Myanmar” production, says her experience with the Common Ground Approach was transformative on a personal level: “I’ve taken my new communication and conflict resolution tools home and have witnessed the positive impact on my family and friends.” Swe Zin started working as a media coordinator at Search for Common Ground Myanmar in mid-2015. She also had a short stint as an actor (playing the doctor in episode 7 of “The Team Myanmar”). The idea that people from different ethnic groups and religions could find a common ground was brand new to her: “I’ve learned to respect that people have different beliefs and identities. I’ve also come to understand the difference between conflict and violence.” Swe Zin says the project taught her an array of new skills, including negotiation, facilitation and communication. Ma Swe Zin’s story evokes SFCG’s belief that everyone involved in the project - from staff members to artists to audience members - are beneficiaries and stakeholders.

VII.II PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

This section explores the major outputs and outcomes of the project, the impact of external factors, and the project’s contribution to increasing awareness among the greater population about cultural diversity, inclusiveness and expression representative of all ethnic and religious groups in the target areas, and to strengthening civil society, media professionals and cultural actors’ capacity to integrate cultural content for the promotion of intercultural dialogue and reconciliation. Subsections below include intended results and the project’s 3 specific objectives.

SFCG completed the project activities within the designated 32-month period (24 months + an 8 month no-cost project extension). The three partners have strong reputations, skill sets, knowledge and experience. Many of the challenges the project faced were not unique to SFCG during this historic period in Myanmar’s political transition i.e. establishing a country office while simultaneously undertaking an ambitious project, identifying appropriate media platforms and reaching significant audiences in a complex and busy media sector, significant staff turnover, communication issues between partners, delays in the implementation of activities, and other project management challenges, including financial agreements and funding disbursements to partners. SFCG’s two implementing partners highlighted the need to address the latter issue. It is recommended that SFCG review each of the aforementioned challenges and apply lessons learned to future projects.

INTENDED RESULTS:

The overall objective of the project was to facilitate a process of reconciliation across ethnic, political, generational and gender divides. Indicators include strengthened individual and group relationships between ethnic and religious groups, increased capacity of civil society, media professionals and cultural actors to integrate cultural content to promote intercultural dialogue and reconciliation, and increased awareness among the greater population about cultural diversity and expression representative of all ethnic and religious groups.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1:

There is evidence of strengthened individual and group relationships between ethnic and religious groups, particularly among people directly involved in the project. Kayin filmmaker Saw Eh Doh
Poe’s (Aero) story illustrates this point: “I’m Kayin Christian and when I joined the project I didn’t want anything to do with the Kayin Buddhists. But then I got to know them, and now we’re making films together.”

Aero was born in Yangon and spent summers with his family in a Christian community in northern Kayin State. He dreamed of becoming an animator so was excited when he was chosen to participate in the short documentary film course offered by Yangon Film School, in collaboration with Search for Common Ground. His excitement quickly turned to dismay, however, when he discovered that the two other budding filmmakers from Kayin State were Buddhist. Aero lashed out against one of them, saying he wasn’t a true Kayin because his father was from the country’s majority Bamar ethnic group. Yet six weeks later, after living, training and working together, he apologised for his words and actions at the project’s closing ceremony. The two are now friends and collaborate on film projects. Aero is continuing to take courses at the Yangon Film School and to work as a graphic designer. He’s also producing a feature-length documentary called *Seasons of Wishes*. His increased capacity as a filmmaker also provides evidence that specific objective 2 (described in greater detail below) has been met.

There was also evidence of strengthened individual and group relationships between ethnic and religious groups according to the survey respondents who had watched “The Team Myanmar” television program. Sixty-five percent of them said that the program themes resembled their own lives and their own experiences with conflict. Seventy-four percent said they had learned something new about another culture or religion. They also indicated response, including making new friends from different cultures and religions (80%), and participating in discussions about friendship, identity and respect (44%). The survey highlights a significant overall trend i.e. that respondents who watched the program were personally touched by it, understood the messages, and in some cases modified targeted attitudes and behaviours.

“The Team Myanmar” actor Prahbu says the project exposed him to different viewpoints and ethnicities that helped him look beyond cultural stereotypes, and empowered his own transformation: “Before joining The Team Myanmar, I only knew people in my own Tamil community. Now I have friends from many different ethnic groups and religions.”

