“I hate you! You're not from here! You are different, you do not speak our language, and you don't know anything about us! Go back to where you come from!”

Hate Speech can have manifold faces and happens around all of us. It uses words and pictures as a weapon to consciously and deliberately hurt others. Often, these are racist, anti-Semitic or sexist comments targeting certain people or groups. Also in Myanmar, there are many narratives that propagate differences instead of commonalities. Stereotypes against various ethnic groups are deeply rooted in the society and negative feelings against others are extremely difficult to overcome.

**Monitoring and Evaluation – Indispensable in Counter Hate Speech Work**

In projects to counter Hate Speech, Monitoring and Evaluation are key elements throughout the entire project lifecycle to design impactful projects and to measure our success. Our Myanmar Impact Toolkit includes not only tips on detecting hate speech, but also concrete tools to be included in projects countering Hate Speech. It provides guidance to taking the first steps in setting up a system to better monitor and evaluate your counter hate speech initiatives. Being a joint effort by civil society organizations and local and international NGOs, practitioners from 23 leading organizations from across Myanmar came together in a series of workshops to make this toolkit happen. They all shared one common characteristic – working at the forefront of attempts to counter hate speech and promote tolerance.

**What Works Against Hate Speech?**

Together with civil society organizations, NGOs and INGOs, activists and partners, we have found some best practices for countering hate speech in Myanmar:
A stakeholder mapping conducted by Search for Common Ground found that strategies and tactics are diverse and vary widely, but include the following:

- **Monitoring hate speech**: Everybody should be able to identify and track hate speech, both online on Facebook pages, and offline such as the distribution of leaflets or videos.
- **Mitigating rumors**: Once sensitized, users identify an unsubstantiated and harmful rumor, usually offline, and then actively set out to dispel it, collaborating with local public officials, journalists, and influential social media users.
- **Building response mechanisms**: People coordinate local public officials, police, MPs, influential social media users, activists, and civil society organizations so that they are ready to respond to any potential violence.
- **Directly countering hate speech on social media**: Content is identified on 16 social media pages or posts and comments are added to refute the claims or declare it hate speech.
- **Proactive hate speech reduction campaigns on social media**: Grassroots campaigns can help to build wider support for tolerance and to promote counter narratives and peace speech.
- **Peace promotion**: Movies, books, reports, and other materials shall be published that promote peace, coexistence, and tolerance.
- **Legal advocacy**: Coalitions can help to pressurize the government to adopt or amend laws or bills.
Our Recommendations for Myanmar

The recommendations that result from our project stem right from the field as Myanmar works towards a shared clear definition of this disputed term.

- **Map conflict actors;** examine hate speech from a conflict analysis perspective: Mapping conflict actors and producing a document shared amongst key organizations monitoring hate speech would help support coordinated hate speech monitoring across organizations.

- **Support the development of a Burmese language hate speech lexicon:** Further work needs to be conducted to create a shared definition of hate speech and to categorize hate speech terms and phrases. Further support should be given to bridge the gaps and move further along with definitions and categorizations.

- **Make software for tracking hate speech fully operational:** Analysis from this stakeholder mapping shows that if a lexicon of hate speech words and phrases were produced, then with technical expertise further work could be done to produce efficient soft-ware for tracking hate speech.

- **M&E skills:** Many organizations have stories of success but no mechanisms to document them. Workshops and the Myanmar Impact Toolkit promote the value of success stories, mechanisms for collecting stories of success and usage of success stories to demonstrate results.

- **Be inclusive:** Efforts to counter hate speech should be inclusive of different types of hate speech and the groups they target.

- **Plan ahead:** Consider the likelihood of a rise in hate speech and potential for increased levels of violence in the run-up to the 2020 election. Plan ahead when considering organizational strategies for combating hate speech.
Animations

Link to Video

Our Myanmar Impact Toolkit


Stakeholder Mapping Report

Stakeholder Mapping Report by Taylor O'Connor: