

The use of social media in increasing access to quality sexual reproductive health information among people of reproductive age in Myanmar



“Leveraging social media campaign increases easy access to high-quality informative sexual and reproductive health messages by Myanmar young people.”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years, social media has become an integral part of the lives of millions of people around the world, including those in Myanmar. Social media platforms provide a wide range of opportunities for users to connect with each other, share information and experiences, and access information on a variety of topics, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and gender related topics.

Social media plays a significant role in disseminating information and raising awareness of the SRH related concerns among individuals, particularly the youth population in Myanmar, where access to reliable SRH information is frequently restricted. On the other hand, spreading misinformation regarding sexual health on social media can be damaging and mislead users, resulting in hazardous or wrong behavior. It is critical that young people in Myanmar are given proper information on SRH to address the issues that they face barriers to get reliable SRH information.

Among the SRH problems, cervical cancer is also a significant public health issue in Myanmar with the high incidence and mortality rates. Low awareness and knowledge about cervical cancer prevention (CCP) limit timely access to screening and

treatment services. There is a strong link between SRHR and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) because GBV can have negative impacts on SRHR by causing physical injuries, sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancies, and abortion. In Myanmar, GBV has been a longstanding concern and the community need to increase attention and action on this issue. It is also crucial to raise awareness about the impact of GBV on women and girls in Myanmar, protection, and support for them.

Campaigns for education and social media literacy initiatives could accomplish these issues. Consequently, the purpose of this learning brief is to investigate how social media affects young people in Myanmar who have access to reliable SRH information. This brief will examine how young people interact with personalized and tailored SRH social media contents and measure the social media reach of SRH, CCP and GBV information connecting to women of reproductive age and young people in Myanmar.

BACKGROUND

In recent years, Myanmar has two major crises. Along with the effects of COVID-19 pandemic, the nation has experienced political and social turmoil. Throughout this period, young people in Myanmar had either restricted or limited access to reliable and trusted SRH information. As a result, young people used social media, particularly Facebook, more frequently to obtain information and health knowledge, but they were unsure if they were receiving accurate information or the reliability of these sources.

By January 2022, there were 25.28 million internet users in Myanmar and 20.75 million active social media users. (Source: Datareportal.com) According to gs.statcounter.com, as of May 2022, Facebook was the most popular social media site in Myanmar with 90.02% of usage. Forty percent of users were between the ages of 18 and 24. In Myanmar, young people frequently rely on Facebook for current news and health-related information. Leveraging on reach and user behavior, PSI (Population Services International) Myanmar employed the Facebook platform as a digital health communication tool to launch social media campaigns on SRH for educating young people, CCP for reproductive age women and GBV for general population.

CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

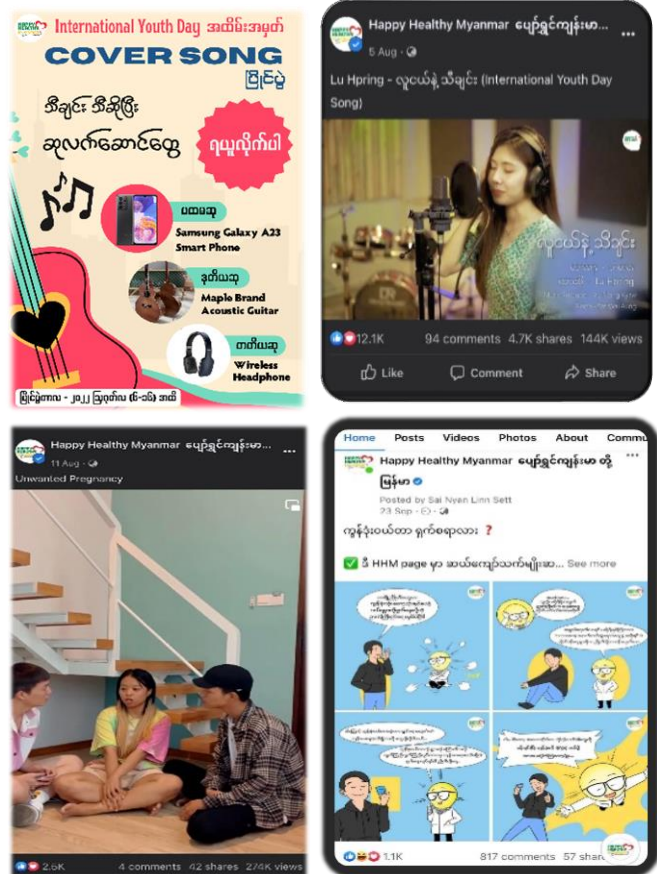
To make informed decisions about their health in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and other political and social problems, young people in Myanmar needed access to high-quality SRH information. It was crucial to leverage social media campaign to increase easy access to high-quality informative sexual and reproductive health messages by Myanmar young people.

