

Citizen Engagement in Burma: Trends, Barriers and the Role for Media



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Executive Summary

“Where in the past we were bound tightly by ten ropes, nowadays I feel like the number of ropes has been reduced by two”

Older Male - Yangon

Background to the Study

This report presents the findings of a study conducted by BBC Media Action, to inform its approach to supporting improved governance in Burma, also known as Myanmar.

In March 2011, Burma commenced a reform process with the stated objective of democratisation. Reforms witnessed since then have included the revision of labour laws, greater press freedoms, release of political prisoners and the increased visibility of political opposition. People-centred development features strongly in the government's discourse of reform, and national and international stakeholders are looking to the successful implementation of free and fair elections in 2015 as evidence of true democratic transition. The people of Burma have a crucial role to play in the democratic transformation of the country. In order to demand accountability and set expectations of responsiveness, citizens¹ need to be informed of their rights and empowered to make their voices heard. They need to be motivated and confident to participate in dialogue and decision-making about issues affecting their lives. Without such citizen engagement there is a danger that new political settlements and reforms will not be owned by the public.

BBC Media Action's experience in a number of countries and contexts suggest that free, professional and plural media can make a significant contribution to good governance. Media can help to reduce information asymmetries between citizens and governments, and to monitor or expose wrongdoing or underperformance of leaders.

Throughout June and July 2013 BBC Media Action conducted a mixed-methods research study to understand current levels of citizen engagement in Burma, and the extent to which media might influence this. For this study, citizen engagement was conceptualised as being aware and knowledgeable about political processes, engaging in discussion and dialogue on local or national issues of importance, raising issues with authorities, and participating in local governance and political activities. The barriers to engaging in these ways - including freedoms, opportunities and societal norms - were also explored.

The research consisted of a household survey of 1,224 participants, across 11 of Burma's 14 states and regions, and qualitative research in four locations. The qualitative research involved focus group discussions and interviews with members of communities in urban Yangon, and rural villages in Karen State, Magwe region and Ayeyarwady region.

¹ In this report the terms 'citizen' and 'citizen engagement' are used in the broadest sense to refer to individuals who are recognized citizens, as well as those who face challenges to their citizenship rights.

Key Findings

Levels of Citizen Engagement

Findings of this study evidenced **extremely low levels of citizen engagement in Burma**, suggesting that the Burmese public is far from exhibiting the type of open and vibrant debate and participation on which free and fair elections and democracy are supposed to rest. Almost two thirds of respondents were not aware of reforms that had been announced by government within the previous year, and 46% reported *never* discussing local or national issues with family, friends or others. Overt political participation, such as protest or petitioning, was almost non-existent, while raising issues of importance through formal governance structures was also uncommon. Just 12% of participants had ever raised an issue with a local level official, and less than 1% had ever attempted to contact an MP.

Continuing uncertainty surrounding freedom of expression is likely to have impacted on participants' confidence in answering some survey questions. When respondents were asked how free they felt they were to 'say what they think', 69% responded 'Very Free' or 'Somewhat Free'². However when freedom of expression was qualified to expressing views about *the government* in public, this figure dropped to 43%. Furthermore, 25% of participants responded 'I don't know' to this question. High levels of 'I don't know' responses were recorded for other attitudinal questions relating to government - likely reflecting a desire to avoid responding, rather than a lack of awareness or opinion.

Barriers to Citizen Engagement

The research found that **barriers faced by the public** in engaging in governance processes included: poor access to information; perceptions that political processes and reforms were not relevant to people's everyday lives; uncertainty about freedom of expression and association; and restrictive cultural and social norms and hierarchies. Challenges faced by individuals in navigating formal governance structures and low expectations of government responsiveness also acted as deterrents to raising issues with authorities.

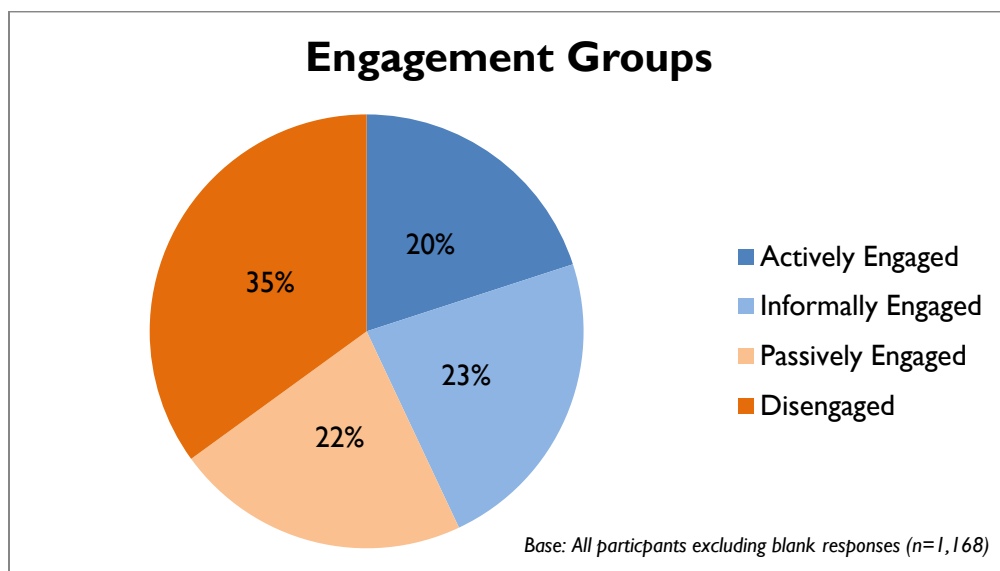
"We don't have right to complain. People from the top oppress those in lower positions. We don't have right to correct even what the elders say is wrong. We can say that it's Myanmar's tradition. Children are not allowed to talk back the parents according to religious teaching"

Young Male - Magwe

² The top two categories in a four-point scale, ranging from *Not At All Free* to *Very Free*.

Who is Engaged?

Through further analysis³ of the survey data BBC Media Action identified **four potential 'types' of engagement**, based on participants' scores on four indices - level of political knowledge, extent of interpersonal discussion of issues, and history of attending local governance meetings or raising issues with local administrators.⁴ The analysis grouped participants into four segments or groups which spanned the spectrum of citizen engagement, categorized as Disengaged, Passively Engaged, Informally Engaged and Formally Engaged.



Note: 5% of the total sample (n=56) could not be added to any cluster due to missing data. These figures therefore reflect a total sample of n=1,168.

Just over a third (35%) of the sample fell into the **Disengaged** category. Those who fell into this group demonstrated low knowledge and behaviour across all four indices. That is, they had low political knowledge, reported low levels of interpersonal discussion, and reported never attending a village tract/ward meeting or raising an issue with an administrator.

The remaining participants were divided relatively equally across the other three segments. In increasing order of engagement these were: Passively Engaged, Informally Engaged and Formally Engaged.

The Informally and Formally Engaged groups were considered to be more actively engaged. The **Informally Engaged** group reported higher levels of interpersonal discussion on issues compared to the Disengaged and Passively Engaged groups. However their political knowledge was still low. The **Formally Engaged** group was considered to demonstrate the highest overall level of engagement. This is the only group that contained members who had

³ A segmentation analysis was conducted on the data, to observe how survey participants cluster together based on their responses to different survey questions. These could be scores on knowledge, behavioural or attitudinal measures. The analysis is described in Section 3 and technical detail is provided in Appendix 3.

