Press Summary on Hate Speech Monitoring

Introduction

To systematically monitor the use of hate speech through media, PEN Myanmar has conducted conflict sensitive media monitoring project by specifically focusing on broadcast media (primarily songs and movies), social media (Facebook) and print media (newspapers, journals and magazines) for the period of January, 2015 to November, 2015.
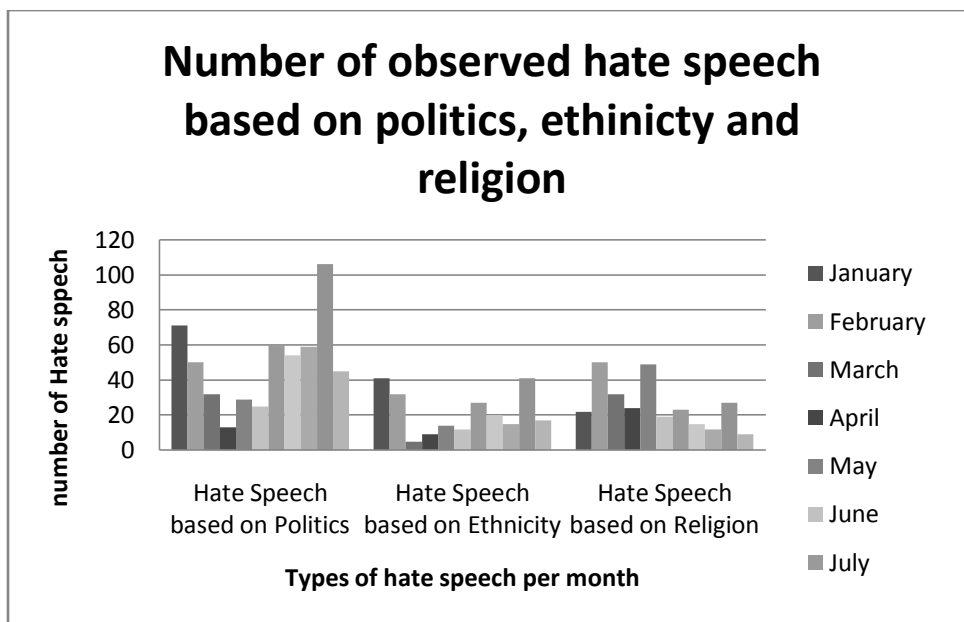
Time Observed

January, 2015 to November 10, 2015

Who Observed

3 observers till July 2015 and later 2 observers till November and led by project consultant

Key Findings on Social Media

Overall, about 153 facebook pages were monitored on daily basis. During the observed period of January to Nov, 2015; the number of accounts had to be increased depending on the political context of the country. At least 60 % of the pages were active regularly by writing notes, putting photos on the wall and sharing news and photos of other pages.


Number of observed hate speech based on politics, ethinicty and religion

Key Findings on Print Media

Overall, about 1613 newspapers, magazines and journals were monitored in total. During the observed period of January to Nov, 2015; 4 newspapers, namely, the Mirror, 7 Day Daily, Standard Times daily and Myawaddy were observed daily. Weekly journals, namely, The Sun Rays, Myanmar Post, People Age, News Watch and Union journals were observed weekly and one biweekly magazine was observed. The number of journals and newspapers observed were shown in the following figure.

Month	Monitoring of Print Media(Newspaper, Journal and Magazine)	Total
January	210,23, 3	236
February	210, 6,2	218
March	120,21	141
April	120, 8	128
May	120, 22	142
June	120, 21	141
July	120, 18	138
August	120, 21	141
September	120, 19	139
October	120, 20	140
November	40, 8, 1	49
	Total	1613

It was noted that most magazines were highly sensitive to conflict and met the standards of conflict sensitive journalism practices after monitoring for two months. Thus, resources were diverted to focus on journals and newspapers. It was also observed that hate speech based on politics are higher than hate speech based on religion for print media, contrary to the results found on social media.

