YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF PLURALISM AND DIVERSITY IN YANGON, MYANMAR

Executive summary

A number of primary gaps have been identified in the existing English language literature on youth, diversity, and pluralism in Myanmar that have particular ramifications for organizations and donors working in the youth and pluralism space. The first is the issue of translation. Most of the existing literature makes no note of how concepts such as diversity, tolerance, pluralism and discrimination are translated into Burmese or if there is a pre-existing Burmese concept or framework for these concepts, and particularly, how youth are using and learning about these concepts.

The second is the question of where and how youth are exposed to lessons on the value of cultural diversity, and how youth learn to advocate for greater social inclusion. The socializing agents and drivers of youth engagement in or understanding of cultural diversity are not well documented or understood.

This research collaboration between UNESCO and Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation attempts to narrow these gaps by exploring how youth perceive and experience diversity in Yangon. The report's key findings are summarized below:

- **Space –** A common complaint amongst research participants was the lack of space available for youth to organize, meet other youth of different backgrounds, and feel welcome and safe. In particular, respondents noted the lack of youth centers and youth programming that are free or low cost. For many respondents it was hard to even think about places where they could meet with youth from diverse backgrounds.

- **Change Agents –** A handful of institutions were repeatedly mentioned by respondents of all religions and ethnicities as places where youth had learned about diversity or attended a training that made them change their minds about other groups. Sometimes this was because of the training itself – gender awareness or disability awareness trainings for example – but mainly it was because of the youth of other backgrounds they met and got to know as peers in these spaces. Unprompted, youth mentioned these trainings and programs as positive influences on their understanding of diversity and their acceptance of others.

- **Public Schools -** Youth build relationships with youth of different ethnic and religious backgrounds in state schools and universities. Investing in education, especially teacher training on diversity awareness is critical. Knowledge of diversity in more homogenous areas is delivered by teachers, and the curriculum needs to be more inclusive of ethnic and religious minorities.

- **Language –** A major finding of this research was that the commonly used translations in Burmese for words like tolerance and diversity have slightly negative connotations and do not match the meaning conveyed in the English terms. However, Burmese has existing terms that may not be exact translations but that fit ideas of tolerance, respect and mutual understanding much better than the commonly used translations, are more frequently used, and are known to a much broader range of people.

- **Social Media –** While much of the recent literature on Myanmar has attributed negative stereotypes of other groups to social media, and hate speech continues to spread on social media, several respondents reported that they changed their minds about other groups and became more tolerant and accepting due to information they accessed on social media. Other respondents noted how trainings are useful but only reach a limited number of people, while a well-designed social media campaign with high quality content could potentially reach tens of thousands. Social media has also impacted the peer-to-peer relationship, as peer-to-peer contact extends far beyond the school day over social media.

- **Discrimination and Conflict –** The majority of survey respondents reported facing discrimination in Yangon, with the most reported cause being religion, followed by race/ethnicity and wealth. Multiple Christians, Sikhs and Hindus of South Asian descent reported that they were discriminated against because they were assumed to be Muslim, while Muslims reported being forced to identify themselves as Bengali on official documents. Increased discrimination towards Rakhine and Kachin youth was linked to ongoing armed conflicts in their states.

- **Social Isolation –** Youth are increasingly isolated in their own work and daily lives. For many respondents, this was expressed as a response to the perceived lack of safety and security in their communities as well as economic pressures to prioritize work. There is a sense that minority communities have become more insular due to safety concerns while majority communities have become less accepting of outsiders or newcomers. While most respondents reported they had participated in Buddhist festivals, very few non-Muslim respondents reported that they had participated in Muslim festivals.

- **Civil documentation –** The general population, including government officials, do not have sympathy for religious and ethnic minorities' troubles in obtaining civil documentation. Due to rampant corruption and the relative ease of accessing documentation for those who can pay, or those who were documented in the run-up to the 2015 election, people do not think about nor understand how people with the right to civil documentation could not have it. Nor do they understand the impact of not having access to these documents and the institutional and social discrimination it causes. The problem of civil documentation is closely linked to discrimination as well as perceptions of diversity.

- **Hierarchy –** Youth reported that in addition to discrimination based on gender, religion, ethnicity, social class, and family backgrounds, social hierarchy based on age continues to be a major factor. Youth felt that elders do not want to hand over their positions, or responsibilities to youth, or make space for youth, particularly in political parties or employment settings. This means that even with all the right qualifications, youth may not succeed due to social constraints. Social norms still constrict opportunities available to youth due to their age and place in society.

Introduction

Myanmar's youth (15-35) comprise one-third of the total population of the country. As a major population group, Myanmar youth have advocated for a national youth policy since 2008.[1] In 2018, Myanmar promulgated a National Youth Policy, followed by a strategic implementation plan in August 2019. Youth-led advocacy on the National Youth Policy highlighted both the needs of youth in a changing Myanmar and the role of youth in advocating for social and political change.

Paying attention to youth issues, concerns, and aspirations is important as they not only encompass a large population group, but also as they are the next generation of political, business, and educational leaders. This generation of youth is also the first generation to enter the Myanmar workforce since the transition began in 2011, and the first to have access to social media and modern communications technology.[2] Understanding youth views and supporting their needs is crucial to attaining sustainable peace and social cohesion in Myanmar.

Yet, policy research has only recently identified youth as potential leaders in fostering respect for cultural diversity, social cohesion, and sustainable peace in Myanmar.[3] The UNESCO research on youth perceptions and experiences of diversity including discrimination, tolerance, and acceptance, will substantively contribute to a growing body of research on youth in Myanmar, by highlighting the spaces, experiences, and socializing agents that shape youth attitudes towards diversity, inclusion, and pluralism.

Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation (EMReF) and UNESCO surveyed 265 youth ages 18-35 in 28 out of Yangon's 33 townships. Survey results were augmented by 9 focus group discussions (FGDs) with 50+ participants, and 17 key informant interviews (KIIs). In total over 300 youth from across Yangon participated in this research. The mixed methods approach allowed for both quantitative and qualitative data analysis and allowed for room for research participants to initiate discussion on topics that the research team had not previously anticipated.

The overarching research question is "How do Yangon youth perceive and experience diversity in their communities?" This research question allowed for the exploration of socializing agents influencing youth perceptions, drivers of both exclusion and social cohesion, and perceptions and attitudes towards diversity that will inform future programming related to promoting respect for cultural diversity, pluralism, and mutual understanding.

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[1] SFCG, 2018.
[2] British Council, 2019.
[3] For example, see: British Council, 2019; Grizelj, 2018; SFCG, 2018.

Literature Review

Only recently have studies and reports begun to shine a light on youth perceptions, experiences, and the socializing factors that shape youth attitudes towards cultural diversity and pluralism, including experiences of discrimination and acceptance.[4] The Asia Foundation's 2018 City Life Survey for example, highlights issues of community and interpersonal trust, which is important in building social cohesion, but may not be as important in building respect for cultural diversity. The British Council and VSO's Next Generation report is the first country-wide youth opinion survey but as such, was focused on youth values rather than experiences. This piece of research builds on previous surveys and adds real-life examples to give texture to youth perceptions and experiences of cultural diversity in Yangon.

Most of the existing literature is either survey-based or qualitative, with few examples of mixed-methods research combining surveys and qualitative interviews and focus groups, with the exceptions of Search for Common Ground's (2018) Youth-led Participatory Research on Social Cohesion in Urban Areas and the British Council and VSO's (2018) Next Generation youth opinion survey. Furthermore, while most of the available research includes Yangon, this is the first report that we know of to focus on youth in Yangon and the socializing agents that shape youth perceptions and experiences of cultural diversity.

The following brief literature review highlights findings from these reports and recent academic research on Myanmar thematically, paying close attention to the themes covered in the UNESCO-EMReF study and gaps in the existing literature.

EDUCATION

The Asia Foundation's 2018 *City Life Survey* highlighted the links between education and social cohesion and mutual trust in Myanmar. It found that respondents with a graduate degree or higher were three times more likely to agree that people of other religions could be trusted when compared to those with no formal education. As education becomes more accessible, we may see higher levels of trust between members of different religious groups. But we also need to pay close attention to key socializing factors outside of educational attainment, like social media, social norms, or neighborhood composition which may also impact on youth perceptions of others.

ISOLATION AND PUBLIC AND CULTURAL SPACES

The Search for Common Ground 'Let's Think, Let's Change' report highlights the perceived lack of public space where people of different backgrounds can meet without paying money, as a hindrance to socialization with diverse groups of people outside of one's immediate neighborhood. It likewise mentions the lack of space for young people to engage in social activities outside of charity and religious activities which may not cross neighborhood or religious boundaries. Women, furthermore may have restrictions on travel and curfews placed on them by their families, making it harder to

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[4] These reports include: the 'Next Generation' report by British Council (2019), the first nationwide youth opinion survey; a study on 'Myanmar's Millennials and GenZ' by MSR (2019); 'Exploring Digital and Mobile Cultures' by Phandeeyar (2019); a 'Youth-led Participatory Research on Social Cohesion in Urban Areas' by Search for Common Ground (2018); a Rapid Conflict Assessment by Search for Common Ground entitled 'Let's Think, Let's Change: Promoting Diversity Through Popular Culture' (2018); the Berghof Foundation study on 'Youth Space of Dialogue and Mediation in Myanmar' (2017); the Paung Sie Facility report 'Youth and Everyday Peace: Fostering the untapped potential of Myanmar's youth'; the UNICEF report on 'School Violence and Bullying in Myanmar' (2019); and the Asia Foundation City Life Survey (2018).

access social spaces.[5] In our research we are interested in understanding more about public spaces including public cultural spaces where people from different backgrounds are able to meet.