⁴ Participants were asked if they had 'ever' attended meetings or raised issues in the past (no time period was specified)

raised issues with local officials in the past and who demonstrated high factual knowledge of political processes.

Members of the Formally Engaged group were more likely to be male, older, more educated, wealthier and living in urban locations. Women, youth, and those who were less educated and less wealthy, were more likely to be Disengaged.

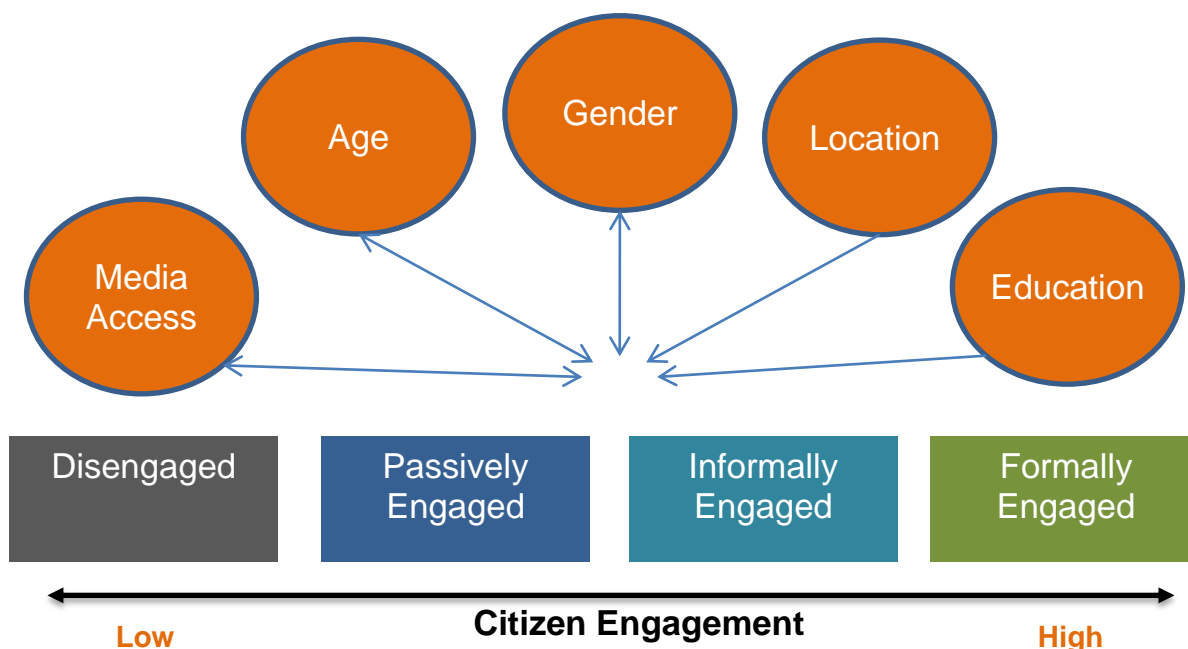
Categorising citizen engagement in this way can be useful in identifying those who need most support or encouragement to engage with governance processes. For example, the Disengaged group could be considered to have the farthest distance to travel with regard to becoming engaged with governance processes. Supporting an increase in engagement amongst this group could focus on prompting interest in governance processes or building confidence or motivation to engage in discussion. Knowing that women and youth are more likely to fall into this category can help to shape mass media communications, or initiatives at community level, that are aimed at increasing engagement.

The Influence of Media Access on Citizen Engagement

Statistical analysis⁵ was conducted to understand the association between the level of media access an individual had, and their level of citizen engagement, and thus explore the potential role that media may play in determining the level of engagement among the public of Burma.

Figure A. below shows the demographic characteristics that were found to be associated with engagement in this model. Ethnicity, literacy and household purchasing power were not found to be significantly associated with engagement.

Figure A. Characteristics explored in analysis of association between media access and citizen engagement



⁵ A regression analysis was conducted. This is described in Section 4 and technical detail is provided in Appendix 4.

Having **regular access to at least one ‘public service oriented’ media source⁶ increased the likelihood of being Formally Engaged rather than Disengaged by 11 times.** This association existed when controlling for the effects of age, gender, urban/rural location, education, household purchasing power (a measure of income), ethnicity and literacy. Having a university level education was associated most strongly with higher engagement, increasing the likelihood of being Formally Engaged by 33 times. However media access had a stronger association with engagement than a participant’s age, sex, urban/rural location, or education up to secondary level.

Media access was also found to increase the likelihood of being Formally Engaged rather than Informally Engaged, and Informally Engaged rather than Disengaged.

While this analysis cannot prove that media access *causes* membership of different engagement groups, it provides evidence that a strong relationship between media and citizen engagement exists. This relationship exists even when the influence of demographic characteristics are considered.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This research report provides a picture of current citizen engagement in Burma. It is one of a public that, to varying degrees, lacks knowledge, confidence, motivation, and space to participate in governance processes and make their voices heard. The research provides objective evidence, however, that a relationship exists between an individual’s access to media and their level of citizen engagement.

This evidence provides a compelling case for the need to promote citizen access to public service media and other quality, balanced, comprehensive sources of information. Be it through a strengthened local media sector, or other information provision initiatives such as grassroots civic education and community mobilization programmes - strengthening national media could mean promoting engagement of millions of people across the country.

The following recommendations reflect the findings of this research, and also take into account the role that media has played in other developing countries where BBC Media Action works:

- **Media should be harnessed to raise awareness and reduce knowledge deficits:** High-quality, balanced media can be a crucial source of impartial information on individual rights and government policies.

⁶ A public service media is, by definition, one that seeks public benefit, rather than commercial gain. It serves the entire population and ensures a high technical standard with a balance of views and a range of topics. As described in Box 2 on page 27, the level and quality of information provided by different media outlets in Burma varies widely. Local FMs and television stations do not produce their own news, and the information provided by the state media lacks completeness and diversity of perspectives. While the quality of Burma’s 350-odd weekly journals and newspapers cannot be verified, private publications do provide perspectives beyond those of the government, as do overseas radio and television stations. Therefore overseas radio, overseas television, news producing non-state local broadcast media, and non-state owned newspapers, were all classified as ‘public service oriented media’ for the purposes of this study. All other media - state and non-news producing local media - were classified as ‘other media’.

- **Media can provide a platform for public deliberation:** Media can act as a platform to raise issues and connect leaders with the public. Media can bridge the gap through formats that enable citizens to air their views, pose their questions, and hear directly from politicians and other decision-makers. Where citizens are not yet confident about raising issues with leaders directly, media can raise those issues on their behalf.
- **Use media to stimulate discussion and participation among the general population:** In an environment of uncertainty about the limits of freedom of expression and the individual's role in governance processes, media can provide a safe space to engage in, and observe, discussion of social and political issues, while preserving an individual's anonymity.
- **Promote greater inclusion of marginalised groups through media:** Creative programming can confront problematic cultural and social norms, and address controversial or taboo topics in a way that traditional news media might not currently have the freedom to do. Programmes that raise the visibility of marginalised groups - such as ethnic minorities and women - can highlight role models, raise awareness of needs and experiences, and represent 'alternative' options for such individuals and groups.