Hate Speech on Print Media
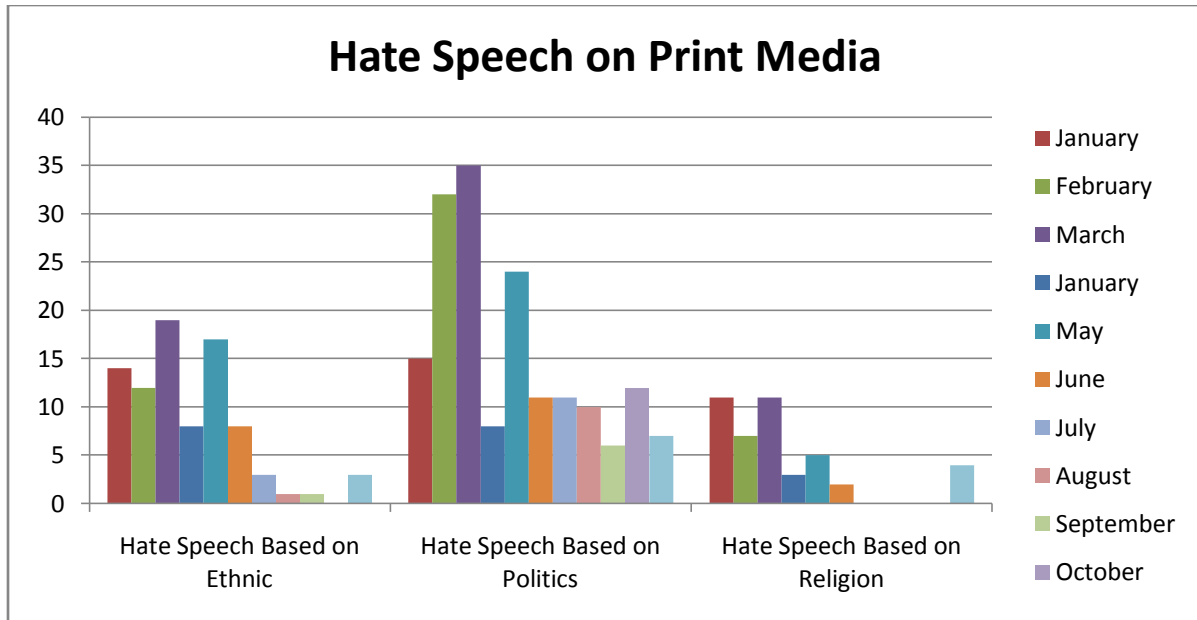
In comparing with the hate speech on social media, print media have only less amount of religious hate speeches. However, political hate speeches were too obvious on Print media than other types of media.

Key Findings on Songs

Overall, about 269 songs were monitored in total during the observed period of January to Nov, 2015. The number of songs observed were shown in the following figures. Among the observed data, about 93 hate speeches were found.

It was noted that songs disseminated through Youtube were included hate speech messages than songs on Broadcast media. However, some songs were put on you tube only after on the Broadcase media. Among the observed songs, hate speech based on politics and ethnic can be found along with hate speech based on religion.