RELIGION AND ETHNICITY

The Asia Foundation (2018) *City Life Survey* reported that the two most important identity factors for Yangon residents, in order of importance, are religion and ethnicity, which is one of the reasons we have chosen to focus on religion and ethnicity in this research. Survey respondents were less likely to report trusting people of different ethnic or religious groups. However, the Asia Foundation also found that more diverse cities reported higher levels of trust between ethnic and religious groups. In Yangon, however, only 28% of respondents reported that most people of other religions in the city can be trusted and 29% responded that most people of other ethnicities can be trusted. Interestingly, religious minorities, such as Muslims and Christians were more likely to report trust in people of other religions. While 60% of Muslims and Christians reported that members of other religious groups could be trusted, only 32% of Buddhists respondents agreed. Drawing on the findings of the City Life Survey and expanding from the concept of trust, this study explores social relationships amongst youth of different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

HISTORIES AND MEMORIES OF COEXISTENCE, FRIENDSHIP, AND ACCEPTANCE

One report found that a history of coexistence and shared experiences led to stronger community ties in ethnically and religiously diverse neighborhoods.[6] As the government and economy changes, there may be elements of integration and interaction from a shared past under authoritarian rule that could be helpful for strengthening social cohesion. Another study found that older respondents were more trusting than younger respondents,[7] which shows that there may be a generational change in social cohesion that could be linked to Myanmar's transition. On the other hand, due to parents' strong memories of retribution for political activities, particularly in 1988 and during the military government, activities that are not religious or cultural in nature may be seen as political activism and discouraged by parents fearful for their children's safety,[8] which means youth may not be socialized in diverse communities in the ways their parents were. However, a recent survey found that 75 percent of youth respondents had had a conversation with someone from a different ethnic, religious, or social background in the last two months, while 68 percent of adults reported having had such a conversation.[9] This study examines how and where youth are introduced to cultural diversity and inflection points where understandings of cultural diversity, or opportunities to partake in activities or create relationships with people of different backgrounds shift.

DISCRIMINATION AND BURMANIZATION

Institutionalized discrimination, often referred to in Myanmar as Burmanization, plays out differently for different groups. Such institutionalized discrimination in accessing government services, education, healthcare, and employment has resulted in restricted access to services, travel, and rights for religious and ethnic minority groups such as Hindus, Muslims, Chinese, and Indians. But for groups considered to be *taingyintha* ('sons of the soil', a legal category in Myanmar's citizenship legislation and Constitution), including Chin, Kachin, Karen, Mon, Kayah, Rakhine, Shan and other ethnic minorities, Burmanization has meant pressure to assimilate culturally and linguistically in order to access

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[5] British Council, 2019.
[6] SFCG, n.d.
[7] Asia Foundation, 2018.
[8] British Council, 2019.
[9] Grizelj, 2018.

opportunities, by choosing Burmese names, learning Burmese, and adopting Burmese dress.[10] Such institutionalized discrimination may also be a result of a lack of workplace diversity within government departments, meaning government employees may have less integration and exposure to other groups, and certain groups are less represented amongst policymakers.

But youth can also experience discrimination in government and private settings, including in their families and neighborhoods.[11] Ethnic and religious minorities may face discrimination in public spaces, school, or employment settings, while majority populations may face it when interacting in minority-populated areas or when not seen to conform to a particular shared identity.[12]

The ongoing conflicts across the country may also influence discrimination against ethnic minorities.[13] About a fifth of respondents in the Next Generation survey reported that they had recently experienced religious discrimination, with a similar number of respondents reporting discrimination based on their ethnicity.[14] The Global School Based Health Survey conducted in 2016-17 in Myanmar found that 21.5 percent of boys and 15 percent of girls had been made fun of in school for their nationality, race, or color, while religion was the least reported driver of bullying.[15] Gender discrimination is also highly reported, with over 30 percent of women reporting gender-based discrimination.[16] Our survey focuses on discrimination and Burmanization as experienced by the youth of Yangon.

PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND LESSONS: HIERARCHY AND SOCIAL NORMS

Socialization from elders, peers, language, and cultural narratives (found in literature, idioms, proverbs, folktales, media, etc.) seems to play a role in youth perceptions of diversity which needs to be further explored. Social relationships in Myanmar are often marked by a degree of hierarchy, and this is more pronounced when there are age differences. Myanmar speakers are constantly positioning themselves in terms of age in their day-to-day interactions in order to choose which titles to use when addressing others.

Parents especially, can have great control and influence over their children's lives, even into adulthood. Some recent research found that this high level of parental involvement may discourage youth from involvement in activism and civil society.[17] Elders (parents, teachers, religious leaders, politicians, etc.) can pass on experiences and understandings of diversity through intergenerational relationships. Elders' experiences of other ethnic and religious groups may be positive or negative, but their role in socialization is key.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Recent research on social media use in Myanmar found that for Myanmar social media users, the internet is Facebook, though it is not necessarily used for social networking.[18] Research found that people use social media for active information searching, using Facebook to find information in the way that one may use a search engine like Google. High levels of trust are placed in social media pages and channels, but there is also an understanding of social media as a place where hate-speech, posts insulting religion, misinformation, and disinformation is spread.

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[10] SFCG, n.d.; Walton, 2012.
[11] SFCG, n.d.
[12] British Council, 2019; Nash, Nesterova, et al., 2017.
[13] SFCG, n.d.
[14] British Council, 2019.
[15] UNICEF, 2019.
[16] British Council, 2019.
[17] British Council, 2019.
[18] Thant Sin Oo, 2019.

Youth are also using social media for self-improvement and learning. This means that youth could potentially learn about diversity and tolerance through a trusted page or channel, just as they could learn about intolerance. Interestingly, Phandeeyar's research found that having a mobile phone was seen as a rite of passage, with students purchasing their first phone after passing the matriculation exam. Before this, high school students may have access to phones through their family members or if they are well-off or living apart from their family.[19]

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[19] Thant Sin Oo, 2019.

Methodology

The research focuses on perceptions and experiences of pluralism and cultural diversity amongst youth in Yangon. It also explores the influencing factors and socializing agents (media, family, peers, elders, school, workplace, etc.) on youth perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors towards individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds. The research aims to understand the drivers, socializing agents, narratives, and pathways that lead to promotion of tolerance and valuing diversity amongst youth, as well as understanding and mapping the drivers, narratives, socializing agents, and pathways that promote intolerance. This includes understanding youth experiences and perceptions of discrimination, tolerance, diversity, and pluralism.

Focus group discussions, surveys, and key informant interviews were conducted using a snowball sample. Due to this, the research team was often directed towards other civil society organizations, youth activists, or religious groups. Private sector workers, civil society workers, and full-time students accounted for 60 percent of respondents. In the survey university students are over represented with 27% of respondents reporting they are currently in university. Furthermore, those with higher education are overwhelmingly overrepresented with almost 80 percent reporting some education or training beyond high school.

Religious leaders, unemployed, housewives, job seekers, employers, government employees and self-employed respondents were all included in the survey but accounted for 40 percent of total respondents. The survey thus cannot be considered representative, due to sample size as well as methodology, but it did assist the research team in identifying areas of concern and interest related to tolerance, pluralism, and diversity in Yangon which shaped the qualitative research.

In order to try to be as representative as time and resources would allow, the team tried to compensate for the survey's overrepresentation of educated youth by making contact with grassroots organizations, and ward-level party and religious leaders in lower-income areas for focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The research team also worked to incorporate minority groups that are not frequently represented in social research on Myanmar, such as Hindu, Tamil, Telugu, Shia, and Sikh communities.

The qualitative and quantitative analysis is accompanied by a mapping of youth and civil society organizations working on youth issues and pluralism. Alongside the mapping, we have identified youth resources and support needs in building tolerance and promoting diversity in Yangon.

The 265 survey respondents included 132 men and 133 women ages 18-35. With the majority of respondents (36%) between 21-25 years of age. Focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted in Burmese and recorded, with the exception of three KIIs which were conducted in English. In total 8 FGDs were conducted with 40 participants, and 15 respondents participated in KIIs.

Survey Respondents by Age group
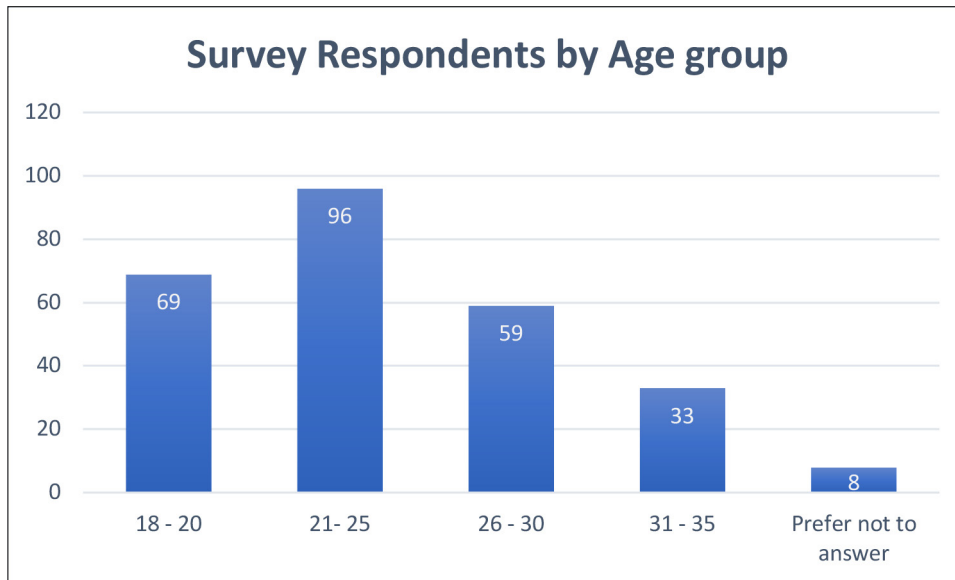
ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Over half of the survey respondents are Buddhists and nearly 34% of respondents are Christian (Roman Catholic and various Protestant groups), with remaining respondents identifying as Hindu, Muslim, and Animist.

Religion
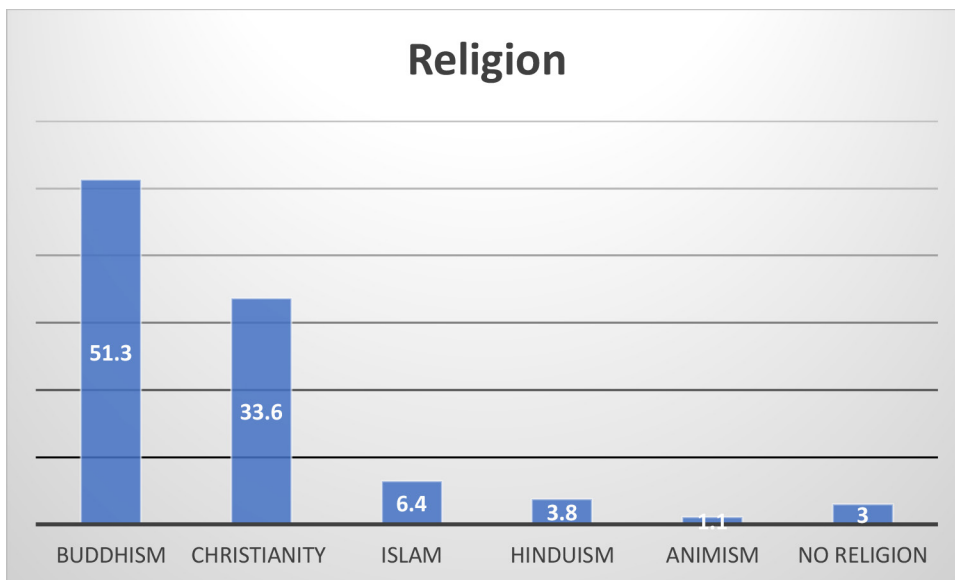
When asked which languages were spoken at home, 60 percent of respondents reported speaking Burmese at home, followed by Rakhine (6.4%), Shan (5.3%), Kachin (5.3%), Chin (4.5%), Mon (4.2%), Karen (3%), Akha (3%), Kayah (2.3%), and Pa-O (1.9%).