BBC Media Action is working in Burma to support improved governance through media. To date activities have focused on building capacity of local journalists and media organisations to meet audience needs with more balanced, relevant and comprehensive news and information. BBC Media Action also produces a radio programme for young people, which aims to increase knowledge and promote discussion of important social issues, and encourage greater participation of youth at the community level.

However this research suggests that there is a need, and potential, for media to do *more*. These findings will be built on in Burma, through continuing research into the public experience of governance, and the extent to which media is supporting greater engagement and other outcomes at the population level. This will help to ensure that media development initiatives are evidence-based and addressing the changing needs of citizens as the country progresses towards national elections in 2015.

Introduction

March 2011 heralded the start of a period of unprecedented political reform in Burma, also known as Myanmar, as a military junta handed over power to a semi-civilian government. Since then, visible elements of a transition to democratic governance have included the revision of labour laws, greater press freedoms, release of political prisoners and the increased visibility of political opposition. Successful implementation of free and fair elections in 2015 is now being looked to as evidence of completion of a democratic transition. However, the consensus is that many more hurdles need to be overcome in progressing democratisation and economic development.

In December 2012, President Thein Sein's *Framework for Economic and Social Reform* outlined a series of actions aiming to set Burma on a path towards becoming a “modern, developed and democratic nation by 2030”⁷. The framework is intended to support the anticipated twenty-year National Comprehensive Development Plan, which the Government is at present working to finalize.⁸ Improved infrastructure and public services, food security and agricultural growth, and trade liberalization are some of the specific areas addressed in the plan. Improved governance and people-centred development are described as being central to supporting growth and poverty reduction, as they are in the discourse of reform in Burma more widely.

Donors, from neighbouring ASEAN governments to large multilaterals, have expressed commitment to supporting the aims of Burma's democratic reform strategy and people-centred development. Financial assistance for improving infrastructure is a major focus. Support to improved governance, through strengthening institutions of government and civil society and promoting greater transparency, accountability and responsiveness, is another. However, while working with local and central government structures to better serve the needs of the people is crucial to achieving these aims, the role that individual citizens play is equally important.

For development to be truly people-centred, and ‘good’ governance progressed, the engagement of the public is crucial. In order to demand accountability and set expectations of responsiveness, citizens⁹ need to be informed of their rights and empowered to make their voices heard. They need to be motivated and confident to participate in dialogue and decision-making about issues affecting their lives. Participation in this sense can span the spectrum of private discussion with family and friends, to engaging with community meetings and initiatives, to more overt activities such as petitioning, protest, contacting officials and leaders, or voting. Without such engagement, there is a danger that new political settlements and reforms will not be owned by the public.

In Burma there are currently a number of challenges to engagement with governance processes. Decades of political oppression have meant that discussion of even social issues, let alone overt political action, has been a risky pursuit. More than two thirds of the population reside in rural areas, geographically distant from leaders. Many struggle for their day-to-day

⁷ Republic of the Union of Myanmar (December 2012) *Framework for Economic and Social Reform: Policy Priorities for 2012-15 towards the Long-Term Goals of the National Comprehensive Development Plan*

⁸ UNDP (Dec 2013) *Democratic Governance in Myanmar: Current Trends and Implications*

⁹ In this report the terms ‘citizen’ and ‘citizen engagement’ are used in the broadest sense to refer to individuals who are recognized citizens, as well as those who face challenges to their citizenship rights.

existence, with more than one quarter of the population living below US\$2 per day¹⁰ and lacking any formal education. The news on government activities available to the rural population is still largely limited to broadcasts produced by the state media - lacking a diversity of perspectives and depth of information on important issues of the day. The concept of leaders who must be accountable and responsive to the needs of their constituents is not one which characterised political activity during the military regime.

The contribution that free, professional, and plural media can make to good governance has been recognised across many countries and contexts. By reducing information asymmetries between citizens and governments, and mobilising citizens to defend their interests, mass media can play an important role in ensuring accountability.¹¹ In countries where institutional structures do not effectively monitor, expose, or punish government wrongdoing or underperformance, the media has a role to play as an independent watchdog.¹² As Paul Collier, author of *The Bottom Billion*, compellingly argues, while elections can work to discipline governments, they only work if “life is breathed into those institutions, and the process of breathing life into those institutions is basically having an informed and organised society. A free and active media delivers both of these.”¹³ The media in Burma has not previously functioned as a “Fourth Estate” of a democracy in this way. However, it now finds itself playing a potentially pivotal role in the current democratic reform process.

Throughout June and July 2013, BBC Media Action conducted a mixed-methods baseline study to inform an approach to supporting improved governance in Burma. The research sought to understand the extent to which the public is engaged with political and governance processes on issues affecting their lives. **At the outset, citizen engagement was conceptualised as being aware and knowledgeable about political processes, engaging in discussion and dialogue on local or national issues of importance, raising issues with authorities, and participating in local governance and political activities.** The barriers to engaging in these ways - including freedoms, opportunities and societal norms - were also explored.

This report looks at overall levels of citizen engagement according to these indices, and identifies the demographic groups that were found to be most, and least, engaged. Barriers faced by the public in engaging in governance processes, with regard to community development and public service delivery, are also described. The analysis then looks at evidence for the influence that access to media and information can have on engagement, when factors such as gender and education are accounted for.

The findings highlight a need to pay greater attention to supporting citizen engagement in Burma, as the 2015 elections approach and the reform process continues. To this end, recommendations for the ways in which media and information could support citizen engagement in Burma are proposed.

¹⁰ UNDP (Aug 2013) *A Regional Perspective on Poverty in Myanmar*

¹¹ Moehler, D. & Luyimbazi, A. (2008) ‘Tune in to Governance: An Experimental Investigation of Radio Campaigns in Africa’. Paper presented at conference *Field Experiments*, Institute for Political and Economic Governance (IPEG), University of Manchester: Manchester UK, July 2008

¹² Odugbemi, S. & Norris, P. (2009) ‘Assessing the Extent to which the News Media Acts as Watchdogs, Agenda Setters and Gatekeepers’ in *Public Sentinel: News Media and Governance Reform* (ed.) Norris, P. The World Bank: Washington DC

¹³ Professor Paul Collier. Remarks made at Salzburg Seminar, July 2008, <http://www.salzburgglobal.org/mediafiles/MEDIA44723.pdf>

Research Methodology

A multi-methods approach

The study employed a mixed-methods design, consisting of a household survey in 11 states and regions, and qualitative research (focus groups and key informant interviews) in four communities. The survey provided quantifiable population level data on knowledge and behaviours associated with citizen engagement, not previously collected at this scale. The qualitative component allowed researchers to explore more deeply factors that influence engagement on an individual and community level.

The quantitative and qualitative methodologies are described in brief in this section, with further technical information detailed in Appendix 1.