ARH social media campaign

PSI Myanmar launched the adolescent reproductive health (ARH) social media campaign on PSI's [Happy Healthy Myanmar](#) Facebook page during May to October 2022 with the goals of increasing awareness on sexually transmitted infections, contraceptive methods, prevention, and consequences of unwanted pregnancy, improving knowledge on puberty changes including menstrual hygiene, and highlighting importance of male involvement. The campaign targeted youth, with access to the internet, from Yangon region, Kachin, and Shan states.

Through this campaign, three youth friendly cartoon characters – the genius person with youth girl and boy - delivered age-specific ARH information in a variety of formats such as static text posts, cartoon stories, quizzes and dynamic GIF posts, slideshow videos, motion graphic comics and social videos.

To encourage better youth engagement, an online cover song competition was held on the International Youth Day. The campaign also engaged young social influencers, through paid partnership approach, featuring in three edutainment videos with the key messages of ARH including harassment and rights. ([video1](#), [video2](#), [video3](#))



PSI also created the Happy Healthy Myanmar messenger chatbot linked to the campaigns so that young people could interact with it and receive personalized information about reproductive health including contraceptive methods, family planning decision tree, sexually transmitted diseases, menstruation, and cervical cancer prevention.



CCP social media campaign

PSI Myanmar ran CCP social media campaign from February to May 2022 across the country to raise awareness on the symptoms of cervical cancer and who is at risk, ways to prevent it, CCP screening, vaccination, and treatment services.

Targeting women of reproductive age, health messages were delivered through the dialogue between the two characters - an educated young woman and her aunt who had limited health literacy. A health talk social video was also streamed on International HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) Awareness Day with the topic of HPV and cervical cancer and featured a senior obstetrician, gynecologist, and a general practitioner.

PSI also engaged with the target group creating three social media videos: interview clip to examine Myanmar women’s awareness of cervical cancer and its prevention, user experience video to inspire women to get screening and an interview video with Sun provider (general practitioner) who explained her experiences with cervical cancer screening.

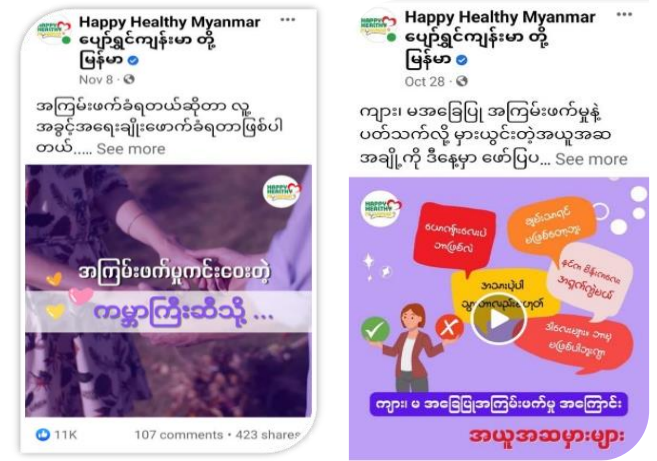


GBV social media campaign

A GBV campaign was run from October to November 2022 to dispel myths about GBV, promote gender-related knowledge and encourage community involvement in ending GBV.

The campaign was directed at the general population in Yangon region, Kachin, and Shan

states. In November, a photo essay competition was held as part of online activity for 16-days of activism against Gender-Based Violence, a global campaign calling for an end to violence against women and girls. To increase viewer engagement, GBV contents on the topics of “financial abuse,” “teen dating violence - GBV within a dating relationship among adolescent,” and “relationship advice” were generated in the narrative format of story-telling style.



