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HEARTBEAT OF THE NATION

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Project monitors social media hate speech

Project monitors social media hate speech

Nandar Aung 07 Apr 2016



An SOS discussion in Bhamo covers information on Facebook, stressing that not everything you read online is true. Photos: Supplied

Project monitors social media hate speech

In 2012, Myanmar's mobile penetration was estimated at just 4 percent. By June 2015, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology reported it had [reached 50pc](#), a 12-fold increase in just three years.

But as Myanmar has [leapfrogged](#) into the 21st century, the advent of social media apps like Facebook and YouTube have led to dangerous [new avenues for hate speech](#). In 2012 and 2014, serial conflicts between Buddhists and Muslims were set off by [Facebook posts accusing](#) Muslims of committing sexual assault. These violent widespread community clashes. Hundreds of civilians have died.

With more than 18 million internet users in Myanmar – 10 million of which use Facebook – the danger posed by internet hate speech has led NGO Mido to launch a project to Save Online Space (SOS).

“As social media are the most commonly used [apps] in Myanmar, everyone from the online community is affecting things offline and outside, too,” said Chit Su Wai Aung, a representative from the SOS project. “I believe that there will only be peace offline if there is peace online.”

The project, launched in October 2015 and wrapping up in May, monitors Myanmar Facebook pages for six indicators of hate speech: threats, accusations, dehumanisations, encouragement of violence, bullying and harassment. SOS then reports accounts that talk about hate speech to the local media each month.

Members of the initiative have also travelled to areas such as Magwe, Bago, Mawlamyine and dozens of others around the country to offer training about Facebook privacy, digital security, news literacy and finding accurate news sources. Their message is simple: Technology must come with awareness from the users.



Project monitors social media hate speech

“Some users believe whatever they see on Facebook and share it without first finding out if the post is true or false,” said Gar Gar, the SOS project coordinator. “Most of the false facts tend to lead to religious problems that eventually become political.”

Such was the case in 2012, when members of the Buddhist nationalist group Ma Ba Tha – including [U Wirathu](#), a prominent monk known for his anti-Muslim rhetoric – shared Facebook posts accusing a Muslim man of raping a Buddhist woman. Over a period of two years, the [ensuing riots and violence](#) left 250 people dead and more than 140,000 Muslims in displacement camps.



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Mido, which was founded in February 2012, grew out of the Myanmar Blogger Society thanks to a large youth contingent that recognised the incendiary power of Facebook posts. Their SOS project is an effort to prevent more violence by advocating against hate speech.

At their March meeting, members of SOS discussed a current hate speech thread bouncing around Facebook. The subject is newly elected Christian – many accounts have accused him of planning to shift the country away from monasteries and into churches.

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COVID-19 Surveillance Dashboard (Myanmar)

COVID-19 Surveillance Dashboard (Myanmar) Mobile View

ဓာတ်ခွဲစစ်ဆေးသူစုစုပေါင်း (Total Specimens Tested) - **8,154,072**

ဦးတွေလူနာ (Lab Confirmed) - **613,238**

ဦးတွေသေဆုံးလူနာ (Death among Lab Confirmed) - **19,434**

ဦးတွေပြန်လည်သက်သာ (Recovered) - **592,221**

last updated on **24-5-2022, 8:00 PM**

Abbreviation

- ဓာတ်ခွဲစစ်ဆေးသူစုစုပေါင်း

Case Count

Visualization: **eHealth Unit, Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health and Sports Myanmar**

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