Quantitative survey

A household survey was conducted across 11 of Burma's 14 states and regions.¹⁴ Survey questions focused on access to information and media, awareness of key governance issues and reforms in Burma, political knowledge, and attitudes towards, and participation in, political processes. A total of 1,224 individuals, aged 15+, were interviewed. The study design is described in more detail in Appendix 1.

A local market research agency in Burma was commissioned to conduct the fieldwork, and interviewers were trained comprehensively by the BBC Media Action research team prior going to field.

Qualitative study

A total of 163 individuals participated in the qualitative component of the study, which was conducted in 4 locations - Yangon, Magwe, Ayeyarwady, and Karen State. In each location, focus group discussions and key informant interviews explored experiences of governance and accountability in relation to public service delivery. Discussions were grounded in public service delivery to allow participants to reflect more easily on how they engaged in relation to real issues, where there was real demand in their communities.

Participants were assigned to discussion groups based on age and gender - young males, young females, older males, older females. Key informant interviews were conducted with prominent male, female and youth figures in each location. The male key informants tended to be village elders, while female and youth key informants were mainly those involved in community development projects or active in their communities in some other way.

The qualitative component was conducted through a continuing partnership with ActionAid Myanmar. BBC Media Action researchers trained a number of ActionAid 'fellows' - young community mobilisers - to facilitate discussions in villages where they were familiar to participants. This approach enabled facilitators to create a safe space where participants were at their ease and comfortable sharing experiences and opinions.

¹⁴ Three states were excluded from this survey: Kachin due to security threats, and Chin and Kayah as these states are remote with small populations and their inclusion would have added significant cost to the study. This is a limitation of the study as exclusion of three ethnic states may have resulted in under-representation of knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of non-Bamar populations in the findings. Future studies will aim to include all states, where costs and security allow.

Box 1: Willingness to Respond - A Challenge of Conducting Research in Burma

The context in which the research was conducted must be considered in the interpretation of the findings. Feedback from survey field interviewers was that many participants appeared cautious in responding to questions. For some this was interpreted as fear or lack of confidence to express opinions (particularly negative ones), while others were simply unfamiliar with the form of standardized questioning that characterizes the survey experience.

Analysis of the resulting data revealed a very high level of 'I don't know' responses for questions relating to attitudes towards government, including government responsiveness and accountability.. It is possible that the restrictions people perceive to remain around freedom of expression and association influenced how they reacted when posed with questions on these themes. In a country where people have been actively discouraged from expressing opinions for decades, 'I don't know' may be an easy way to avoid making statements that might draw unwanted attention - despite assurances that the process is confidential and anonymous.

It is not possible to determine whether these 'I don't know' responses indicate avoidance or actual lack of awareness/opinion on a theme. However, tracking shifts in people's willingness and ability to respond to questions like these in the future will reveal a lot about the public sense of confidence and capacity to play a role in the political landscape.

The more advanced statistical analysis presented in Section 3 and 4 of this report utilises only those measures that featured acceptable levels of response, to ensure integrity of the results. These were factual knowledge, behavioural and demographic measures.

The qualitative approach allowed more freedom for facilitators to rephrase questions, probe and reflect back responses to participants, and resulted in uncovering opinions and attitudes that aided in interpreting survey findings.

Findings

1. Current levels of citizen engagement

To what extent is the public of Burma engaged with governance processes? This section draws out findings on a number of different factors that contribute to engagement, including:

- being aware of the reform process;
- being knowledgeable about formal political processes and current affairs;
- engaging in informal discussion on important local or national issues;
- raising issues with authorities; and
- political participation.



Key Findings

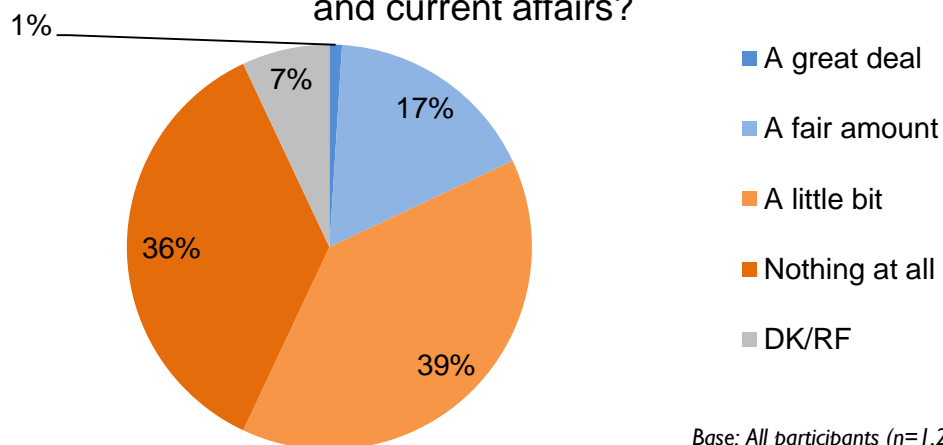
- Results indicate low awareness of the reform process amongst the public, with 75% of survey participants reporting to know only 'a little bit' or 'nothing at all' about any reforms announced or implemented by the government in the previous 12 months.
- Knowledge of formal political processes is low, with no more than 15% of participants correctly answering any one of four questions testing factual knowledge.
- Engaging in informal discussion on local or national issues of importance is low, with 46% reporting that they have never done this with family, friends or other people.
- Overt political participation is almost non-existent - less than 1% of participants reported taking part in protests or petitions
- While 44% had attended their village or ward administrator meeting at least once in the past, just 12% had raised an issue of importance with their village or ward administrator.

1.1 Awareness and Knowledge

The study sought to understand how knowledgeable the public felt, and how aware they actually were, about reforms and political processes.

Self-Reported Political Knowledge

Q: How much do you feel you know about political issues and current affairs?



When asked how much they felt they knew about politics and current affairs (on a 4-point scale from knowing 'nothing at all' to 'a great deal') 75% of participants rated themselves as knowing just 'a little bit' or 'nothing at all' - the negative end of the scale. Furthermore, many participants reported low confidence in their ability to process political information, with 65% agreeing with the statement *'sometimes politics seems so complicated, a person like me can't understand what's going on'*.

Males (22%) were significantly more likely to rate themselves as having 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' of knowledge than females (16%). The same was true for urban (29%) compared with rural (14%) participants. Self-reported knowledge also increased steadily with education level and household purchasing power.