Hate Speech on Songs
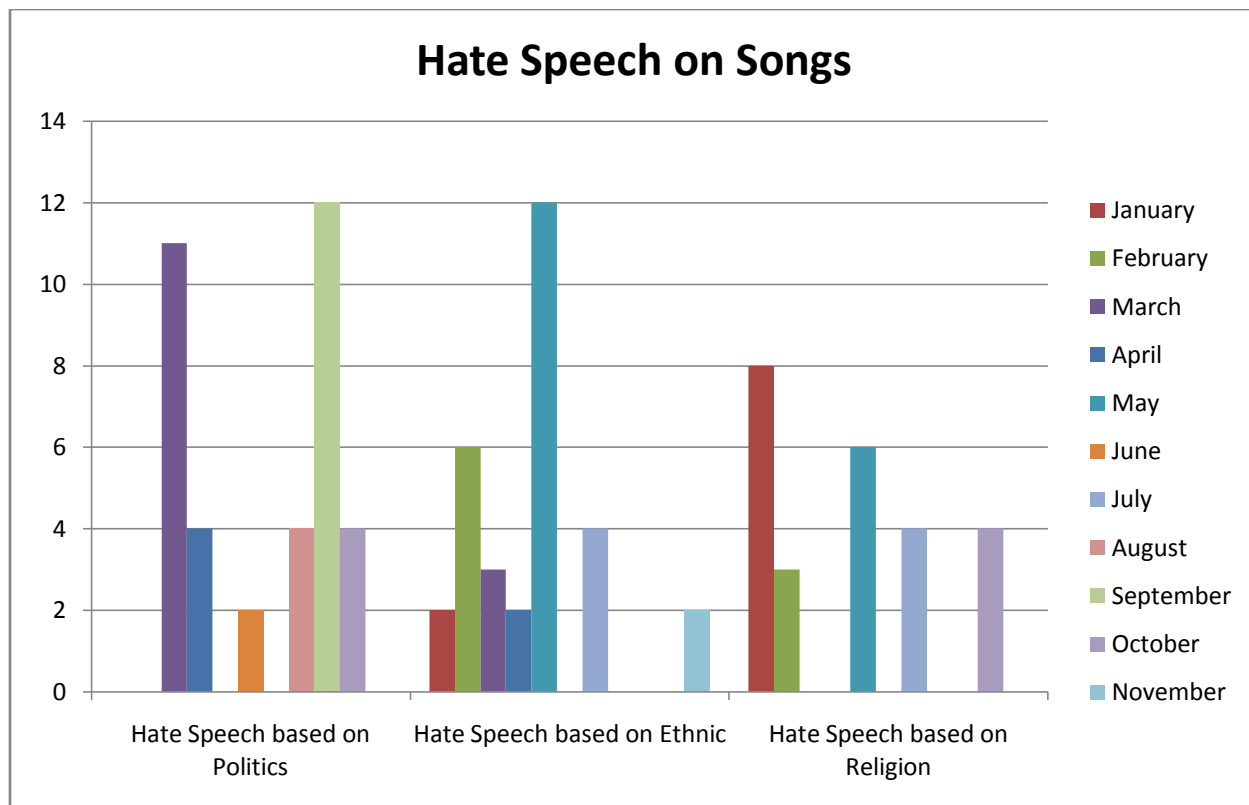
Most of the messages are disseminated through youtube links on internet, DVDs and mp3 sticks for communities and official sale at the supermarkets. These have been communicated to the hands of the communities at the ground levels to open songs thoroughly.

As these songs include incitement to violence, challenges and discrimination against other diverse people, it can create feelings of hatred towards other people and sometimes create unreasonable responses by diverse people as well. One song was contributing to the immediate cause of riots in Thandwe township in Rakhine State in 2013.

Key Findings on Movies

Overall, about 304 were monitored in total during the observed period of January to Nov, 2015. The number of songs observed were shown in the following figures. Among the observed data, about 262 hate speeches were found.

It was noted that movies, especially the action movies included several hate speech messages against foreigners and people with diverse political ideologies. Among the observed movies, hate speech based on politics and ethnicity can be found, however, it was very rare for hate speech based on religion.