The survey asked respondents to self-identify their ethnicity and share their ethnicity as written on their citizenship scrutiny card (if they have one). Respondents came from a wide range of ethnic groups including Shanni, Zomi, Kayaw, Kayan, Danu, Akha, Lavow, Lachid, Innthar, Chinese, Tamil, Bengali, and Rohingya, in addition to the groups listed below.

Ethnicity (Self Identification)
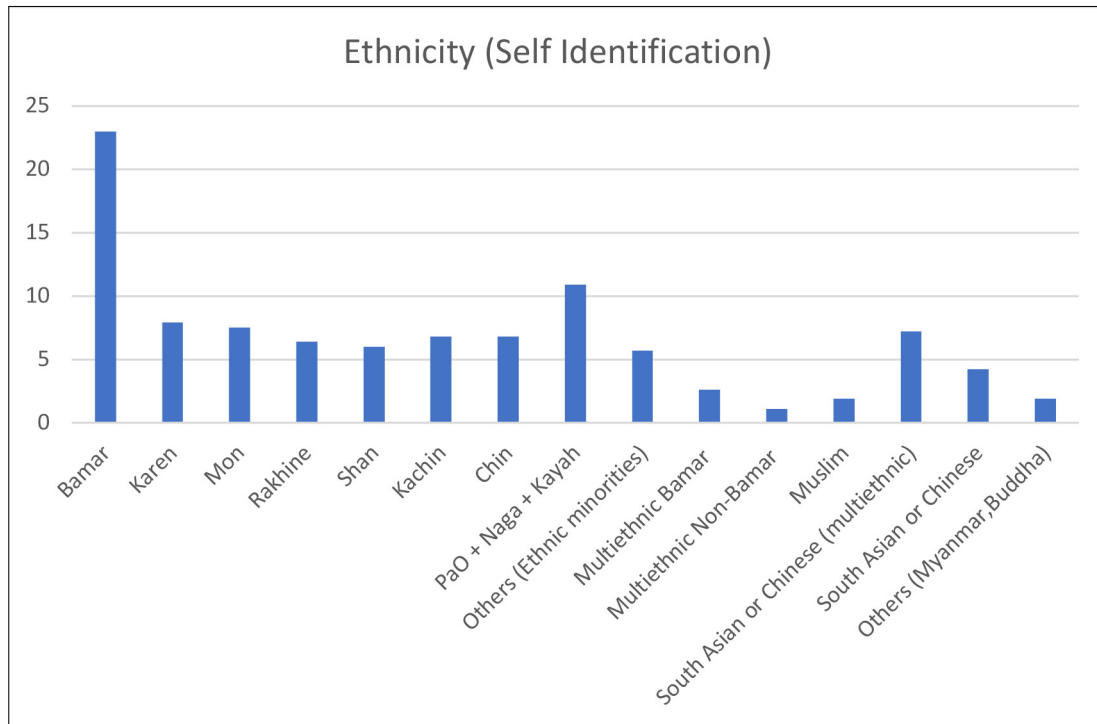
Research Findings

PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY, PLURALISM AND TOLERANCE

During interviews and focus group discussions, research participants were asked to reflect on what diversity and pluralism meant to them. A common theme was looking to the past for Myanmar-specific experiences of pluralism.

"I visited Bagan in 2014 and saw that most of the pagodas are like Hindu temples, and many people who are not Bamar were active in the society.[20] They built the empire together in their different roles. The migration and the diversity supported the Bagan kingdom to become a large and successful kingdom. They had a successful kingdom because of diversity. Arakan Kingdom's history can also help us learn about more inclusion. There was trade between the Middle East and Rakhine, and even Mon people."
– Sikh man, 23 years old

*"In our past Rakhine people already accepted diversity – we had mosques, Portuguese, Kaman, many people coexisting. But they were divided by some people. Nowadays youth
are getting moreaware of how to solve this problem."*
– Rakhine student, 20 years old

"Muslims also talk about living together during King Mindon's era – they built a mosque, sent people on hajj – even built a dormitory for Myanmar Muslims in Mecca. But it was a traditional society then – the Muslim population was small, and Myanmar was more isolated. Now we are living in a modern society. Myanmar is very multicultural and diverse, but the thinking is still a traditional society."
– Muslim man, 32 years old

"Diversity is all the different and diverse people, and the reason they are diverse is because of their ancestors. For me, all people are the same and I see and look at them as humans without discrimination."
– Rohingya woman, 22 years old

Most perceptions of diversity were positive.

"Even though we are not the same – we can share where we overlap."
– Rakhine Buddhist woman, 25 years old

"Diversity is like colorful flowers in a garden, all with their own respective beauty."
– Bamar man, 24 years old

"My hand has 5 fingers, they are all different, but you can't hold something with one finger, you need to use the whole hand to pick something up. Diversity is like this."
– Bamar youth activist, 24 years old

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[20] For a description of the religious, ethnic, and linguistic diversity during the Bagan period, see: Thant Myint-U, 2001, p. 84.

But some respondents suggested that diversity could be a cause of social problems.

> *"Diversity is good because all kinds of people are in the country but on the other*
> *hand people can easily have a different perception of the issue and can quarrel*
> *easily especially when it is related to race and religion."*
> – Karen Buddhist woman, 26 years old

> *"Because my parents' social circle was very small, there were fewer social problems in their day, but now*
> *that youth have more experiences with other people and more education [where they meet with people*
> *from other backgrounds], there is more chance for social problems."*
> – Karen Buddhist woman, 24 years old

> *"A challenge is that it is difficult to have peace among many ethnicities. For human beings, it is usual not*
> *to have unity and peace even among the same group and race. To accept diversity, it depends*
> *on how the neighborhood and community shape and guide youth. Young people*
> *in Yangon have more opportunities than people in other states and regions."*
> – Kachin Christian woman

Other youth reflected that it was not diversity that was a problem, but the politicization of religious difference and the lack of the institutionalization of cultural diversity in Myanmar.

> *"Diversity is not the problem; the problem is how the discourse of diversity has been used. This has been*
> *an issue since Ma Ba Tha,[21] as previously people would sit in cafes together, play sports together, now*
> *people stay in their ward and discriminate based on religion. We used to see Muslims participate in*
> *sermons or ceremonies at the Damayone [Buddhist hall]– Today we don't see this anymore."*
> –Bamar-Karen man, 24 years old

> *"Problems here are not religious problems, they are political problems,*
> *so we need to solve them in a political way."*
> –Sikh man, 23 years old

> *"Cultural diversity as a concept is not institutionalized in Myanmar. Schools, government departments,*
> *companies can forget out of ignorance. They aren't as sensitive to other religions as we are to Buddhism."*
> –Bamar-Buddhist man, 26 years old

> *"Diversity is like a pyramid. It gets smaller and smaller the closer you get to the top. Elders are less*
> *accepting of diversity than young people, and there is no government policy to accept diversity. The use of*
> *'security' by the government encourages a lack of diversity."*
> – Bamar student activist, 24 years old

Due in part to the lack of institutionalization of cultural diversity, some minority respondents were critical of organizations or events that claim to accept or promote diversity, citing it as potentially fake, for show, or merely 'tokenism'. A frequent example of diversity cited by respondents was ethnic festivals or shows with all the beautiful costumes with the idea that diversity is something that you see that can be put on display. This was rejected as tokenism by some respondents.

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[21] The Burmese acronym for the Organization for the Protection of Race and Religion. See: Walton, M. 2018.

"Some teachers perceive that ethnic people are there just for entertainment – for example, ethnic people must dance in their costumes in the opening ceremony. We wanted to do an event opening with a discussion of diversity and peace, but the teachers prohibited it – they just wanted us to have Rakhine and Karen dancing. We can see this attitude in government programs with taingyintha costumes for the opening ceremonies."
– Rakhine student, 20 years old

A number of respondents highlighted the importance of pluralism as opposed to interfaith relations. Respondents reported that interfaith means groups must participate as "the Muslims," or "the Buddhists". Furthermore, it is reliant on the participation of the majority group for the concept to work, and they may have little incentive to cooperate. Pluralism, however, was seen by respondents as being about the participation of individuals in society rather than groups.

DISCRIMINATION, CIVIL DOCUMENTATION AND CONFLICT

About half of survey respondents reported that they faced discrimination in Myanmar (20% responded that they did not know or refused to answer). Reported causes included being an ethnic minority, age, ethnicity and religion, gender, language/accent, family life/family background, employment status, physical appearance, and class. The most widely reported causes of discrimination were ethnicity, religion, physical appearance, followed by lack of education and class background or employment status.

Yet, family connections were overwhelmingly reported by survey respondents as the most important determining factor in terms of how people are treated in society. Wealth, Sex/Gender, Ethnicity, Physical Appearance, Employment Status/Position, and Religious Belief were the next most important indicators.

"The biggest difference is not religion or ethnicity, but between people who have money and people who don't"
– Tamil Hindu man, 25 years old

"When people are poor, they [staff at government offices] treat them badly they shout at them. If people have money, they are very kind."
– Karen Buddhist woman, 25 years old

But in most cases the research team found that the discrimination experienced by youth was intersectional, stemming from a combination of factors including gender, religion, ethnicity, education level, physical appearance, and not having identification. Within minority groups there is also discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity.