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We have learned a lot [about our different ethnicities and religions] from each other [Team Cast]. For example, I shared with my friends that ‘Mingalar Par’ in Kayin language is ‘Aung Soe Lar Sai… We had never heard about Hinduism but he (Prabhu) has been teaching us about his culture. The same can be said about our Muslim, Mon, Kayah and Kayin friends.
- Hein Thet Tant, Team Actor (Kayin)
Prahbu played a Hindu snacks seller named Tin Soe who was the fastest player on the team. He says it’s difficult for a Hindu to be cast in mainstream Myanmar movies, so “The Team Myanmar” was a unique opportunity. He was particularly impressed by the rigorous and professional selection process and training. In 2015 Prabhu launched his own company, Master Cine Production Co Ltd, to produce his own movies. He has recently worked as an actor, scriptwriter, director, producer and distributor of short Tamil-language films, as well as Myanmar-language tele-movies and short films. He has also continued acting classes at the 3H (Head Heart, Hands) Art Academy in Yangon. Before joining the project, he didn’t know people from other religions and cultures. He says it has changed his life.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2:

There is evidence that civil society, media professionals and cultural actors have increased capacity to integrate cultural content for the promotion of intercultural dialogue and reconciliation as a result of the project. Ma Thu Thu Htwe’s story provides an excellent example: “My culture doesn’t encourage women to act in theatre, but I wanted to collaborate with people from other religions and ethnic groups, and to work for peace. That’s how I found the courage.”

Twenty-seven year old Ma Thu Thu Htwe volunteered as a cultural actor for the participatory theatre project in Hpa-An. Her parents had taught her to be tolerant and they supported her decision. Some members of her community didn’t welcome it, however, so she tried to be sensitive to their views. When there were Muslims in the audience, for example, she didn’t go on stage. Ma Thu Thu Htwe first started acting with a local theatre project that sought to eradicate domestic violence. She continues to mentor youth involved in that project and to volunteer in a local youth inter-faith program. Interested in conflict resolution and peace, and the use of arts and culture as tools to achieve these goals, she would like to become a trainer to assist the peace process. “When I first started speaking and performing in public, my hands and legs would go cold. This project has given me confidence to speak in public and to collaborate with people from many different cultures and religions.” Ma Thu Thu Htwe’s story also illustrates strengthened relationships between ethnic and religious groups (specific objective 1).

Kayah filmmaker Khon Soe Moe Aung agrees that the project provided a unique opportunity: “It gave me the courage to pursue my dreams. Not many people in Myanmar have that kind of chance.”

Twenty-eight year old Khon Soe Moe Aung lives in Demoso Township in Kayah State. He was one of three young people from his state selected to participate in the short documentary film course at the Yangon Film School. Before joining the project, he worked as a community activist: “When I was
growing up I made short films as a hobby, but I didn’t know how to break into the field. This project gave me the opportunity I was looking for.” As the overall objective of the project was peace, he suggested making a film about landmines in Kayah State. That’s how he came to direct the award-winning film My Leg, about a group of war veterans that make artificial legs for fellow veterans from all sides of the conflict. My Leg received a Special Mention Award at the 2015 Exground International Film Festival in Wiesbaden, Germany, and was screened at Kyoto University’s 2016 Visual Documentary Project in Japan and at the 2016 Taiwan International Documentary Film Festival. Khon Soe Moe Aung says the 14 filmmakers from different ethnic states who participated in the project lived and worked together and learned from each other. He currently works for Kayah Earthrights Action Network and in his spare time provides filmmaking mentorship to community activists.

| The experience of developing the storyline, characters and scripts for the Team Myanmar television series has been both a professional and personally significant experience for scriptwriter, Chan Myae Kyaw. As he had hoped he has honed his script writing skills, however the experience has additionally left him viewing the world and his place in a different light. “I am also much more aware of my own attitude...I have learned that I need to control my responses and emotions to have peace in myself, which leads to the peacefulness of people around me.” |

| This project introduced The Team Myanmar Director, Maung Myo Myin to new and creative ways to combine his artistic and social work. Maung Myo Min will share lessons he learned creating The Team Myanmar with his students at 3H Art Academy where he trains new actors and directors for the Myanmar entertainment industry. “I decided to shoot this series because I believe in the story. Playing football mirrors the life of a human being. In football, like in life, there are challenges and opportunities.” |