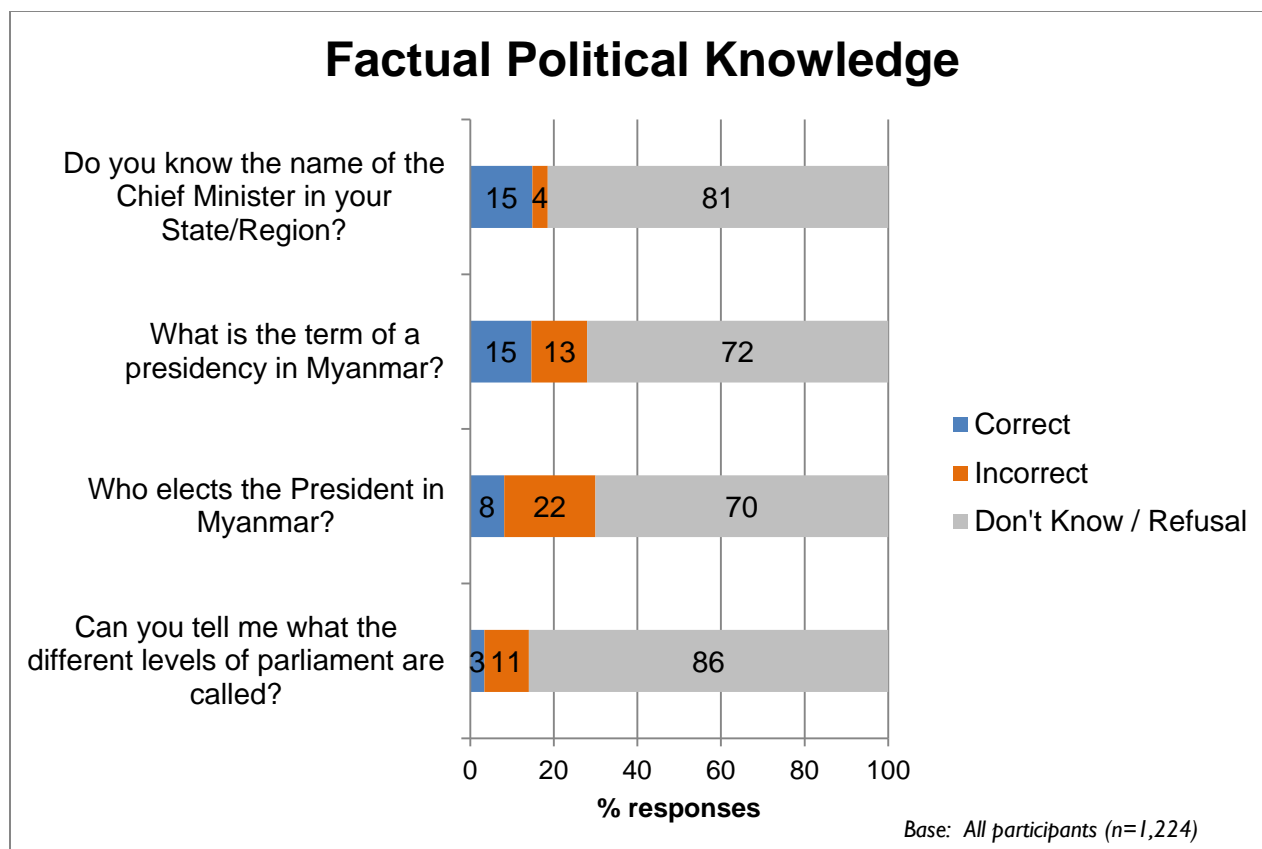
Participants were also asked if they could name (unprompted) any government reforms announced over the last 12 months that they were aware of. The majority of respondents (62%) were unable, or unwilling, to name a single policy, law or service change. That is, they responded 'I Don't Know'. The next most common response related to the introduction of low cost sim cards (17%), followed by education related reforms (7%).

In addition to these self-reports of knowledge, the survey sought to capture a more objective measure of knowledge.¹⁵ In studies of political science and communications, knowledge is most commonly measured by testing awareness of discrete facts that tap knowledge of institutions and processes, substantive issues or public figures.¹⁶ A series of four questions were developed for the Burma context, as illustrated in the graph below.¹⁷

¹⁵ Self-reported knowledge is sometimes criticised as being a subjective measure of knowledge, and such ratings sometimes fail to correlate with actual levels knowledge when further tested. The extent to which a person rates their own knowledge as 'high' or 'low' can be influenced by a number of factors. For example, men are often found to overestimate their level of knowledge compared to women, and more educated people have been found to be more critical of the level of knowledge they hold compared with those who are less educated.

¹⁶ Delli Carpini, M. & Keeter, S. (1993) Measuring Political Knowledge: Putting First Things First; American Journal of Political Science, Vol.37, No. 4

¹⁷ The following introduction was first given to participants to make them feel more comfortable responding and admitting lack of knowledge where necessary: *"We are interested to know how much information citizens currently have about their government, parliament and elected representatives. Please tell me if you know the answers to the following questions. If you do not know the answers that is fine. Just say 'I don't know' and we will skip to the next question."*



No more than 15% of participants responded correctly to any one of the four political knowledge questions. Just 15% knew the length of the presidential term, while only 3% could name the three levels of parliament. When a total correct score out of four was given to each participant, the average score across the sample was 1.3 out of 4.

Sex and urban/rural location of participants were significantly associated with factual knowledge. As with self-reported knowledge, males and urban participants demonstrated higher levels of knowledge than females and rural participants.

While such factual knowledge does not necessarily indicate an underlying depth of understanding or ability to interpret political information, it is a useful indication of the extent to which the public is aware of formal political processes that are in place.

This low level of awareness and knowledge was also evident in the qualitative research. With encouragement and probing from the facilitator, focus group participants were quite vocal about issues affecting their communities locally. However, they demonstrated much less awareness of national issues and the reform process, and were less confident and interested in discussing these matters. A very surface level understanding of political concepts was revealed where such topics arose. Participants expressed confusion about the meaning of terms like “democracy”, and in discussions this was often paired with the notion of freedom or peace.

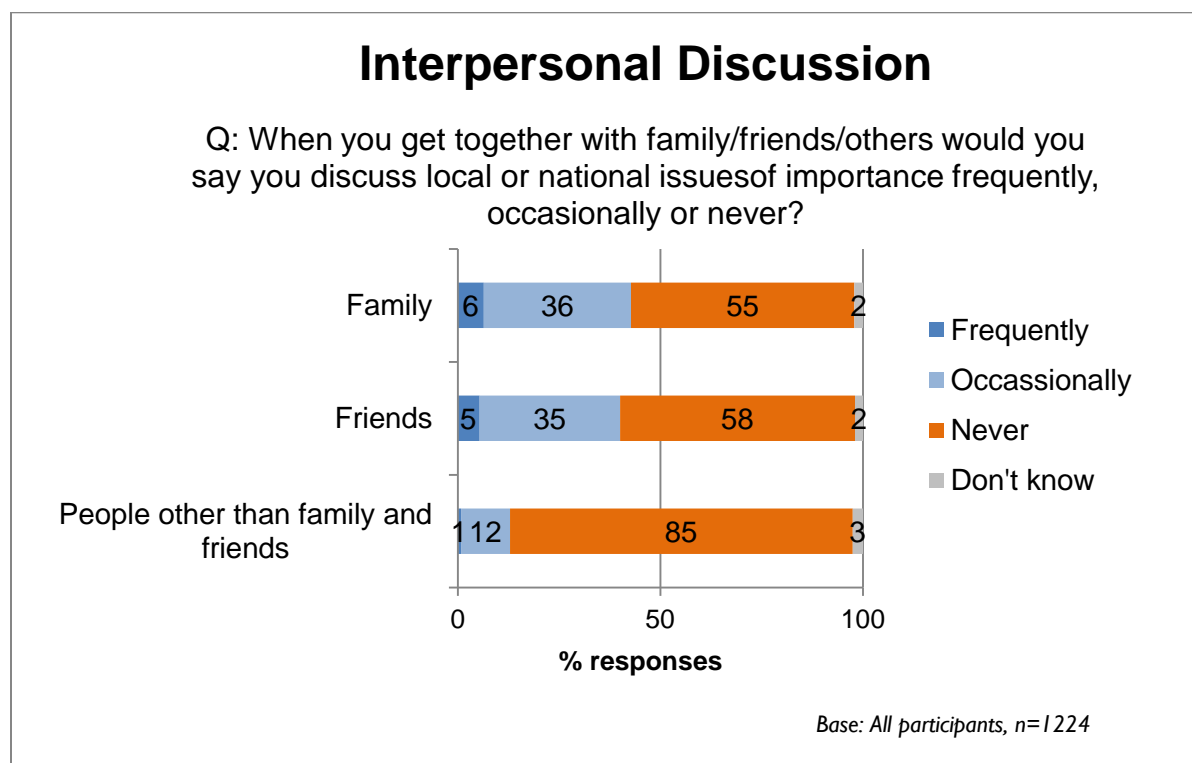
“P1: The big change is that Myanmar has become free.