"My mother is from the grassroots level. She knows other people and knows their struggles. She can understand other people who she has met who are LGBT, but not her son."
– LGBT Muslim youth, 23 years old

Civil Documentation
For most respondents of South Asian descent, including those identifying as Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, the primary hurdle and experience of discrimination is when applying for identity documents in government offices or accessing government services like education. Over 10 percent of survey respondents reported that they were not allowed to use their real name, religion,

or ethnic identity on their identification documents, attributing this to discrimination based on ethnicity or religion.

One Kachin student relayed that she was forced to change her name when registering for state school as her name was difficult to write and pronounce in Burmese. Her teacher gave her a new name to use in school instead.

Multiple respondents reported that their identity on their ID card was different than their self-reported identity. In the majority of cases India, Pakistan, or Bengali was added to Muslim ID cards even though applicants did not claim to have any heritage from these countries or ethnic groups. For example, a Muslim who identifies as Bamar reported that their ID card reads Bengali, while a Muslim who identifies as Bengali reported that their ID card reads Bengali + Bamar + Pakistan. A Muslim who identifies as Bamar, Shan, and Muslim received an ID card that reads: Bamar + Shan + India. It seems in these cases ethnic or national identities are added to the identity cards to make religious minorities more explicitly 'different' from the majority population.

> *"Sikh, Hindu, Muslim – even Christians – the Bamar community*
> *will call them outsiders. For us – Indians - it is even worse – they call us the 'guests"*
> – Sikh man, 23 years old

> *"Hindus face less discrimination. They are mostly vegetarian, they are from the birthplace of the Buddha, and*
> *apart from skin color, everything is a plus in our eyes. But the colonial legacy surpasses all the other benefits."*
> – Bamar Buddhist man, 26 years old

> *"I think the most discriminated against groups are Muslims and then Hindus and Christians.*
> *Discrimination against Buddhists is very little. We can see discrimination based on ethnicity or*
> *religion in some vacancy announcements or housing advertisements; for example –*
> *the applicant must be Bamar, Buddhist and can speak Burmese language well and so on."*
> – Karen Buddhist/Christian woman, 26 years old

> *"We generally don't feel we face discrimination. Except for the identity card issue."*
> – Tamil Hindu man, 25 years old

> *"I'm a Ngapi-eater. I live in Burma, I was born in Burma, my great-grandparents were born here,*
> *I speak Burmese, I can't speak any kala languages – but still I face discrimination – why?"*
> – Muslim woman leader

On the other hand, there were also ethnic minority respondents who reported having their identities taken off of their cards or not included. A Mon-identifying respondent became "Bamar" on their ID card, a Mon-Bamar respondent became just Bamar, and another Mon respondent became Mon + Bamar on their ID card.

When children are 10 years old and need to apply for their first citizenship scrutiny card (CSC), immigration officers come to the public schools to register the school children. However, Hindus, Muslims, Chinese, Indians, and others considered "mixed blood" are not able to receive their CSCs through this process and must apply via a lengthier process at the immigration office.

The discrimination experienced during the citizenship scrutiny card application process is reportedly so intense that some respondents stopped applying altogether. This means they are barred from purchasing land or property, renting a flat for more than one year at a time, graduating from university, traveling domestically as well as internationally, opening a bank account, transferring money, starting a business, applying for a driver's license, and are barred from certain types of employment – particularly those that would involve travel for work, or where a copy of the CSC is part of the application.

"It's not religion. I'm Hindu-Buddhist so that's the same. Language is the same – I speak Myanmar. Education is the same – I went to public school and other people in my area have low levels of education. It's ethnicity – it's how we look that means we can't get the NRC."
– Tamil woman, 28 years old

"I have tried to be given NRC card access for two years. I just received this card after we wrote a request letter to the Union Level with the help of our relative. My little sister who is a Grade-11 student is now trying to get her NRC card but we don't know how long this process will take. There are many people who decided not to take the NRC card because they don't want to go to the Immigration Department anymore."
– Rohingya woman, 22 years old

"Previously without CSC cards we could still apply for many jobs. But now the requirement for CSC cards is more stringent – the NRC cards have become essential."
– Hindu man, 25 years old

Case Study

"I have not received my citizenship scrutiny card (CSC) although we tried to get it with the help of a broker since my second year of university. My native town is Mawlamyine and we have to make our CSCs at our native town and therefore I asked for help from a broker for my card. I am mixed-blood, my mother is Cholia+Bengali+Mon on her card and my father is also mixed ethnicity on his CSC. Therefore, if I am given a CSC, Bengali ethnicity will be written on my card because the Immigration office is automatically writing any sub-group of Muslims such as Cholia, or Surti as Bengali on their cards. I feel uncomfortable writing Bengali on my identity card because I am not Bengali, and people have some misunderstandings about 'Bengali'. I asked the broker if there was any way not to write Bengali on my card, but he said no. For my parents, they just accepted Bengali easily because there was not any sensitive issue about this word. Now if you have Bengali on your CSC, it will be difficult to apply for a passport or the process will be delayed. Full citizenship rights are lost for them. I need my CSC urgently because it is important for me to receive my graduation certificate. Some people said that the class rank will differ between two people if one is holding a CSC and the other is not. And although I want to apply for a scholarship program, I can't access it. I feel I have lost my right to education. I don't know why the Immigration department takes so long to process an identity card, and we are also born in Myanmar. One of my Muslim friends hasn't been given a CSC although her parents hold citizenship scrutiny cards, and so if she has to travel, she is using a student card instead of a CSC." – Muslim female student, 20 years old

Even for those with full-citizenship and civil documentation, being an ethnic or religious minority is still seen as leading to greater scrutiny and cause for delays in service provision.

"We can say that being from a different religious or ethnic group is a barrier for
youths to access opportunities. For example – my colleague got a full scholarship from the
Australian government. She is Muslim and also has a citizenship scrutiny card.
But she had not been given a passport at the time she had to leave for the
scholarship because her mother was a Muslim from Maungdaw,
Rakhine State. Therefore, her scholarship was cancelled."
– Karen Buddhist/Christian woman, 26 years old

Yet, as corruption in obtaining civil documentation, including citizenship scrutiny cards, is so widespread, and the assumption is that if someone does not have a document it is because they are either lazy or undeserving, there is a lack of empathy on the part of the general population, including government officials, for minorities without civil documentation. It is also difficult for non-minority youth to understand the everyday and long-term impacts of not having access to civil documentation. Discrimination faced by ethnic and religious minorities cannot be separated from the issue of civil documentation.

Conflict
The research team found that recent cases of discrimination reported by respondents were strongly correlated with recent conflicts, particularly for Rakhine, Kachin, and Muslim respondents. Multiple respondents reported facing discrimination or witnessing discrimination against others due to ongoing conflicts in Myanmar, particularly the conflict between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army (AA) in Rakhine and the conflict between the military and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in Kachin state. Increased discrimination towards Rakhine and Kachin youth was linked to the armed conflicts in their states.

"Some of my friends treated me strangely after the Rakhine
Crisis started because they see that Rakhine people are bad to minorities."
– Rakhine student, 22 years old

"After the AA and the Tatmadaw conflict, many Rakhine people had trouble renting
apartments and houses in Yangon. Shan and Ta-ang may face similar issues
if the fighting in their region becomes more serious."
– Shan-Chinese man

"I was targeted by the teachers in class – they said in front of the rest of the class that all Kachins are KIA."
– Kachin student

"We heard about diversity before, but we haven't paid much attention to it in the past. But now we are more
serious about this issue and more aware of this issue. We learned about it at a training where we learned
about other ethnic groups. Because there is a conflict, people do not understand diversity. If we understood
about diversity, there might be less conflict. I myself do not know much about diversity – but I know it relates to
skin color, sex, acceptance, respect, different perspectives and different attitudes."
– Rakhine student, 20 years old

"After the conflict people hate Rakhine people. On Master Chef one of the chef's was Rakhine and even though he is good he was not selected because he was Rakhine. People criticized him a lot for being Rakhine on social media. Some people posted comments with things like 'Rakhine people are so greedy and so selfish'. People don't want Rakhine people to reach to the top."
– Shan-Rakhine woman, 26 years old

Multiple Christians, Sikhs and Hindus of South Asian descent reported that they were discriminated against because they were assumed to be Muslim, while Muslims reported being forced to identify themselves as Bengali on official documents. Respondents linked this primarily to the conflict in Rakhine State, but also to previous cases of inter-religious violence in Meikhtila, Mandalay, and Lashio.

SOCIALIZATION: PARENTS, PEERS, AND LESSONS

Youth are socialized first at home, then at school (discussed in the following section), as well as by idioms, proverbs, mottos, propaganda and government communications. All of these factors contribute to shaping young people's environments and their ideas about themselves and others.

Class background and educational attainment considerably impacts on youth social environments, networks, and role models. Several young Muslim women research participants in Thaketa reported that their role models were their parents and their husbands, with their social and professional lives existing entirely in the ward where they live.

"Understanding diversity, in my opinion, is related to our neighborhood and environment which shapes us to accept others or not. In my experience we were all Bamar in high school, I just met other ethnicities like Chin when I went to university."
– Bamar man, 31 years old

Proverbs, Idioms, Mottos

Proverbs, idioms, and mottos can be used to pass on lessons to children in youth. Those used in government offices, holidays, and the school curriculum were commented on in interviews and focus group discussions as being particularly impactful and indicative of the lack of institutional policy on diversity.

There are multiple proverbs, idioms, and mottos which relate to the fear of one's race (usually Bamar) disappearing or becoming extinct, justifying the need to protect it.[22] But this is also found in government departments and the school curriculum. The Immigration Department's offices and website[23] are emblazoned with their official motto, which roughly translates as:

"Being swallowed by a fissure in the earth will not cause a race's extinction, only another race will."

One respondent mentioned that growing up the school curriculum also had a similar line in a poetry lesson: *"we hate mixed blood; it can make a race extinct."* [24]

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[22] A common usage is: အမျိုးပျောက်မှာ စိုးကြောက်စရာ

[23] http://www.mip.gov.mm

[24] Ongoing curriculum reform since 2014 has resulted in new textbooks for kindergarten and first grade, but the other grades continue to rely on curriculum from the military government. For more see: Metro, 2019. As of 2019, this was reportedly still in the primary school curriculum and appeared in the Grade 5 final exam in Mandalay Region, although authors could not independently confirm this. See: Su Myat Mon, 2019.

These sorts of idioms that promote intolerance are also used to stereotype other ethnic groups. One Chin respondent reported that growing up he was taught the idiom:

"If we see a Rakhine and a cobra, we must first kill the Rakhine and then the cobra."