Hate Speech found in movies
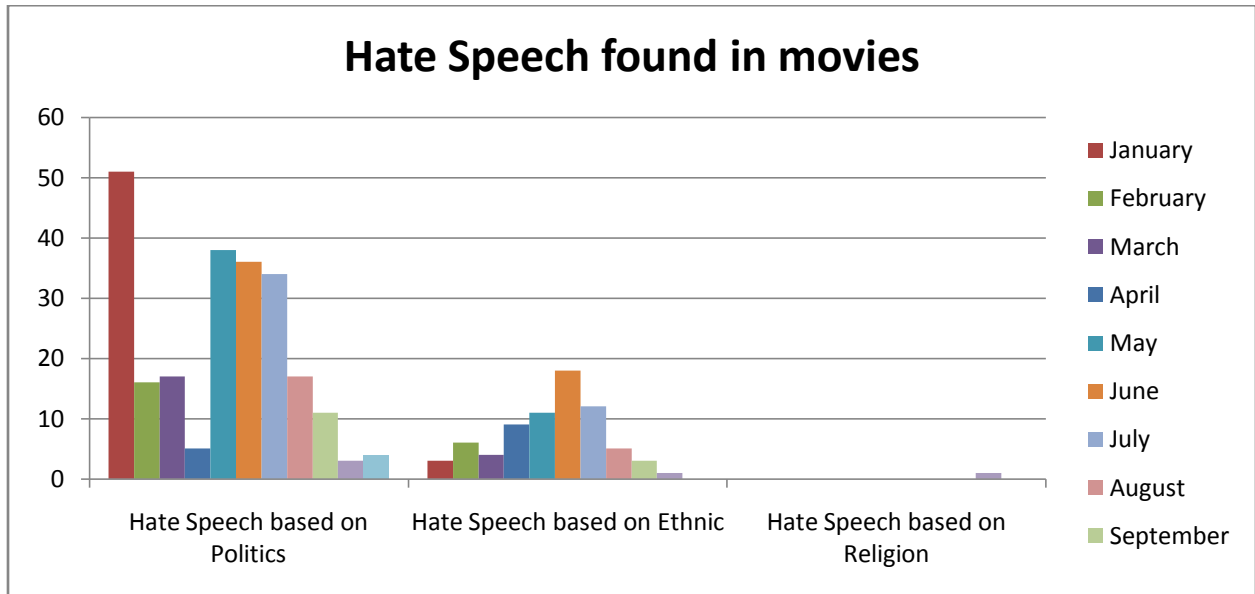
Most of the movies were on Broadcast media on daily basis As these songs include incitement to violence, challenges and discrimination against other diverse people, it can create feelings of hatred towards other people and sometimes create unreasonable responses by diverse people as well. For example, the use of Muslims in rape cases in the movies created the images among the society members in the real world settings. The plots against ethnic revolutionaries in the movies had a negative impact as dividers in the society, and sometimes leading to counter hatred from particular ethnic people. Emotional matters cannot be observed with this content analysis. It can be done with key informant interviews and focused group discussions on the ground level as the next research agenda.

Recommendations

Conflict insensitive media and the inclusion of hate speeches on media can do greater harm to the society by glorifying violent physical violence in religious and political conflicts. The use of social media makes the public far more well-informed about the conflict beneath the violence, and can assist in resolving it. In contrast, it can also makes the public to be alarmed, to have fear or increase hatred towards diverse groups. To prevent conflicts that are violent, PEN Myanmar would like to make the following recommendations for conflict sensitive media practices.

To the government and legislators:

(a) promote public awareness of the nature of conflicts and conflict resolution measures;

(b) set up obligations of government officials, journalists and citizens to report and distribute the news which are true, reliable and not making the society in a panic manner;

(c) strengthen the legal rules and regulations of the use of social media in a peaceful manner by avoiding offensive and abusive languages.

To the social media users:

(a) Take conflict sensitive responsibility for putting news, notes and photos on the social media;

(b) Avoid words like devastated, tragedy and terrorized to describe what has been done to one group;

(c) Avoid making an opinion to the fact;

   (d) Avoid emotional and imprecise words which can make conflicts more worse;

To CSOs and CBOs:

(a) design training programs on media literacy, conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity of media practices and countering hate speech programs

(b) raise public awareness on how media practices can affect the escalation or de-escalation of conflicts;

(c) avoid active participation in promoting culture of violence that glorify direct physical violence.

To producers and directors of movies and song writers:

(a) produce songs and movies that promote culture of peace rather than culture of violence

(b) raise public awareness on the consequences of hate speech in terms of movies and songs

(c) participate in anti-hate speech campaigns

To publishers and editors of print media:

(a) publish that promote culture of peace rather than culture of violence

(b) raise public awareness on the consequences of hate speech trough print media

(c) practice conflict sensitive journalism

(c) participate in anti-hate speech campaigns

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Protecting
Freedom of Expression
Fostering Vital
Literary Culture