Interviewees also offered a few suggestions for improving future projects. A scriptwriter suggested, for example, that the capacity-building and collaborations would have been even stronger if there had been stronger links between the different parts of the projects, including between the writers, directors and actors. As well, the project depended on the participation of volunteers for the implementation of activities in the field which they said did not fully recognise the scope of the contributions. The young cultural actors in Kayah State, for example, noted that it was difficult to obtain their families’ acceptance of work that was strictly volunteer, and that it was challenging to maintain their commitment and dedication on the long-term.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3:

The evaluation team saw clear examples of increased awareness among the greater population about cultural diversity and expression representative of all ethnic and religious groups. Daw Naw Than Nu is a good example. After viewing “The Team Myanmar” at a mobile screening in her village in Kayin State she demonstrated a keen understanding of its messages: “If we work together as a team we can succeed and make peace in our village and country.”
Daw Naw Than Nu is a 60 year old Sgaw Kayin Buddhist living in Win Dayel village, about 40 minutes from Hpa-An, the capital of Kayin State. She’s raised seven children; three of them work on fish farms in Thailand. She earns her living as a rice paddy farmer but says it isn’t profitable. She’s also a community leader and organiser. In 2008 she managed a micro-finance project for women in her village. During the focus group discussion about “The Team Myanmar”, Daw Naw Than Nu helped explain the program themes to the other people and encouraged them to take part in the discussion. She says she learned several lessons from the series: “Although it can be difficult, people from different religions and ethnic groups can work together and achieve peace. You need a good leader and good skills to succeed just like they did on the football field. And you need to be satisfied with who you are. That’s the best way to make a contribution and to create unity.”

Almost all of the people interviewed during the FGD and KII also expressed strong resonance vis-à-vis the participatory theatre performances, saying they liked seeing their own lives and problems acted out on stage and discussed. Several participatory theatre themes had particular resonance; for example, performances that focused on children and youth, and neighbours working together. (For more examples, please refer to the Sustainability section below.) While “The Team Myanmar” television program also resonated with the people who had attended the mobile screenings, they indicated a much stronger and more meaningful relationship with the participatory theatre. Most importantly: none of the interviewees had had prior experience with participatory theatre, and they are now enthused and inspired. This is something to build upon!

Once again, interviewees made a few suggestions to improve future projects. Some of the Christian mobile screening audience members in Kachin State noted, for example, that the two episodes of “The Team Myanmar” they had watched had only contained Buddhist references that didn’t resonate with them; this highlights the problem of only screening part of the series and/or of omitting to choose the most culturally appropriate episodes for each location. Two interviewees in Kachin and Kayah States observed that the TV program had been written from a Union perspective that did not necessarily resonate with ethnic minorities; they wondered if SFCG had made this
choice out of a desire not to offend the national government. The fact that the participatory theatre performances targeted the ethnic states, while “The Team Myanmar” program targeted young Burman males, provides important context for these comments. Twenty-eight of the survey respondents were young Burman males (aged 20-29), and out of that total 5 had heard of the television and radio program, 3 had watched it, and none had listened to the radio program. The three that watched it indicated significant levels of resonance and response.

Reaching large, diverse audiences, beyond the individuals and groups directly involved, or areas where outreach activities had taken place, was one of the big challenges posed by the project. BBC Media Action notes that this challenge was shared by other content producers in Myanmar’s crowded media field. As well, many respondents and interviewees had only watched a few episodes of “The Team Myanmar” (or parts of them). In the ethnic states many said they had only watched the program at the mobile screenings because they didn’t have a television or enhanced versatile disc player (EVD), their electricity was intermittent or problematic, they didn’t have access to the channels where the programs were broadcast on Skynet, or they were too busy working and taking care of their families. This indicates that there is still significant scope for taking the existing media products - television, radio, short films and theatre - back to towns and villages in the ethnic states and to continue using them for conflict resolution, peacebuilding and educational activities. This could include supporting local - and potentially multi-ethnic state - networks of cultural actors that are continuing to do participatory theatre, including in challenging locations such as IDP camps where there is a dearth of cultural and educational activity on offer.