Another popular idiom includes stereotypes about labor and wealth divisions in ethnic groups.

"Work like an Indian, save like a Chinese, don't spend like a Burman"

"People thought that a man with black skin will be poor, a liar, or a thief but the man with skin color like a Chinese will be rich and so, he will not be a liar or a thief."
– Chin Christian woman, 28 years old

Some minorities spoke of the necessity of adaptation or going with the flow. In Burmese this is found in the idioms "fish follows water" and "when in Rome do as the Romans do", which one respondent explained meant that when amongst majority groups or non-Muslims, while in her heart she is Muslim, she would do what she needed to get by, including things like eating at non-halal shops but not eating pork.

The phrase *gyi naing nge nyin*[25] came up in multiple focus groups and interviews. It means the elder defeats the younger and the younger is persecuted by the elder. This idiom speaks to social hierarchy operative in Burma, where the young have to do the bidding of their elders. In interviews it was used to demonstrate how elders do not want to make a place for youth. A similar idiom is *lu paw ma mu tey, mu paw mu tey* which means it does not depend on the person, it depends on the policy. So, if someone is younger, their ability does not matter as much as their place in the hierarchy.

Peers and Friends

By far the most reported source of information about other ethnic and religious groups is "friends," with social media a distant second, followed by teachers and parents. Thus, while parents, teachers, and other elders are still an important source of authority, youth are getting their information from other youth. The advent of social media also means that youth can be more connected to their peers outside of school, with a near 24/7 connection to other youth at their fingertips.

Over 93 percent of respondents reported that they had a friend of another religion. But just 85 percent of respondents reported that they had visited their friend of another religion's home or had a friend from another religion to their home. As one respondent said:

"We had friends of different religions when I was in school. But I left school at 6th grade and now I'm a housewife so I just stay in my ward where people are also from my religion."
–Hindu woman, 28 years old

Respondents also made a point about the difference between friends, acquaintances or work colleagues, and neighbors, so there is also a possibility that the bar for "friend" was deemed high and therefore the question may have received a more negative response.

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[25] ကြီးနိုင် ငယ်ညှင်း
[26] "လူပေါ်မမူတည် မူပေါ်မူတည်"

*"Most of my friends are from different ethnic and religion such as Chinese and Bamar. I am more
familiar with them compared with the friends from the same religion as me. I think this is because there are
many limitations in our religion and my Muslim friends follow exactly by the religious rules
but I* have the habit of doing *things I think I should do even if I have to break the religious rules."*
– Rohingya woman, 22 years old

Yet, when asked about friends of a different ethnicity, more people (95 percent) responded that they
had a friend of a different ethnicity and 88 percent reported that this friend had been to their home
or they had been to their friend's home.

*"If people have the same mindset as me, we can be friends, friendship is
not based on ethnicity, but it may be hard to be intimate friends."*
–Telugu Christian woman, 31 years old

*"It is easier to be friends with someone from the same religion, but because I went to
a state school with mostly Muslims and some Buddhists where I was the only
Christian in my class I made friends with others. Character is more important than religion."*
– Telugu Christian woman, 32 years old

*"I could easily make friends any kind of people who are same or different with me at first meeting but the
problem is that some friends who are influenced by their parents couldn't accept me as close friend."*
– Rohingya woman, 22 years old

*"My friend who is Bamar from Upper Myanmar told me 'Don't make friends with Muslims,
they are bad and will cause problems for you' when she saw some Muslim students at university.
In reality she had no experiences with Muslims and just repeated what she had been told by elders."*
– Chin Christian woman, 28-years old

Parents and Elders

Parents, teachers, and elders have traditionally been afforded high status in Myanmar society. While
about 90 percent of respondents agreed a little (15.8%), somewhat (44.9%), or strongly (30.2%) that
they were comfortable sharing their opinions with other youth, this dropped to 82 percent when
asked if they were comfortable sharing their opinions with their community, 77 percent for sharing
opinions with elders, and 67 percent for sharing opinions outside of their community.

A little over a quarter of survey respondents reported that they relied on their parents to help them
make decisions, with 45% reporting that they both relied on their parents and made decisions on
their own. As one interviewee reported:

*"We are naturally curious and now we have access – we can quench our thirst. Our parents were also curious
but had no outlets, so they learned to swallow their curiosity and not pursue it. Now our natural curiosity is
being rewarded but they learned to follow the elders and so they think we should do the same."*
– Bamar man, 26 years old

Parents play a key role in teaching children about cultural diversity and pluralism, particularly if they
live in isolated or homogenous areas and do not have opportunities to socialize with youth of other
backgrounds.

"Parents just teach and shape children to follow them and to be adaptable with the neighborhood and same group rather than teaching the diversity. I do not have the experience that parents guide children to accept diversity."
–Bamar man, 31 years old

"Since I was in 5th or 6th grade my parents taught me about diversity and other religions. There are no Muslims in Kyaukphyu. So even though I hadn't seen Muslims I knew about them because of my parents. My role models are my parents because they taught me about the values of others – Muslims and Christians have their own values."
– Rakhine woman, 25 years old

"Even though my parents co-existed with different communities they never talk about the other community, especially Muslims."
– Rakhine student, 22 years old

"Since I was young, I knew well about Buddhism and Hinduism because my parents told me about them but I just learnt Christianity from school books and so I didn't know well it. I become familiar with them after visiting church."
– Rohingya woman, 22

The research found several cases of parents who actively taught children to discriminate or taught them negative lessons about other groups. While some youth reported that their parents taught them to value diversity, amongst those interviewed, their experiences were far outnumbered by those whose parents either did not teach them about other ethnic or religious groups at all or taught them negative lessons about other groups. Three of our KII participants, and the participants in two of the focus groups reported that parents (either their parents or friends' parents) teach their children not to make friends with Muslims. One respondent reported that parents also teach their children to call transpeople *"achauk"* (a derogatory word).

But youth also mentioned that their perceptions of diversity and tolerance differ from their parents. Currently, for youth in Yangon, particularly educated youth, discrimination is seen as shameful. Education and being open to new experiences were cited as key tools for increasing tolerance and acceptance of diversity. Youth expressed that they were still able and curious to learn about diversity, whereas their parents may not be able to change their mindsets and worldviews.

"We youth must enhance our understanding about diversity. For the older people it is over – we cannot convince them to understand about diversity."
– Rakhine student, 22 years old

"In the past there might have been discrimination amongst the youth and the young people because of their lack of knowledge and education. It's not about being narrow-minded it's about a lack of education. But nowadays people are becoming aware of this issue and promoting it."
– Rakhine student, 20 years old

EDUCATION (SCHOOLS, UNIVERSITIES AND TEACHERS)

More than 80 percent of respondents reported that public schools and universities were diverse places. Yet, while schools are seen as diverse, the state education system is seen as one-sided, leaving out histories of minorities and using Buddhist prayer in schools. Recent academic work has shown

that history textbooks are shorter than both the textbooks from the 1980s as well as those from the colonial period.[27] During the military government, periods of history where non-Bamar groups such as the Shan, Mon or Arakanese (Rakhine) were powerful were deleted from the curriculum or reduced.[28] Students are not taught about each other's histories or religions but rather learn the history and religion of the majority Bamar Buddhist population.

"Even though we know the names of Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Chin and so on in the state school, we did not see the diversity in the state school curriculum. We have learned about it in our workplace though."
–Bamar man, 31 years old

"I learned about other ethnicities from the textbook with the photos and just learned the name not about the culture (and also didn't learn about anyone not in the book)."
– Karen Buddhist woman, 24 years old

"We don't learn about other religions in school – your religion is yours and mine is mine."
– Hindu woman, 28 years old

"Mon and Rakhine had large kingdoms and were historically great contributors to the religious and cultural development of the area but are left out of the histories."
– Naga man, 26 years old

"Education is very important for people. From the textbook we can learn about other people. But *about other ethnic people we didn't learn from the textbook, we learned from other people in our class, and from field trips to the ethnic nationalities village when I was young."*
– Bamar woman, 25 years old

"We tolerate because we are human beings – not because it is written down as a rule and followed – not because its taught to us. Avenues to learn tolerance are very small – movies, foreign exposure, friends of different religions and backgrounds."
– Bamar man, 26 years old

Multiple respondents reported that stories in their school textbooks often introduced characters as 'Bamar Buddhist' as the descriptor. Children were meant to identify that this character description meant they were the protagonist or a good person.

Schools closed one day a week during Buddhist lent every year from July-September, but the students have to go to school on Saturday. This disadvantages ethnic minority and religious minority students who have religious schools or mother-tongue language classes on the weekends.

Christians and Muslims reported that they had to sweep and tidy the classroom while Buddhist children paid respect to the Buddha at school. In this way all the other children knew that they were different, and it felt like they were being punished for their difference by having to clean during prayer time.

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[27] Metro, 2019.
[28] Salem-Gervais and Metro, 2012.

"At government school there was a Buddhist prayer session. I did not know why other people like Christians did not join that class. But now I am aware that this is a different religion."
– Shan-Rakhine woman, 26 years old

"In state school students have to pay respect to the Buddha every morning at school and change flowers for the offering to the Buddha. But in private school there is just a ceremony of paying respect to the teacher."
– Muslim woman, 20 years old

"Although there are diverse religions in state school, the minorities like Christian, Hindu and Muslim do not have a chance to pray, in addition the minority students are scolded by the teacher if they do not join in the Buddhist prayer section."
– Kachin woman

Teachers often encouraged or ignored discrimination in their classrooms. Some respondents reported that their teachers participated in discrimination and public ridicule of minority students and that students learned this behavior from their teachers.

"When I was in my tuition class my teacher was eating pork and tried to feed it to me. I was so sad about this experience."
– Tamil Hindu woman, 28 years old

"Teachers discriminate against people with dark skin – they'd call them charcoal. So, when we were young, we made jokes too – we didn't know – we thought what the teacher said was right. I understood later that it was wrong."
– Bamar man, 21 years old

For school-related discrimination the majority of reported causes are religion or ethnicity. A major exception to this was discrimination reported in gaining admission or scholarships to university, of which there were a wide range of reported causes including family connections, age, accent or language, religion, and ethnicity.

"In universities discrimination against women, ethnic groups, religious minorities is very shameful, so we don't see it as much compared to state schools."
– Bamar Buddhist man, 21 years old

By the time students reach university, discrimination between youth improves, while institutional discrimination continues. About three percent of respondents reported that they were unable to graduate from university due to the school withholding their certificate and felt it was due to their ethnic or religious identity. Focus group discussion participants reported that those without a citizenship scrutiny card, the document most commonly used for identification in Myanmar, were able to graduate from university. However, their certificate of completion did not bear the official seal and so therefore was not an official document which caused problems in obtaining employment and further education.