P2: Myanmar has gotten independence. She has democracy now or something, I don’t know. So she gets peace now.”

Young females, Karen State

1.2 Discussion and Dialogue

On a spectrum of participation, interpersonal discussion with family, friends and other acquaintances, could be said to sit at the end that is most informal and easy to engage in. The research explored the extent to which participants engaged in such discussion on local or national issues that were of personal importance.



Less than 42% of survey participants reported discussing local or national issues of importance with family or friends, and just 13% had discussed issues with someone other than family and friends. Most striking however was the finding that 46% of participants reported that they had *never* discussed a local or national issue of importance with anyone at all.

Women were more likely to engage in discussion with family members, and males were more likely to discuss issues with friends or others.

This low level of informal dialogue resonates with qualitative findings from a number of BBC Media Action's studies in Burma, where participants have commented that the research experience itself was the first time they had ever discussed local or national issues with others.

"In the past, when our country was not open like now, we were afraid to have this kind of discussion [in the community]...we just talked and discussed amongst friends. We discussed silently as it was not free at that time."

Older male, Yangon

1.3 Participation and Voice

Taking action on an issue of importance was even less common than interpersonal discussion. This is not surprising considering that decades of political oppression have meant that engaging in overtly political activities such as protests or demonstrations has been a dangerous pursuit in Burma.

Overt forms of participation, such as petitioning, protest and working for political parties/campaigns, were almost non-existent among survey participants (<1%). Raising an issue through the media was just as low, with just 2% having contacted TV, radio or press in the past, and 1% having commented about an issue online. Four per cent of participants had raised an issue with a civil society or community based organisation.

The extent to which participants exercised voice within formal governance structures varied. Figure 1 on page 22 illustrates the layers of administration that exist between a household and the central government level.

Survey participants were asked if they had raised an issue through formal channels such as local village administrators and township administrators through to MPs.

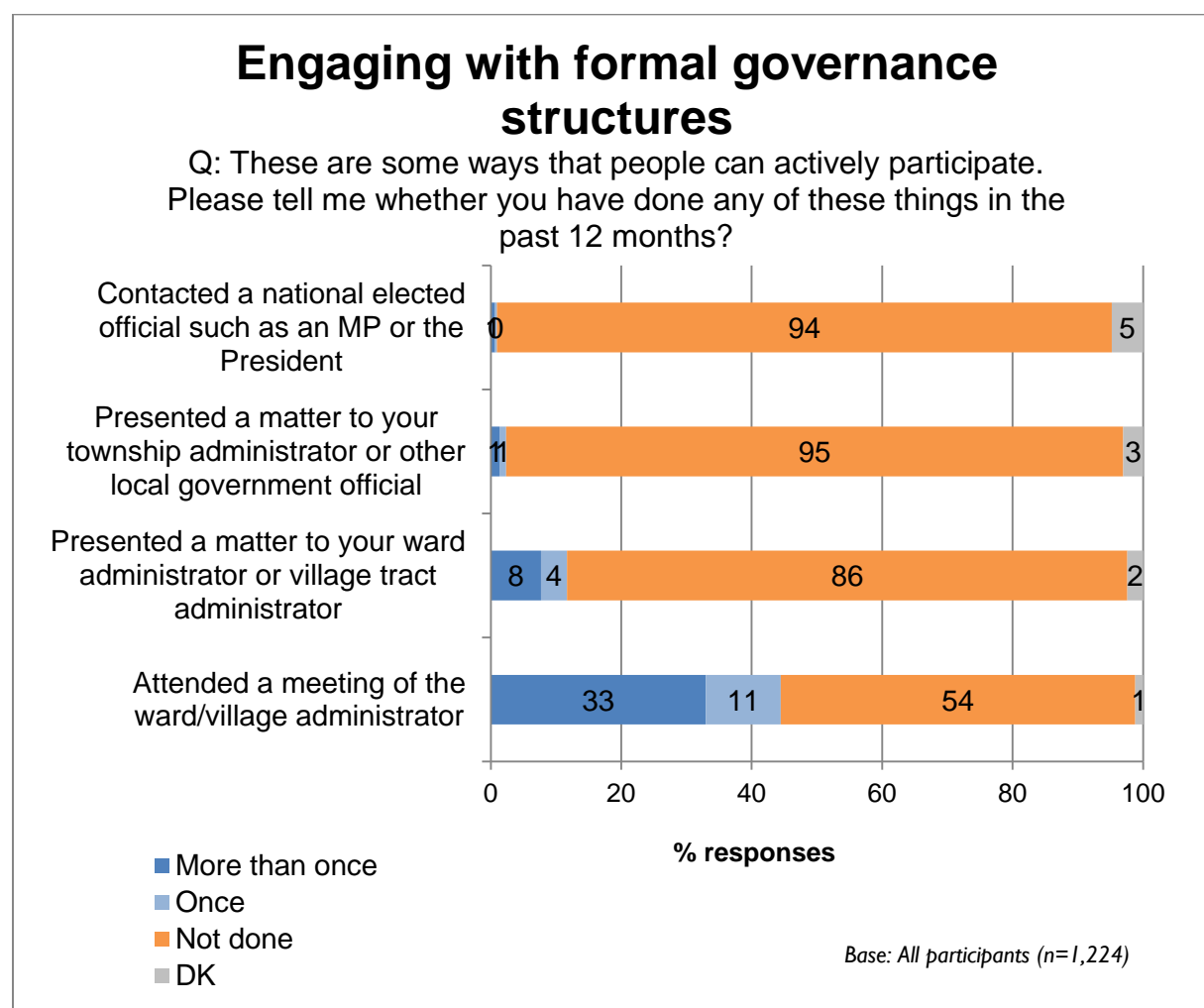
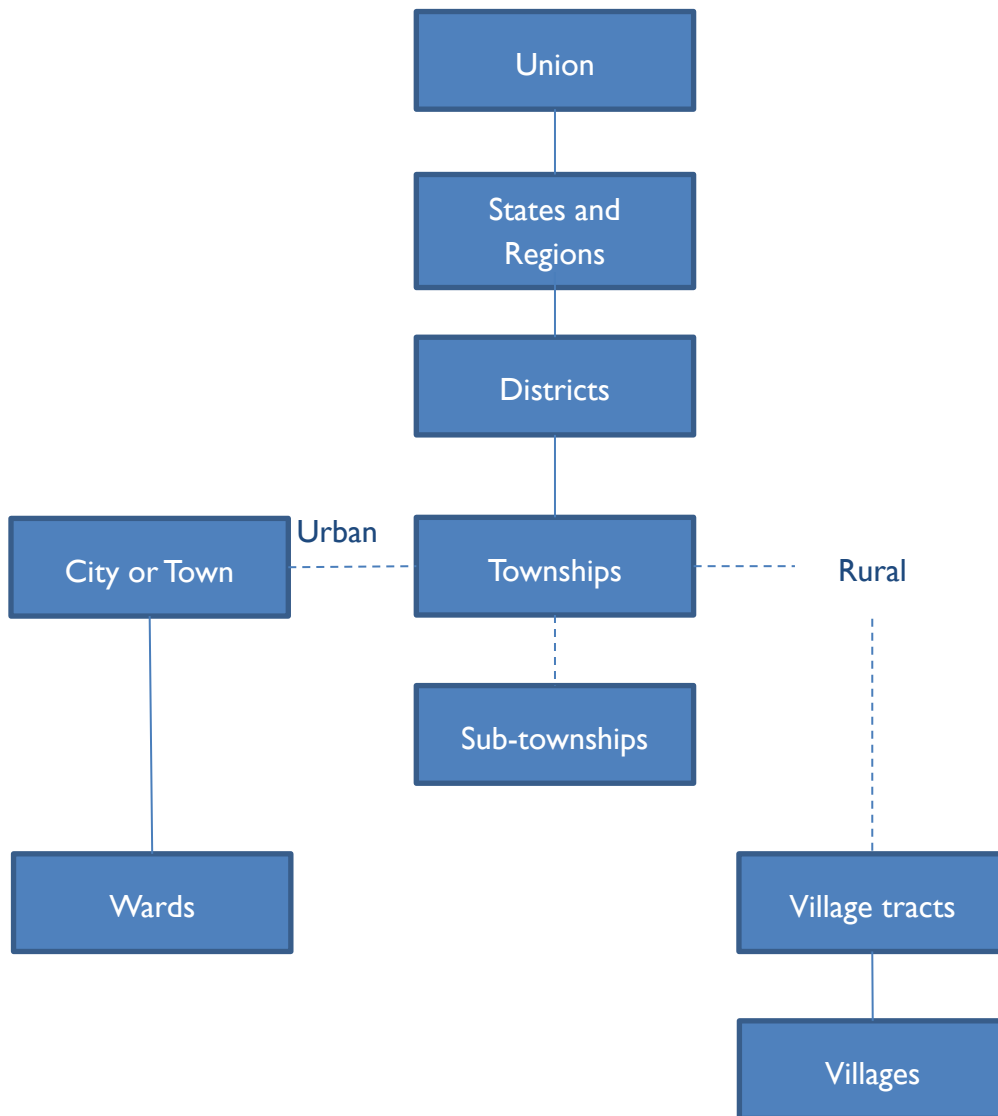