To ensure reaching to targeted townships and audience, social media contents were targeted by using Facebook Ads, which is a Facebook target advertising tool that can be highly targeted to specific populations based on geography, gender, age, and interests.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF CAMPAIGN RESULTS

PSI Myanmar monitored the Facebook campaign using Facebook insights based on the number of users reached and engaged. The reach means “the number of Facebook users who saw any of the posts at least once” and engagement means “the number of reactions, clicks, comments and shares expressed as a percentage of the total people a post reached.” A post with 5% engagement rate is above-average performance with reference to Facebook. The engagement rate is a metric often used in analyzing the efficacy of the campaigns and it is the number of reactions, clicks, comments,



shares expressed as a percentage of the total number of people a post reached.

Facebook Advertising analytics and insights showed that the total reach of the campaign was 10.2 M+ and total engagement was 3.3 M+. The ARH campaign published fifty-five posts targeting young people from the age of 18 to 24 years. Yangon had a larger population of young people and a prominent level of digital literacy compared to Kachin and Shan states, therefore in terms of absolute numbers reach and engagement in Yangon was comparatively higher than the two other states. (Figure 1).

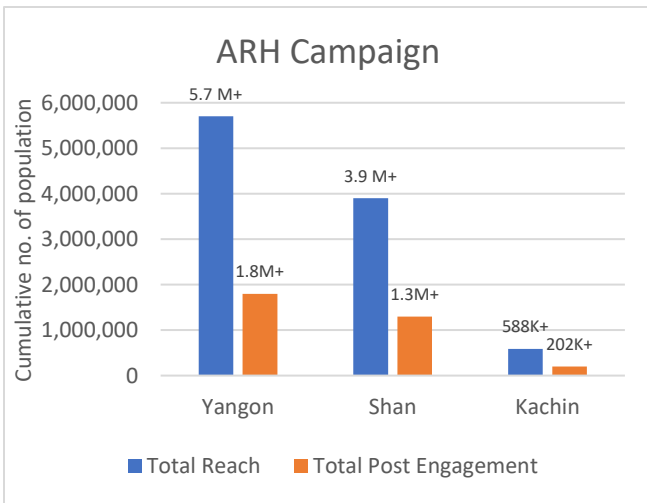


Figure 1: Reach and Engagement of ARH Campaign in three geographic regions.

The engagement rate of ARH posts was 33% on average in overall and dynamic posts and quizzes received higher engagement with young people. An average reach was 186K+ in overall, and average engagement with SRH social media contents was 61K+ and 51K+ post reactions. (Figure 2)



Figure 2: ARH Campaign achievement

The CCP campaign, which targeted women between the ages of 18 and 49, reached the 6.3 M+ total audience and total engagement was 1.8 M+ over the course of four months, whereas the GBV campaign, which targeted both genders between the ages of 18 and 65, reached 3.5 M+ and engaged 1M+ over the course of two months. (Figure 3)

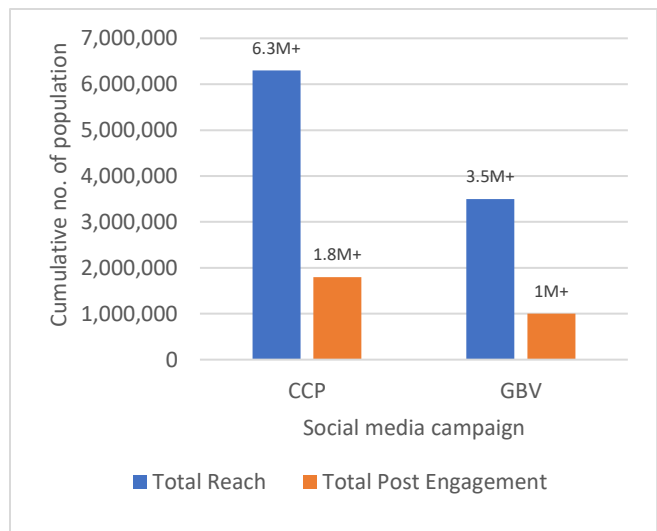


Figure 3: Reach and Engagement of CCP and GBV campaigns.