Those with Associate or Naturalized Citizenship,[29] usually reserved for people of Chinese, South Asian, or European descent, are able to access university but are not given spaces in the most popular and prestigious programs, particularly medicine and engineering. Interviewees reported that they

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[29] For more on citizenship, see the Justice Base 2018 report.

cannot receive specialized bachelor's and master's degrees (LLB, B.Eng., etc.) but can only study BA and MA subjects. [30]

Socialization

"In school youth are not taught how to manage diversity or get along with each other, they are taught to memorize from the book which tends to prioritize individual action rather than cooperation and teamwork."
– Naga youth leader

School is a key location outside of the family where youth are socialized and friendships are formed. Most respondents said their closest friendships are formed during high school. The fact that youth report that the majority of close friendships are made in high school adds to the potential isolation for minority or low-income students who may drop out of school before high school where many of these cross-cultural friendships are formed.

Muslim students may be able to make friends with other students easily, but the sticking points often come down to where to eat and what to eat, with many Bamar restaurants not serving halal food, meaning that Muslim students cannot easily go to their friends' neighborhoods, homes, or to their favorite restaurants. This may be interpreted by Buddhist youth as Muslims not wanting to join for their festivals or important events. If youth learned more about other religious practices in school, they may be more sensitive to religious prohibitions on food and certain activities and find social activities that are more inclusive.

"Children have a sense that Muslims come from other territories – they say things like
'go back to your country', or things like 'let's eat pork together' as a dare."
– Muslim man, 23 years old

Religious minorities of South Asian descent face bullying in school. Often this is related to their skin color and/or religion. Christian, Hindu, and Muslim men and women of South Asian descent or multiethnic backgrounds reported that they were teased in school and called 'kala' - a derogatory racial slur that they experienced as rude and hurtful – by other children. Research participants reported that classmates learned this word from their parents and teachers took no action when children used this sort of language with each other.

Hindu, Muslim and Christian young women of South Asian descent reported being called 'kalama' (female kala) at school and being teased for having dark skin. Two Telugu Christian women who are now working as teachers reported being called 'kala teacher' by students and their students' parents.

"When I was young, even though people teased me, calling me kalama, I had no feelings at the time.
Later on I had trauma, I didn't know how to introduce myself to other people – am
I a Muslim or a Buddhist. Is it wrong that I was born in this family?"
– Bamar Buddhist/Muslim woman, 26 years old

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[30] The research team was able to confirm that was the case in the past but was unable to confirm if that is currently the policy for university-level study.

"Some parents of my students did not accept that I could be a Christian Indian. They thought I must be a Muslim and complained that they did not want their children to have a Muslim teacher. I didn't want to clarify that I am not a Muslim, as I have some Muslim students in my classroom and did not want them to feel targeted."
– Telugu Christian woman, 32 years old

ISOLATION AND SPACE

"Tolerance is about relationship building and communication – not about ignoring each other."
– Muslim man, 32 years old

70 % of respondents reported that they preferred to work with people who have the same background as them, while 60 % reported it was easier to make friends with people of the same religion. 55.5% of survey respondents reported living in an area with people of different religions and ethnicities, but 72% reported that they would feel more comfortable to live in a neighborhood with just their own religion or ethnicity. Multiple respondents reported that urban life felt unsafe, insecure, and that they did not have a sense of community in their neighborhood.

"People in wards knew each other well before. After high-rise buildings are built in Yangon, people don't know each other, even though people are from the same building. Besides, as there are many crimes such as theft and murder which we saw and heard about on social media, people don't trust each other."
– Bamar man, 24 years old

"People are more distant from each other nowadays, we become strangers. The community is not unified, particularly amongst Bamar people. People in Yangon just spend all their time working and are friends with their coworkers rather than people in their ward. Even though they see each other frequently they do not greet each other."
– Beik woman, 23 years old

A dispute between Buddhist and a Muslim at a beer shop in Thaketa township a few years ago, resulted in a mob of men with knives returning to the neighborhood looking to destroy Muslim houses but two young women in one of the focus group discussions reported that as there were only four Muslim homes in their ward, their Buddhist neighbors took them in and hid them from the mob for two days. Following this they moved to a majority Muslim ward for safety.

"Understanding about the lack of social cohesion increased after 2012 when the violence in Rakhine state broke out. The violence caused people to retreat into their own communities and ostracize outsiders or newcomers."
–Naga man, 26 years old

"At night a thief came to my house and even though I shouted, neighbors did nothing to help me. My neighbor is Burmese, but my Mon and Karen friends are 3-4 houses away. I was shocked that the Burmese neighbor did nothing to help me. In Yangon, I am seriously concerned with security."
– Beik woman, 23 years old

Almost half of interview and focus group respondents (5 FGDs and 7 interviewees), reported being told that they should not go to Muslim areas, restaurants, shops, make friends with or rent houses to Muslims by neighbors, friends, teachers, and parents. Other communities also reported staying within their own community.

*"Sikhs tend to live in their own community and go to temple and are friends with their
own community. They face discrimination when they communicate with others
but most of their daily life is in the Sikh and Hindu community."*
– Sikh man, 23 years old

Places that were cited as diverse and fostering tolerance include ethnic youth forums, workshops, interfaith meetings, schools and universities. With diverse spaces also including sporting events, vocational training programs like sewing classes, movie theatres, parks, public buses, hospitals and shopping malls.

*"Junction City – some people are going to eat at fancy restaurants or watch movies, but others are just
going to use the toilet or take selfies – so it ends up being a diverse space!"*
– Telugu Christian man, 29 years old

The vast majority of survey respondents – more than 85 percent – reported that universities were diverse spaces. Other spaces sited as diverse included public hospitals, non-governmental organizations, schools and private sector companies. This rubric dropped somewhat for government offices and dropped considerably for the Myanmar Armed Forces which were not seen as diverse organizations or spaces. But places with diversity are also not free from discrimination.

*"We face discrimination on the bus. People don't want us to sit next to them, so
they put their bags on the empty seat next to them when they see us."*
- Telugu Christian man, 29 years old

One issue that repeatedly arose is the issue of a lack of space for youth – both physically and in terms of participation.

*"It's a shame that in Yangon there is a lot of diversity but no place to organize.
Even if NGOs try to organize youth, who shows up are their connections and relatives –
not other youth. We should create free spaces for youth."*
– Bamar-Karen CSO staff

*"Spaces such as NGOs and youth centers are safe spaces for minority groups but may not be available
every day. Youth centers open every day is something we need."*
– LGBT Muslim youth activist, 23 years old

*"We have three major problems facing our community: 1) lack of identity cards; 2)
lack of jobs; and 3) the Bamar do not give us any space."*
– Hindu community member

FESTIVALS, HOLIDAYS, AND CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS SITES

80 percent of survey respondents reported that they had attended a religious or cultural festival of another ethnic or religious group. The most commonly mentioned festivals were Thingyan (Water Festival), Thadingyut (Festival of Lights), Christmas, New Year's, Tazaungdine, and Hindu Fire Walking Festival. Some respondents relayed that they may not want to go to other religious or ethnic groups' festivals, but they are happy to have people join their festivals. Others felt it was their duty to go to festivals of other groups to learn more about their cultures.

"I just participate in Buddhist festivals like Thingyan, Thadingyut and Tazaungdine festivals.
I haven't participated in Muslim or Hindu festivals but pay respect and say thanks to
Muslims when they come to give snacks on their festival day."
– Chin Christian woman, 28 years old

"I really want to participate in festivals, but it is not comfortable for people with disabilities"
–Bamar man living with a disability, 31 years old.

"We need to change ourselves first. We should not wait for other people to change.
We need to first learn their culture, go to their festivals and later we can have
contact with them and understand them better and maybe they will come to ours."
– Karen Buddhist women, 26 years old

While Myanmar Water Festival (Thingyan) is Buddhist New Year, multiple research participants from minority ethnic and religious backgrounds highlighted it as a shared holiday. A low-income mixed Muslim, Hindu, Christian and Buddhist community reported that they all celebrate Myanmar Buddhist holidays like Thingyan (Water Festival) and Thadingyut (Festival of Lights), but as the majority of households in the ward are Muslim, the majority of those partaking in the festival are also Muslim.

"Holidays that all people can celebrate are Independence Day and Thingyan but if Muslims participate
sometimes people say – hey kala – this is not your kala festival why are you participating?"
– Bamar Buddhist/Muslim woman, 26 years old

One respondent commented that since the government did not give permission for large ethnic festivals in the past like Chinese New Year or Mon National Day, communities often celebrated amongst themselves in private settings. Due to this previous government policy, the public may not understand about the performances or significance if they join these festivals now.

Recent cases of erecting statues of General Aung San and naming infrastructure projects after Aung San were commented on by some respondents as examples of Burmanization when asked about issues related to tolerance, acceptance and cultural diversity. This use of cultural and public space by the government was seen as particularly problematic in ethnic states and drew considerable protest from youth.

"Every ethnic group in Myanmar has its own history and role models, but it seems
that through this process everyone must pay respect to Burma's leader [Aung San]
who is not their role model, even if they may personally respect him."
– Naga man, 26 years old

Multiple respondents told the research team that an issue in visiting religious sites of other faiths is fear of making a mistake and causing offense, so people tend to avoid gatherings or places of worship that are not their own. They are not taught about other religions at government school and lack the confidence to explore such a sensitive issue on their own. Another respondent reported that for some festivals of other faiths they needed to be invited and so needed to not only know someone within the community, but someone respected with the power to invite outsiders to a community event, which may limit these sorts of experiences to people of certain class backgrounds.