Figure 1: Burma Administrative Structures



Source: General Administration Department, Ministry of Home Affairs

Although 44% reported attending meetings of their ward or village tract¹⁸ administrators, only 12% had ever raised an issue with the ward or village tract administrator. Raising issues with an official higher than the village or ward level was not something people had engaged in, with less than 2% contacting township administrators or MPs.

Males (53%) were significantly more likely to have attended ward or village tract meetings than females (37%); as were rural participants (49%) compared to urban participants (36%). Attendance also increased steadily with age - only 29% of 15-24 year old had attended, compared with 55% of participants aged above 35 years old.

The qualitative research revealed that many of those who attend village and ward administration meetings do so as passive observers, and many attend only because they are instructed to. Focus group participants also reported negative experiences of raising issues through formal structures and poor levels of response. These experiences are described further in Section 2.

“They [township authorities] said they would like to discuss with the villagers. Over 40 villagers and the administrator go [to the meeting]. So the villagers think well ‘we have some hope’ But when they arrive there, the villagers have to just sit, and they [authorities] take signatures. I don’t know what they did with the signatures.”

Female Key Informant, Karen State

1.4 Summary

Initial analysis of a number of individual measures thought to relate to engagement in Burma - *awareness of reforms and political knowledge; interpersonal discussion with family, friends and others; raising issues with authorities; and participation in overt political activities* - suggests that citizen engagement is low in Burma.

When differences between key demographic groups on these measures of engagement were observed, a repeated pattern emerged. Across most measures, those who were male, more educated, wealthier, and living in urban areas demonstrated significantly¹⁹ higher levels of engagement than females, those with lower levels of education, the poor and rural inhabitants, respectively.

The potential for participants to under-report knowledge or participation due to fear or caution, as outlined in Box 1 on page 15 should be acknowledged in interpreting these findings. However, when survey findings were triangulated with qualitative data, the trends identified were supported.

Section 2 describes qualitative research findings in more detail and outlines a number of barriers that may influence the extent to which the public is confident, motivated, or able to engage. Section 3 then returns to the survey data to further explore how these individual engagement measures might reflect different types of engagement among the population.

¹⁸ A village tract encompasses a number of smaller villages and sits between the village and township administrations in rural governance structures. Urban areas do not have this additional layer, with ward administrations reporting directly to township level.

¹⁹ Significance in the statistical sense refers to the likelihood that the differences or relationships observed between groups is due to coincidence or chance. A statistically significant outcome is one which has an extremely low likelihood of being due to chance. In this study, differences and relationships reported have less than a 5% chance of being a coincidence.

2. Potential Barriers to Citizen Engagement

The survey findings just described provide a snapshot of citizen engagement in Burma at present. The following section explores a range of factors which may influence the type and level engagement found.

Analysis of both survey and focus group data identified potential barriers faced by the public in acquiring information about, and participating in, local governance processes. These included:

- poor access to information;
- little perceived relevance of reforms and politics in day-to-day life;
- continuing uncertainty about fundamental freedoms;
- restrictive social and cultural norms and hierarchies;
- challenges in navigating governance structures; and
- low expectations of government responsibility and responsiveness.