The contents engaged with the targeted women with 55K+ average engagement and there was 30% engagement rate, and the audience showed their interest in the screening and vaccination for cervical cancer prevention with 48K+ post reactions. (Figure 4)

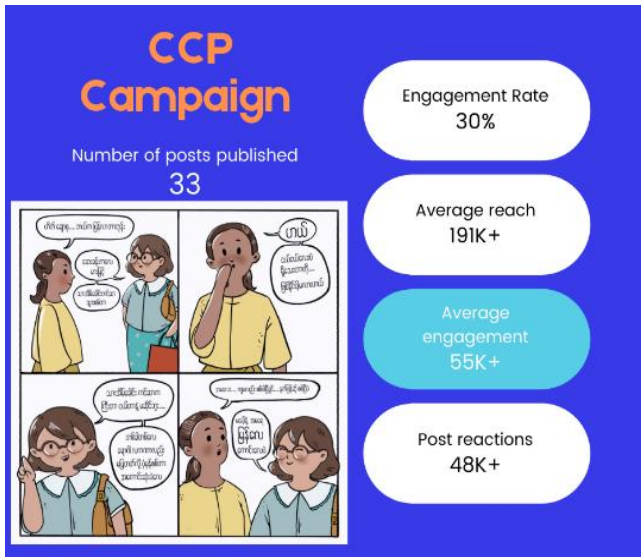


Figure 4: CCP Campaign achievement

There was 61K+ average engagement with GBV contents and engagement rate was 27%. The audience showed their interest in GBV with 44K+ post reactions by contributing their thoughts and experiences to the posts' comment sections. Other people also expressed gratitude for the sharing of valuable information and helpful advice. (Figure 5)



Figure 5: GBV Campaign achievement

Through these campaigns in the social media, PSI Myanmar could engage with targeted young people, women of reproductive age and general people and provide them an access to SRH and GBV related information at their fingertips.

LESSONS LEARNED

Political unrest influenced social media campaigns; it was necessary to explore other social media options and prepare ahead for any unforeseen challenges including expanding campaign to other social media platforms. Similarly, the internet connectivity was a major issue in certain conflict regions, and some rural areas had no internet access. In such instances, reaching population residing in those areas were even more challenging. More Facebook ads had to be used to boost the campaign reach and cover 'missing' audiences. However, it should be noted that the use of social media platforms, as well as the availability of mobile data and Wi-Fi, is sometimes limited to certain population. And we need alternate strategies to cover the remaining populations.

Misinformation and disinformation of SRH online was a major challenge. Furthermore, the growth of 'global culture' brought about by globalization, young people in Myanmar are exposed to inappropriate sexual contents online and are unable to find reliable sources of correct SRH information. The lack of trusted sources can often lead to unhealthy behavior. The campaigns cannot be limited to project townships and needs to target young people across the country to have meaningful impact in improving the SRH of young people in Myanmar.

Based on the goal of social media contents, the content categories must be carefully chosen. Statistics showed that engagement on dynamics posts was higher than static posts with 60% average view rate (15-sec video view) of dynamic post. Yet, among static posts, comic-style stories post often generated more engagement from audience interacted through comments.

It was a smart idea to use social influencers to spread health-related information. To achieve a better impact on the target audience from specific geographic areas, the influencers must be carefully

chosen. However, youth-targeted social influencer videos and animated cartoons were expensive.

Creating the SRH chatbot was innovative and useful for young people who could not feel embarrassed to ask others for specific information. However, using a chatbot was limited to only those who were familiar with how chatbots operated. Making digital technology more user-friendly would help people become more accustomed to it.

CONCLUSION

Campaign results show that social media can be successfully leveraged to reach young people in Myanmar, even in crisis period. The pandemic and current political situation has restricted implementation of traditional offline behavior change activities. In such situations, youth in Myanmar have increasingly relied on social media such as Facebook to obtain news and health information including SRH. Assuring they have access to individualized health information at their fingertips makes it simple for individuals to access, take in, comprehend, and use to make informed health choices.

PSI Myanmar's digital health vision in 2023 is to improve consumer health and well-being by using digital technologies to increase access and personalize delivery of quality information, products, and services throughout their life course. During the digital era, updated health information could even reach people stay-at-home through social media.

ABOUT PSI/MYANMAR

Population Services International Myanmar (PSI/Myanmar) is a non-profit, non-political, and non-religious organization that has been proudly serving the people of Myanmar for more than 25 years and a member of PSI's global network comprising thirty-seven countries around the world. PSI's mission is to make it easier for people to live healthy lives and plan the families they desire. With an unwavering commitment to the healthcare consumer, PSI designs effective and sustainable solutions to strengthen healthcare systems and to address the world's biggest healthcare challenges.

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