The radio project had the least significant reach i.e.: 8% of the total survey respondents had heard of it, and two percent had listened to it. Similarly, few of the FGD participants and KII said that they listened to it. The radio project ended more than a year before the evaluation and thus may have been difficult to recall. As well, it was to some extent an experimental activity that provided lessons learned for the subsequent television drama; the radio and television project partners who were interviewed agreed that the television project had been more successful and better promoted. Myanmar’s broadcast law is also a consideration i.e.: it is not yet operational, there are no radio licences available, and all of the radio stations are owned by the government, military and their business partners. The radio sector is thus comparatively under-developed and does not attract the kinds of audiences one might expect in a transitional country like Myanmar. The fact that it is difficult to access credible and affordable broadcast audience data presents an additional challenge with regards to evaluating reach.

Linguistics also inhibited access and comprehension. Interviewees from Kayah and Kachin States, as well as from two Buddhist and Christian IDP camps in Kachin State that the evaluation team visited, noted varying degrees of difficulty understanding the programs in Myanmar language. Some of the survey respondents in the ethnic states made similar informal comments to the enumerators.

The evaluation team did not meet anyone who had watched the short films, beyond the filmmakers & SFCG/YFS staff. In addition, the different media products - television, radio, participatory theatre, and short films - did not appear to have been pro-actively linked or cross-referenced. While some of the mobilisers were involved in cross-cutting activities - organising mobile screenings and theatre performances, and volunteering as cultural actors - others told the evaluation team that they hadn’t watched or listened to the radio and television programs, and in some cases knew little, if anything, about them. As they could have acted as ‘ambassadors’ for all of the program activities, this represents a lesson learned.

Sustained project work is recommended to enable more substantive efforts to increase awareness among the greater population about cultural diversity and expression representative of all ethnic
and religious groups. This should include a more holistic approach that creates stronger synergies between different project activities.

VII.III PEACE EFFECTIVENESS

This section explores the project’s contribution to a larger conversation around cultural diversity, inclusiveness, reconciliation, and peace and harmony. Indicators include reduced stereotypes and prejudices at a societal level, societal transformation that embraces diversity and mutual respect coupled with the gradual democratic transition, and increased collaboration across dividing lines.

Acting helps you peacebuilder change the way she views differences and resolves conflict.

A key tool of Rhi’s understanding on conflict was a result of conflict transformation training around interest-based advocacy. This training helped Rhi to really see the underlying problems behind a conflict, to understand that we need to delve deeper into people’s interests and positions of a conflict. “I have gained a lot of knowledge from here. We cannot solve the problem by looking at people’s positions without knowing their interests. We need to know what they want, what their desires are and what they are thinking about in their minds.”

Societal transformation, including reduced stereotypes and prejudices, is an ambitious and complex goal that requires a more sustained project. Yet based on the KII, FGD and survey results, there is evidence that the project activities - television, radio, short films and participatory theatre - did contribute to a larger conversation around such themes as cultural and ethnic diversity, reconciliation, peace and harmony. There is also evidence of increased collaboration across dividing lines, for example, among the teams of cultural actors in the ethnic states.

Ma Nu Nan’s story provides a poignant example: “Before I was afraid of Muslims but now I know they’re human beings just like me. For the very first time I’m trying to communicate with them.”

Twenty-two year old Ma Mu Nan lives in a village in Demoso Township in Kayah State. She volunteered as a mobiliser for the project, organising local mobile screenings and participatory theatre. Currently she volunteers in the Demoso General Administration Department.

Ma Mu Nan says she learned an important lesson from the project: “I used to think Muslims were bad, but now I try to respect every community and every religion, whether Buddhist, Christian or Muslim. It’s important to get to know people - not to judge them for what they believe or for the community they belong to.

The viewership and listenership survey data also illustrated the project’s peace effectiveness. Of the 84 respondents to the questions about resonance, 68% agreed that the program promoted trust and respect across dividing lines, 74% indicated they had learned something new about another culture, 24% remembered the theme that football (sport) is a unifying force, and 18% remembered that there is strength and beauty in cultural diversity.
VII.IV MUTUAL REINFORCEMENT (COHERENCE)

This section examines the extent to which project activities have enabled the EU to achieve its development policy objectives, as well as their complementarity with partner country's policies and other donors' interventions. The EU points to other projects that it funded during the same time period that it considers complementary and mutually reinforcing. These include inter-faith dialogue initiatives, as well as the My Justice project at the British Council that seeks to improve access to justice and legal aid for poor and vulnerable populations, and to develop legal capacity of justice sector professionals and rule of law institutions. The EU also funded one of SFCG’s project partners, the Yangon Film School, for what it considers a complementary project entitled Strengthening film as a means of promoting diversity and democracy in Myanmar.