*"I feel uncomfortable to visit Muslim festivals because I don't know
about the culture and am afraid of making a mistake."*
–Karen Buddhist woman, 24 years old

*"I feel uncomfortable to go to a mosque because the religions like Muslims are very strict and
they respect their religion very much. We may do something wrong when we visit their place
so I am uncomfortable to visit there. I learned this from my Muslim friends."*
– Beik woman, 23 years old

*"We may know how to tolerate but we don't know anything about holidays or religious
festivals and friends don't ask me to join their holidays because it is their family time and
my family doesn't teach me because they don't participate."*
– Bamar man, 26 years old

*"Religious buildings are private. Buddhists don't like visitors of other religions
coming to their religious buildings and neither do other religions."*
– Bamar man, 24 years old

CIVIC AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Slightly less than half of respondents (49.1%) reported that they were not a member of any sort of group or organization. Of those who reported that they were members of an organization the majority were members of a social welfare (20.4%), youth (18.6%), religious (19.7%), ethnic (7.2%) or literature and culture (7.5%) organizations. Those who reported that they were full time students, CSO workers, or employed in the private sector had the highest rates of participation in organizations. While a vast majority of youth agreed with the statement Youth should be active in their communities, female respondents were far more likely to disagree.

*"Women often think that we cannot do things. We discriminate
against ourselves – we cannot do this – we think – it's for men."*
– Bamar-Chinese woman student leader, 19 years old

More than 83 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that not enough young people in Myanmar are involved in politics. Candidates for parliament must be over 25 years old, which is almost ten years after most Myanmar youth graduate from high school. Some respondents reported that politics and party membership was the way to make change in Myanmar and improve acceptance of diversity, but they were not old enough to participate. Others expressed interest in politics but thought they would not be accepted as candidates due to their religion.

*"people don't want to give positions or power to people who are different from them as they are still in a
mindset that if A has power, A will create a place and positions for other people like him rather than for people
generally. It is seen as a zero-sum game where any advancement of a minority is a loss for the majority."*
– Naga man, 26 years old

Religious and ethnic minorities that have Associate or Naturalized Citizenship have the right to vote but cannot stand as candidates in elections, meaning they have no political representation for their specific needs.

*"The government talks about federalism but Hindus, Muslims, Chinese, etc. are not
included – how do we become included in this conversation?"*
– Muslim man, 32 years old

One Muslim party member relayed that the youth movement in the Muslim community is not very active, in part due to fear of political activity and in part due to the idea that politics and community engagement does not concern them.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND HATE SPEECH

95 percent of respondents said they used social media. The primary social media applications are Facebook and Facebook Messenger followed by Viber and Youtube, and then Instagram. 90 percent of respondents reported using social media every day. Primarily youth are using social media to access the news and communicate with friends and family, followed by work.

Concerns were raised in surveys and key informant interviews about the use of social media to spread misinformation and disinformation.

*"Youth are using social media but are unable to separate right from wrong, true from false.
We see a lot of viral posts – like share a post of this snake and you will get money! And people do it."*
– Bamar-Karen youth activist

Over 80 percent of respondents reported seeing hate speech online in the past year, and most reported it as frequent (on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis). But the majority – more than 54 percent – did not do anything about the hate speech they encountered online, they simply ignored it. While a much lower percentage (15.3%) blocked users or told their friends about it (12.9%), with only 7.8 percent reporting social media users for hate speech.[31]   Respondents linked social media to hate speech and hate speech to ongoing conflicts.

*"After the conflict even though I had a lot of Muslim friends I didn't want to post
Facebook photos with my Muslim friends – even though my parents accept other
religions they may face social pressure from others in the community."*
– Rakhine woman, 25 years old

*"It is getting worse regarding socializing with other groups. People with different backgrounds of race,
culture and religion were familiar with each other before accessing social media like Facebook. However,
presently regarding the propaganda on race and religion, people stay away from each other and do not
have trust in each other. That is because we can see on Facebook that there are many crimes therefore,
we are not able to trust people, it controls people's trust and socializing."*
– Bamar man, 33 years old

*"Hate speech can be delivered easily and some people do not analyze the posts or where the posts come
from. Some fake accounts are producing conflict and propaganda. Some accounts posting
about Rakhine people like they torture others. At that time, Rakhine people were affected
as people thought that about us. My friends asked – you are Rakhine – did you do this?"*
– Rakhine student, 20 years old

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[31] This correlates with recent research by Save the Children that found that youth are experiencing 'hate speech fatigue' causing them to less frequently report or block hate speech online.

Yet, multiple respondents spoke about using social media as a learning tool that could increase tolerance and acceptance of diversity. This was also echoed in recent research on social media in conflict-affected areas of Myanmar.[32] The experiences of two Karen Buddhist women are an interesting example:

"We heard that women are not allowed to enter the mosque. We heard that in a mixed marriage Buddhists have to convert to Islam, Muslims never convert to Buddhism. Muslim people persuade the partner to convert their religion. If people marry Muslims, they must convert. Muslims do not eat other religion's food. But then we learned about Islam from Facebook. We found that the religion's teaching is not very different from Buddhism."
– Buddhist Karen woman, 26 years old

"When we heard about the conflict [in Rakhine] we hate Muslims and are afraid of Muslims, but we understood later and learned from Facebook that it does not depend on the religion but on the individual people and the message that religious leaders give to their followers."
– Buddhist Karen woman, 24 years old

An example of positive social media campaigns that promote diversity are the Better Together, Better Myanmar campaign on religious pluralism, led by Mosaic Myanmar. Another example is the White Rose campaign that spread across social media and had a face-to-face component of non-Muslims handing out white roses to Muslims breaking fast during Ramadan. This followed an attack on a Muslim fast-breaking event in South Dagon township. The campaign declared that 'there is no place for racism in Myanmar'.

EMPLOYMENT AND MIGRATION
Where youth across the board, regardless of religion or ethnicity, have reported the most difficulty, is in accessing employment. The most frequently reported issues were discrimination due to position/class background, language/accent, age, ethnicity, and religion. When youth are employed, they feel they are offered unfair terms.

"Right now, there is a lack of opportunity for youth. The university attendance and the job opportunities do not match."
– CSO worker

"It's hard for young people to choose a career or make goals – they don't know what to do after finishing high school."
–Muslim woman, 20 years old

"For people without higher education they might not know what to do for work – they don't know what opportunities are available. For example, someone might have low education but be good at computers but without a supportive family and educational background he won't know what to do to improve his skills – just go to the teashop, smoke cigarettes and play video games."
– Telugu Christian man, 29 years old

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[32] Ridout et al., 2019.

Multiple respondents reported personal experiences of employment discrimination. A Muslim woman focus group discussion participant reported that some Bamar restaurant owners rejected her appeals to work at their restaurants due to her physical appearance and dark skin. She noted that finding work is even worse for Muslim women who wear a headscarf. A Christian respondent reported that he liked to pray before having lunch at work and his boss asked him not to. Rather than put up with that kind of treatment he quit his job.

One ethnic youth group leader reported that finding work in Yangon is more difficult for young migrants, especially those from rural areas who lack the educational backgrounds necessary for success in Yangon. Thus, cultural or ethnic-based youth groups in Yangon are key places of socialization and support for young people from rural or ethnic areas.

Multiple respondents reported that there is less trust between people generally because the cost of living has increased so people are trying to find work, make an income and look after themselves rather than the broader community. Respondents noted that Yangon has so much migration from other areas that there is a lack of a Yangon identity, trust, and social cohesion.

> *"People live in large buildings nowadays and it is very transient. We don't know*
> *who is moving in and moving out and there are many strange people."*
> – Bamar woman, 25 years old

People migrating to Yangon was referred to by one respondent as "ants drawn to sugar." Respondents expressed that with the influx of people from other places people do not know each other and therefore have higher rates of fear and less trust. This correlates with the findings of the Asia Foundation's 2018 City Life Survey. Furthermore, respondents noted that people living in Yangon do not often refer to themselves as Yangon-tha in the way that people from Mandalay are Mandalay-tha, Dawei are Dawei-tha, Myeik people are Beik-tha, etc. Other cities with long histories of diverse populations have a regional identity which is not felt or expressed as strongly in Yangon, therefore other forms of identity – class, religion, ethnicity, native place, etc. become more important.

LANGUAGE

The research team had difficulty translating some of the concepts such as diversity, tolerance and discrimination into Burmese. As much as possible, rather than attempting direct translations from English, we tried to craft questions that made sense to Burmese speakers.

Diversity in Burmese is most often translated as: *ma tu kwe pya hmu*[33] which is a negative construction of an abstract noun. Broken down in English, it means the abstract noun of being "dissimilar and distinct from (or showing difference)". But in Burmese it is a negative construction which rather than 'diverse' has the meaning 'dissimilar' which suggests a lack of connection rather than the idea of the celebration of variety associated with the English concept of diversity. Some suggestions were to use *sone lin kwe pya hmu*[34] or *mya pya sone lin hmu*[35] as more inclusive forms of diversity.

Similarly, tolerance or to tolerate is most often translated as *thi kan hmu*[36] which implies forbearing, or to bear patiently, which rather than a positive connotation, has a rather negative connotation.

[33] မတူကွဲပြားမှု
[34] စုံလင်ကွဲပြား မှု
[35] များပြားစုံလင်မှု
[36] သည်းခံမှု

People can be tolerant to a point – once a certain threshold has been reached, they are no longer tolerant. In other words, thi kan hmu has prescribed limits. As one respondent pointed out, *"in Myanmar, tolerance [translated as 'thi kan hmu'] implies that people are oppressing you and you have to accept it."*

When translating into Burmese it may be better to translate tolerance into an idea that already exists in Burmese, which is *nalehmu* [37] or mutual understanding, a word that most Burmese people are familiar with and use in their day-to-day life. Nalehmu implies having a mutual understanding of each other's needs and actions. UNESCO uses a version of *nalehmu (naleh thin myat hmu)*[38] as the official translation for tolerance and this should be encouraged elsewhere. Another word we often heard during interviews is *lek kan hmu*[39] which is most often translated as the verb to accept, or acceptance in its noun form.

Lastly, several people expressed that empathy is their preferred understanding of tolerance. Using phrases like *"If I were in your place…" or "to walk in their shoes"*[40] to explain how they tried to think about the experiences of others.

Using ideas that are already present in Burmese communities may be more readily understandable and efficient than promoting words translated from English, which the research team found predominately educated people, those with an existing knowledge of English or human rights concepts, or those working in civil society understood. Outside of these limited, elite circles, some respondents understood the Burmese word, but not the idea that the direct translation from English was meant to convey. Using existing ideas in the local language may be a more direct means of transmitting messaging related to pluralism, tolerance, and the promotion and celebration of cultural diversity.

CHANGE AGENTS

While some respondents reported that they learned tolerance, acceptance of others, and the value of diversity from their parents or their religion, the vast majority reported that they learned about cultural diversity and pluralism from trainings, educational programs, or clubs sponsored by educational programs or civil society organizations. Yet, it was not so much the content or topic of the training or program that was important, but the chance to meet and form peer-to-peer relationships with youth of other backgrounds. This enabled youth to learn about each other, challenge the stereotypes they had about particular groups, practice empathy and tolerance, and become more accepting of diversity.