VII.V EU VALUE ADDED

This section highlights the extent to which the project intervention is complementary and coordinated to the intervention of EU Member States in the country, and its synergy (or duplication) with the intervention of EU Member States. The EU’s priority sectors in Myanmar include education, food security, rural development, governance, rule of law, institutional strengthening and the peace process. It believes that the project is a strong example of a reconciliation project, and that the use of culture as a tool to promote democratic values is a perfect fit for the Myanmar context. It notes that the project has positively informed other actions, thereby playing a broader role. The EU has learned from the Common Ground Approach, has shared it with the European Parliament, and would like it to be used as a tool for other projects and for the peace process. It proposes that the tools be replicated as much as possible, including distributing “The Team Myanmar” Facilitator’s Manual to CSOs, exploring synergies and opportunities in the education sector, and building partnerships with the government with a view to co-funding.

VII.VI SUSTAINABILITY

This section examines the steps taken to create long-term processes for reducing prejudices, overcoming stereotypes, and developing an inclusive and collaborative culture, whether there has been local ownership of the initiatives and the development of future plans, and whether project activities have continued after the project phase-out.

Project staff and volunteers, including scriptwriters, actors and producers that worked on “The Team Myanmar” programs, confirmed that they had learned new technical skills in the fields of arts, culture, and media, as well as peacebuilding, conflict resolution and communication skills that they have continuing to use after the project period ended. One of the filmmakers also noted that the project gave them “a feeling of independence that was important for all human beings”.

“In Myanmar many places have peace, however they do not know about the fear and suffering of people in other parts of the country in areas of war”

During the YFS documentary training Moe Moe Htwe stayed with other girls from Kachin, Karen and Mon States in one room. They shared their experiences and feelings about their respective ethnic states. She also learned about peaceful coexistence. When they were shooting footage for their documentary in a Shan village in Kachin State, Moe Moe Htwe was amazed to learn that Kachin and Shan tribes live in harmony. This inspired her to value the coexistence amongst other tribes in her state, such as Kayah, Kayaw and Padaung. “I pray for peace among our different ethnicities and to live happily forever in our beautiful Myanmar.”
The working relationships and friendships that cross ethnic and religious lines have also endured beyond the project period. In some cases individuals and teams have stayed in touch with their project mentors and have continued to work together. The participatory theatre actors in Kachin State provide an excellent example: “When we started performing together, we didn’t know each other at all. Now we’re like a family.”

Through this project I have learned how help communities resolve their own conflicts. We present shows in wards and villages. Through these shows, we share how to solve the problems and how to avoid making problems bigger. Our theatre troupe was recently invited to perform at a literature talk on the 14th of this month. We also have a plan to present a play that educates people about how to solve problems collaboratively.

– Ye Naing Oo, Cultural Actor, Mon State

Scriptwriter, Cho Wyut Yi Lwin is applying the skills she learned from her experience as a scriptwriter towards her short stories and other television and film projects. She is working on a new collection of short stories based in the ethnic states and a script for a documentary called ‘Missing’ that has been screened in India and Japan. “I am really satisfied with my contribution to the project, the part that I led was really the climax of the series…I am proud that I could contribute to peace process of our country by writing scripts for The Team Myanmar.”

Mai Lu, Waw Mee, Mun Aung and Ye Ling Aung are Kachin Christians. Zaw Lar (not in the photo) is Shan Buddhist. They grew up in different parts of Kachin State and first met as volunteer actors in the participatory theatre project. The project has now ended, but the theatre group they created - translated here as Colourful Shapes – has continued. They do productions for local organisations, including in the IDP camps, and mentor young people in participatory theatre. They’ve also stayed in touch with the group that trained them for the project - Thukhuma Traveller - and continue to perform with its members in Kachin State. “People look to us as role models on the stage and in real life. That means we have to practise good values every day, and to try to resolve conflict and fight discrimination. We learn from the audiences and the audiences learn from us.”

Some of the village-based participatory theatre performances have also had a sustainable influence on their audiences. Performances are referenced during village meetings as positive examples of how to live and work together. In at least two cases people said the performances have also led to improved attitudes and behavior, including with regards to sending children to school instead of out to work, and neighbours collaborating to protect the local water supply by safely disposing of diseased animals.

With few, if any, exceptions, participatory theatre audience members in diverse villages in the ethnic states said they would welcome more performances that portrayed their own lives and problems. The mobile screening audience members, including in Insein Township in Yangon, also said that they would like to see more of the television episodes, and if possible, to screen the entire series. The
programming and performances have thus piqued the interest of diverse audiences, as well as a desire to create a more sustainable project. “The Team Myanmar” has also helped to create an openness toward television programs that feature diverse ethnic characters living and working together.

VIII. LESSONS LEARNED

• It’s extremely important to have all local partners fully engaged from the start, and to ensure that all people working for, or linked to, SFCG projects participate in the Common Ground Approach training/sensitisation
• To tackle reconciliation, you need to address the majority Burman population, especially young males (the project’s target locations were readjusted to include Yangon and Mandalay, but with hindsight project some staff say they would have placed greater focus on this population, including planning additional activities)
• Radio was not an effective platform for this particular project; with reference to the key findings section, this may, in part, be due to the fact that radio is a comparatively under-developed medium in Myanmar (future broadcast partners need to be carefully chosen; the fact that SFCG is currently collaborating on a radio production with the state broadcaster MRTV which has a large audience is a step in the right direction; the status of the broadcast law should be monitored and a decision made as to whether this will be an effective future platform when the sector opens up, including with regards to community radio)
• Participatory theatre was a more effective platform for reaching audiences in the ethnic states and villages than television dramas; based on the KII and FGD, this is largely because the stories were based on their own lives and problems; it is also of note that participatory theatre was a brand new experience for all of the interviewees and was enthusiastically embraced
• As people said they were often shy and not used to public speaking, that it was difficult for youth to express themselves in front of elders, and challenging for women to speak out (in one village a woman ran up to the mobiliser at the end of the theatre performance with her ideas and opinions written on a piece of paper, saying she had been too shy to express them in public), they say they could benefit from additional preparation in the lead-up to the participatory theatre performances; for example, a group dialogue to help them understand expectations, and to give them a chance to ask questions and to identify a variety of ways to participate and express their opinions
• It is vital to reconcile artists’ desire for editorial and creative independence, and the mandate of peacebuilding projects. (as SFCG notes, this was one of the first times a peacebuilding project had worked with artists, including well-known players from Myanmar’s entertainment field, so some healthy tension was to be expected and embraced as part of the collaboration)
• When shooting/taping television and radio programs, it would be advisable to have project cultural advisors on site (to monitor cultural sensitivity)

IX. CONCLUSION

It was challenging to evaluate such a complex and ambitious project and partnership, with a wide variety of stakeholders and beneficiaries of different backgrounds, cultures and religions, an impressive array of diverse and creative participatory activities, and a wide geographical reach, during an unprecedented period of historic transition, and so soon after project activities ended.

The project created a space for actors, filmmakers, and writers to collaborate, create and perform at the nexus between art, culture and media, and conflict resolution and peacebuilding. With a view to
shifting attitudes and behaviours, and ultimately fostering cultural drivers of peace, the project created strong cultural content with inspiring role models. It also had a visible impact on the people directly involved, as well as on those who came into contact with its media products and activities. This reflects SFCG’s belief that everyone - from staff to audiences to artists - was a beneficiary and stakeholder.

Interviewees and survey respondents that had watched the television program and the participatory theatre performances expressed strong resonance and response. Many said they had only watched a couple of episodes (or parts of them) or bits of the theatre performances. Few had seen the short documentary films. Yet their interest was piqued and they wanted more. In terms of reach, resonance and response, therefore, the project has untapped potential that extends beyond the project period.

At times the project’s artists and peacebuilders had to work together to find a common ground; this was a lesson learned that deserves greater reflection. Most importantly, though, there was widespread acknowledgement that the Common Ground Approach and the programming, theatre and short films were strong tools that could cross-cut projects and programs. Over and over again the evaluation team heard that these kinds of opportunities for creative expression are scarce, particularly in the ethnic states.