A handful of places and programs, such as Myanmar Egress (no longer active), the American Center Public Speaking Club, Institute for Civic and Political Engagement (IPACE), Myanmar Institute of Theology (MIT), Wing's Institute, and the American Center Library, were frequently reported as sites of transformation and places where people made meaningful connections with people of other backgrounds.

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[37] နားလည်မှု
[38] နားလည်သင့်မြတ်မှု
[39] လက်ခံမှု
[40] သူတို့ဖိနပ်ကိုဝင်စီးကြည့်သလိုပေါ့

*"I think I become more familiar and better at communication with community or friends
than 10 years ago. I was afraid to speak with boys because of our community culture and tradition.
After attending the courses like Political and Civic Education and Gender Equality,
I could speak out what I think to my parents, friends and other people.
As the things that I speak out about are mostly correct, they have increased their trust in me."*
– Rohingya woman, 22 years old

*"I met and learned about other ethnicities and cultures from exchange programs
and fellowship programs. We met with many ethnicities at the program and
I understand more about the diversity there than in a book."*
–Bamar man, 31 years old

*"At the Myanmar Institute of Technology Liberal Arts Program they taught
the students not to say 'kala'. They said: 'If you see an Indian looking guy
you can say Indian person.' No one is proud to be called 'kala', it feels exclusionary."*
– Muslim man, 23 years old

While a large number of respondents reported unprompted that they learned about diversity through trainings from NGOs, CSOs, and educational institutions, several respondents suggested that some of what they learned through trainings could be transferred to meaningful online content and dissemination.

*"Long term we need to change the school curriculum, short term we need to do social
media mobilization. We cannot do activism anymore – people do not participate in the streets."*
– youth activist, 23 years old

*"Training for 40 people costs USD 3,000 if we use that money to
make social media content we would have a wider spread"*
– CSO director, 32 years old

*"In the past we had to go to trainings and learning centers but nowadays
we can easily access on social media things we would like to do or learn about."*
–Beik woman, 23 years old

*"Donors don't do enough digital communication like live shows, recorded panels, videos –
not live streams, but giving space to and making the changemaking individuals we deserve."*
– Bamar man, 26 years old

"We should share other religions and ethnicities and cultures to people who don't know about it."
– youth CSO worker

Conclusion

Youth have opportunities to associate and build strong friendships with youth from other backgrounds during school and university, but these opportunities and cross-cultural relationships seem to decrease once youth enter the workforce, move away from their natal community where they went to school, and start their own families. One major exception to this were people working in the civil society and education sectors, where they continued to meet and form relationships with people of other backgrounds.

For those who grew up in more homogenous or sheltered communities, youth who had opportunities to go to university, join civil society organizations, leadership trainings, or other educational workshops were able to meet and connect with youth from diverse backgrounds. They reported that friendships with youth of different backgrounds made them feel that discrimination was shameful. Educational experiences that include peer-to-peer relationship building are key to youth socialization, acceptance of diversity, valuing pluralism, and building peaceful communities.

Yet, institutional and social discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, social class, educational attainment, and personal or family connections continues and is seen by youth as widespread. Furthermore, youth continue to battle ageism in the transition, with promises that as the economy grows, more job opportunities will become available, but many feel that this has not materialized into stable and well-paid employment.

Youth are socialized by parents, teachers, proverbs and language, but youth primarily report that they learn about other cultures and religions from peers. The influence of elders including parents on youth is still strong but may be decreasing as youth travel for educational and employment opportunities, access information via social media, and rely more heavily on their peer networks. With universities re-opened for undergraduate programs and restrictions on travel largely relaxed, youth are venturing away from their parents and their natal communities.

The impact of social media and its influence on youth cannot be understated. Prior to 2015, communication with peers was primarily at school and the home was reserved for parents and family, but online communication with peers now extends throughout the day, and parents also able to easily contact their migrant children. This constant contact may allow for parents' influence over youth to remain steady or even increase, or it may allow for childhood friends from public schools to stay connected longer into adulthood, increasing the diversity of young adults' social networks. Youth may also be easily influenced by social media campaigns, or posts by popular social media personalities. While hate speech on social media remains a problem, youth pointed to the positive impacts of social media and the possibility for social media to be used to further social change.

Language is a key component of any effort to increase respect for cultural diversity. This is in terms of knowing what sort of words are found hurtful and shameful by other groups, and in learning how to discuss concepts like tolerance, mutual understanding, diversity, and acceptance using existing concepts found in Myanmar so that people of all educational and class backgrounds can join in the discussion.

Youth respondents highlighted how understanding, empathy, and acceptance of people from other backgrounds helps them to understand other communities' issues and the types of things that might upset others or lead to conflict. Youth reported that strong understanding of and respect for cultural diversity amongst youth would lead to less conflict. Yet, the question remains, how to encourage respect for cultural diversity amongst youth and support existing youth activists and youth-led organizations working on pluralism and social cohesion?

Recommendations for Program Expansion

- Use social media campaigns including high quality video to promote understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity as a tool for social cohesion. These can be countrywide or targeted at specific geographic areas or social groups.

- Work with existing youth-led organizations and activists to promote their campaigns, activities, and the issues they see as important. This is not only so efforts are not duplicated, but also to build and support a broad coalition of groups working in support of cultural diversity and social cohesion as tools to promote peace.

- Any program of promoting cultural diversity should also include antidiscrimination components so that minority youth recognize that their experiences are included and valued, not just their cultural dress or religious festivals.

- Pay close attention to the vernacular translations of concepts like diversity, tolerance, social cohesion, conflict, and pluralism. Make sure that these concepts convey the right meanings, that they already exist in Myanmar and are not new words, and that they are readily understood by people of all class, linguistic, and educational backgrounds.

- Work with existing youth-led organizations or educational programs to fund or sponsor youth camps, cultural exchanges, and activities that bring youth together from a variety of backgrounds.

- Invest in youth centers or other safe spaces where youth of diverse backgrounds can connect with each other.

Civil Society Mapping

This civil society mapping is non-exhaustive and focuses primarily on organization we came across during our fieldwork or that were mentioned directly by respondents.

INGOs working on social cohesion and Youth

Organization	About	Specific Programs/Projects
Search for Common Ground	SFCG is a peacebuilding organization that works on finding sustainable solutions to conflict.	Research on youth and social cohesion including youth-led participatory research.
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)	AFSC is a Quaker organization devoted to service, development, and peace programs to overcome violence and injustice.	Support of local civil society organizations working on pluralism, including youth-led organizations.

Civil Society Organizations, Cultural Organizations and Educational Organizations

Open History Project	Run by Aung Soe Min of Pansodan Gallery.	The Open History Project has so far been held in Dawei, Hpa-An and Kyauktada Township, Yangon. It is a participatory project to enable communities to tell the story of their own history through photographs, keepsakes, and other material culture.
Myanmar Cultural Research Society	Formed by Yangon-based researchers and academics interested in ethnic studies, cultural history, and related topics.	MCRS has carried out several research projects, seminars and forums, including a recent paper in Burmese with Synergy on Social Harmony.
Kant Kaw Education Center	Established in 2009, Kant Kaw is an educational establishment that enables people from around Myanmar to work more effectively in their communities and access further study.	KKEC's programming includes an intensive year-long, full-time Community Leadership and Social Studies program for 18-22 students annually from across Myanmar.
Myanmar Institute of Theology	MIT was founded as a theological school in 1927. It is a Baptist Institution.	MIT offers BA courses in Religious Studies since 2000, as well as a diploma and MA in Community Development Studies. MIT programs are popular with students from ethnic minority communities, including religious minorities besides Christians.

Civil Society Organizations working on social cohesion, diversity, pluralism and youth

Wing's Institute	The Wing's Institute focuses on building leadership skills to increase national reconciliation in Myanmar.	Short-term exchanges between youth across Myanmar so people from different backgrounds and communities can experience other communities in Myanmar.
Mosaic Myanmar	Founded in 2016, Yangon-based Mosaic Myanmar works with a broad range of religious and ethnic minorities.	Diversity management trainings across the country; federalism trainings to encourage religious minorities and minorities of South Asian descent to be more interested in federalism and the peace process.
Center for Diversity and National Harmony	CDNH works for social harmonization, peaceful coexistence and mitigation of violence in Myanmar.	CDNH is currently working on school syllabi and materials to promote understanding of different religions and increase interfaith dialogues. They also have a research program.
Center for Social Integrity	Focuses on conflict sensitivity, social cohesion and peacebuilding through promoting diversity and pluralism.	CSI runs a 'Transformational Leadership Program' for youth in Rakhine state.
Synergy	Synergy founder and Director is youth activist Thet Swe Win. The organization works on social harmony and youth in Myanmar.	Synergy was active in May 2019's 'White Rose Campaign' during Ramadan in cities across Myanmar. An interfaith campaign, volunteers handed white roses as a sign of peace and support to Muslims breaking fast.
Yangon Youth Leadership Center	YYLC is building a peaceful society by bringing young people from diverse communities together and empowering them to be active and responsive citizens.	YYLC provides trainings in civic and political education including human rights and antidiscrimination, leadership, and skills like English, Professional Development, and Time Management.
Phandeeyar	Phandeeyar is a creation and innovation hub helping change agents to use technology to increase their impact and supporting the growth of tech startups.	The Tech for Peace program focuses on hate speech and promoting positive messages about peace, social harmony, and tolerance.
Myanmar ICT for Development (MIDO)	MIDO focuses on ICT for peace, digital rights, and digital inclusion.	MIDO works on ICT for peace including monitoring online hate speech and developing counter speech.

Diplomatic Missions with Programming on/for Youth

British Council	United Kingdom	Next Generation Myanmar is a research project done by the British Council to examine youth perceptions across Myanmar.
US Department of State	US government	Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative – a scholarship program to bring together youth from across ASEAN.
American Center	US State Department supported educational facility and library.	In addition to the library which is open to the public, the American Center has clubs including interfaith and public speaking club, as well as public talks and events.
French Institute	French government supported ultural facility.	Hosts public talks, cultural events, and parties. Was the first venue to hold Fab Parties for LGBT Myanmar youth.
Goethe Institute	German government supported cultural facility.	Hosts public talks, exhibitions, and cultural events.

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