Although the project goals were without a doubt ambitious, the SFCG team and its partners had a pragmatic approach, understanding that they were contributing to a larger conversation about reconciliation, promoting inter-ethnic/religious relationships and peacebuilding and conflict transformation, and endeavouring to create their own unique niche. To continue working toward these goals and to strengthen reach, resonance and response, sustained project work is recommended.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen relationships among interethnic and interreligious individuals and groups, and to increase awareness among the overall population about cultural diversity and expression representative of all ethnic and religious groups

New project design:

• Ensure longer-term project activities (i.e. increase frequency of participatory theatre performances, mobile and short film screenings, and television and radio programming, over longer periods of time)
• Ensure more substantive engagement in the locations where project activities are conducted (one screening/performance is not enough, risks having little impact, and leaves people wondering why you don’t go back and screen the entire series; you have piqued interest and cultivated learning during the project period being evaluated, and it would be wise to build upon it and to ensure greater reach, resonance and response)
• When it is only possible to screen 1 or 2 episodes of a series, ensure they are the most culturally appropriate for the chosen location
• Pro-actively link relevant activities and media products to enable increased reach and resonance
• Design activities that utilise the media products produced during the project period (screenings, DVB distribution, rebroadcasting, integration into CSO programs, etc)
• Integrate media products into educational programs and curricula (this is an untapped opportunity and one which the EU encourages)

• Stick with what works i.e. integrate participatory theatre into future project design (it is a unique niche, and there is great interest and relevance, and a corps of cultural actors)

• Experiment with productions from the point of view of ethnic minorities

• Create new activities/programming that focus on young Burman males

• Create new activities linked to music (interviewees widely agreed it was an excellent way to engage youth; they suggested new music videos, and competitions (slams, karaoke, etc)

Programmatic approach and implementation:

• Enable strong and creative collaborations between all of SFCG’s partners (SFCG had a relationship with each partner for the project under review, but they say they did not really collaborate with each other)

• Move activities and outreach beyond the traditional SFCG, Shalom and YFS networks

• To increase reach, distribute more DVDs (including to the villages where you’ve already worked) and provide EVD players (they don’t cost much)

Partnerships:

• Explore partnerships with new broadcasters to ensure SFCG’s media products and messages reach larger audiences (the broadcast field is poised to change dramatically; in the short-term, monitor the impact and potential of six new television channels that are soon to be awarded; in the long-term, monitor the potential impact of Myanmar’s broadcast law that is not yet operational; explore new opportunities to partner with CSOs in the currently under-developed community radio sector (a number of international media implementers are providing support to this latter sector)

• Explore partnerships with the Myanmar government (national, state, local) with a view to cost-sharing future educational activities and fostering the sustainability of individual initiatives (the EU has expressed strong interest in this kind of outreach and collaboration)

• Develop effective tools for communication between partners, as well as processes that enable effective financial management for all partners

To build the capacity of local CSOs, media professionals and cultural actors to integrate cultural content promoting intercultural dialogue and reconciliation

Project design:

• enable a longer-term, substantive commitment to the teams and individuals that produce, perform and screen project activities (this means building longer-term, sustainable relationships, including with the people who were involved in, and affected by, the project being evaluated; you have piqued their interest and they want to continue learning and creating and working together)

• create opportunities for undiscovered and untapped talent (move beyond traditional networks to identify young people with potential, much like the young filmmakers identified for SFCG’s first project; conduct experimental workshops and ‘taster’ sessions in the ethnic states and Yangon; the new talent could then participate in the established, longer-term
training in Yangon until such time as it is feasible and cost-effective to move the training to the ethnic states)

Programmatic approach and implementation:

• Involve young people from the ethnic states (they need opportunities to create and experiment, and to play useful roles)

• Move beyond volunteerism as a means for implementing activities (the volunteers say they want to engage and commit, but need remuneration)

Partnerships:

• Explore partnerships with the teams created for SFCG’s first project (the teams of cultural actors in the ethnic states, for example, who have continued performing and who would like to explore cross-state partnerships, or the teams of television actors and scriptwriters; SFCG could be the catalyst for sustained creativity with a focus on peacebuilding and conflict resolution)
XI. ANNEXES

The following documentation is available on the provided CD.

XI.I EVALUATION TOR
XI.II EVALUATION AGENDAS
XI.III LIST OF INTERVIEWEES
XI.IV LIST OF ENUMERATORS
XI.V ENUMERATOR TORS
XI.VI VIEWERSHIP and LISTENERSHIP SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
XI.VII SURVEY CHARTS
XI.VIII KII & FGD QUESTIONS
XI.IX PAPER SURVEY
XI.X BIBLIOGRAPHY
XII. EVALUATION TEAM

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