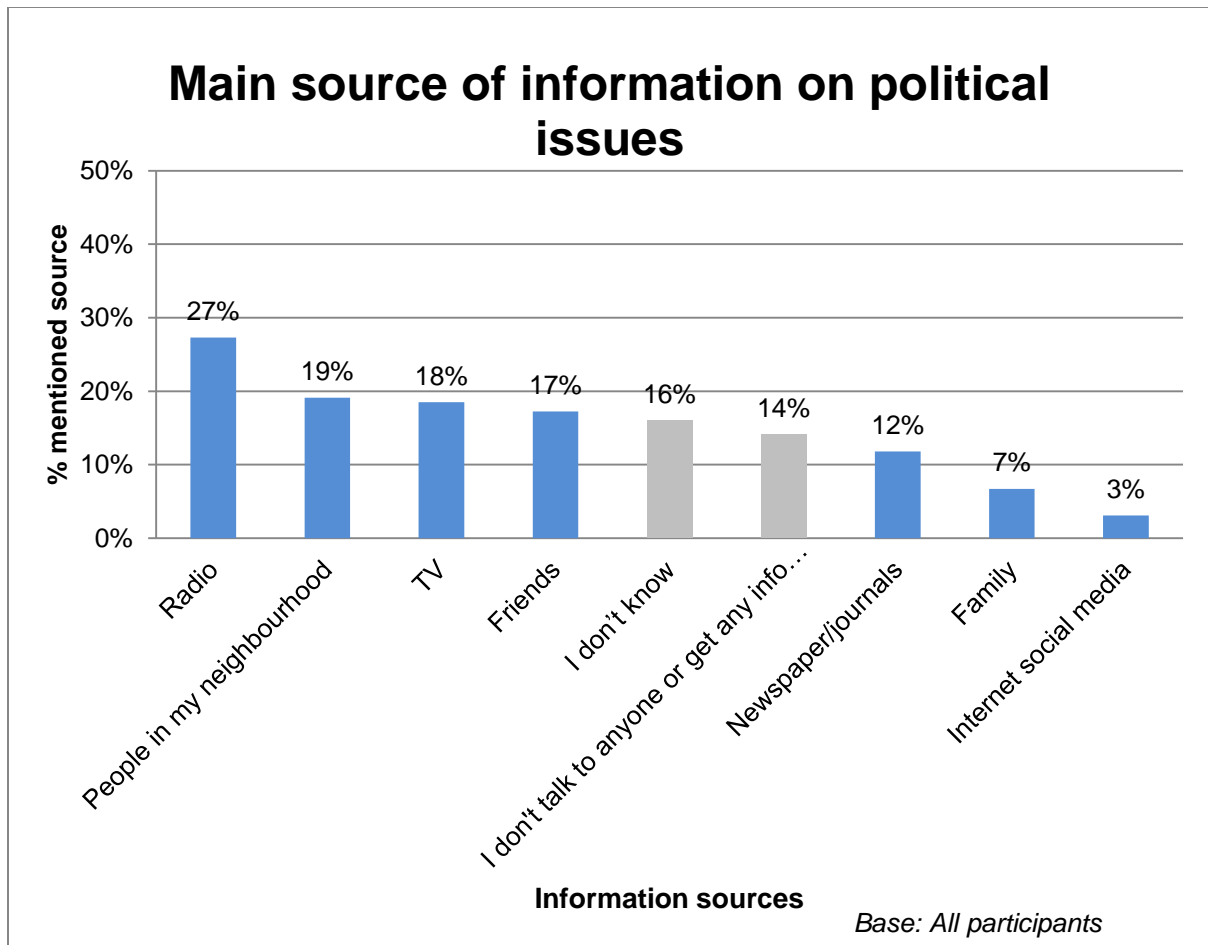


Key Findings

- Poor access to information impacts the extent to which people feel knowledgeable about laws, reforms and other governance issues. Rural populations are most affected by information deficits.
- Reforms and political processes are perceived to have little relevance for people's day-to-day lives, resulting in low levels of interest.
- People continue to face uncertainty about the boundaries of freedom of expression and association. Fear of prosecution, under laws that they do not fully understand, prevents many from participating.
- Norms relating to gender, age and status based on wealth and education, limit the extent to which the voices of certain groups are heard in local level debate and decision-making.
- The complex steps required to raise issues of importance through formal governance structures, and a poor history of responsiveness, act as a deterrent to engaging in this manner.
- Low expectations of what government should be responsible for, and should deliver, mean that levels of demand continue to be low and there is little impetus to seek improved services through formal governance processes.

2.1 Poor access to Information

Accessing up-to-date, comprehensive information on political issues and current affairs is a challenge in Burma. When survey participants were asked what their main source of information was for politics and current affairs just under one third (30%) responded either 'I don't know' or 'I don't get any information on this'. Of those who did get information, a media source (radio, television, newspapers/journals or internet) was mentioned by 46%, while interpersonal sources, such as family, friends or people in the neighbourhood, were also frequently mentioned (43%). Official sources such as government officials or police were quoted by less than 2% of participants.



Radio was the most commonly mentioned individual source (27%). However, as private FM stations do not produce their own news content this information most likely comes from state media sources. BBC Media Action research in March 2013²⁰ found that while audiences turned to state media to hear official statements from government, they felt that it often failed to provide comprehensive information - omitting facts or playing down negative events - or failed to cover stories at all.

The same views on the poor quality of information in Burma's state media emerged in the qualitative component of this study.

"Articles are not written critically in the government newspaper. Only the facts are written - 'The President is on a trip'. We do not get a news feature on it. This is why we like the private papers and don't read the government paper"

Young Male - Yangon

Focus group participants in Yangon described drawing on multiple sources to compare news stories and enhance the information they received. Young urban participants in particular reported drawing on Facebook for information.

²⁰ Myanmar News Media - Audience Research, BBC Media Action, March 2013

"For the people from the grassroots level, we have to rely on the state media. Firstly, we watch MRTV and then MWD and MRTV-4. When news comes out on those sources, I check on the internet or in the private papers to decide whether the news is reliable or not."

Older Male -Yangon

Most rural inhabitants do not have the option to choose or compare between media sources in this way, due to limited or no access to alternative sources, such as internet and the printed press. Where 60% of urban survey participants accessed newspapers or journals at least fortnightly, only 17% of respondents based in rural areas did so. Further information on the Burma media environment and patterns of media consumption are provided in Box 2 below.

Participants attributed low levels of knowledge to poor information access. In turn, lack of knowledge about governance processes was found to impact on people's confidence to raise issues.

"People who have knowledge about the law speak out. For us, we mostly stay at home and we don't understand about laws, so we have to endure it, whether it is right or wrong"

Older Female- Yangon

Box 2 - The Burma Media Environment (March 2014)

The Burma media environment has historically been characterised by strong government censorship and control over licencing, and media laws that have enabled harsh punishment of media practitioners and organisations that push boundaries. However a series of media regulation and licencing reforms, announced since 2011, have resulted in the easing of government censorship and an opening up of space for independent media organisations to play a greater role in the Burmese media landscape.

The emerging media market has been marked by a growing number of weekly print journals; the expansion of TV and satellite channels available; an increase in number of private FM stations; the return of formerly exiled media; media censorship being abolished in print media; and, most recently, the launch of privately owned daily newspapers for the first time in 50 years.

Across Burma there are approximately 14 radio stations (3 state/military run and 11 private FMs), 3 free-to-air television channels (2 of which are military run), a growing number of local satellite channels, more than 350 weekly journals, and 11 daily newspapers in operation. In addition to these local media outlets, international radio stations such as Voice of America and BBC World Service broadcast on shortwave, and satellite owners have access to numerous international channels.

The print and broadcast media in Burma have differed in the past with regard to the focus of their output and the regulatory and legislative controls imposed by the government. Radio programming is mainly music-focused with a small proportion of infotainment and edutainment, while TV features mainly entertainment formats such as soap operas and music, with some factual and learning programmes. Broadcast media have only a limited remit to produce their own news, which is in part the reason behind the focus on entertainment. The state-media produced news still comprises the

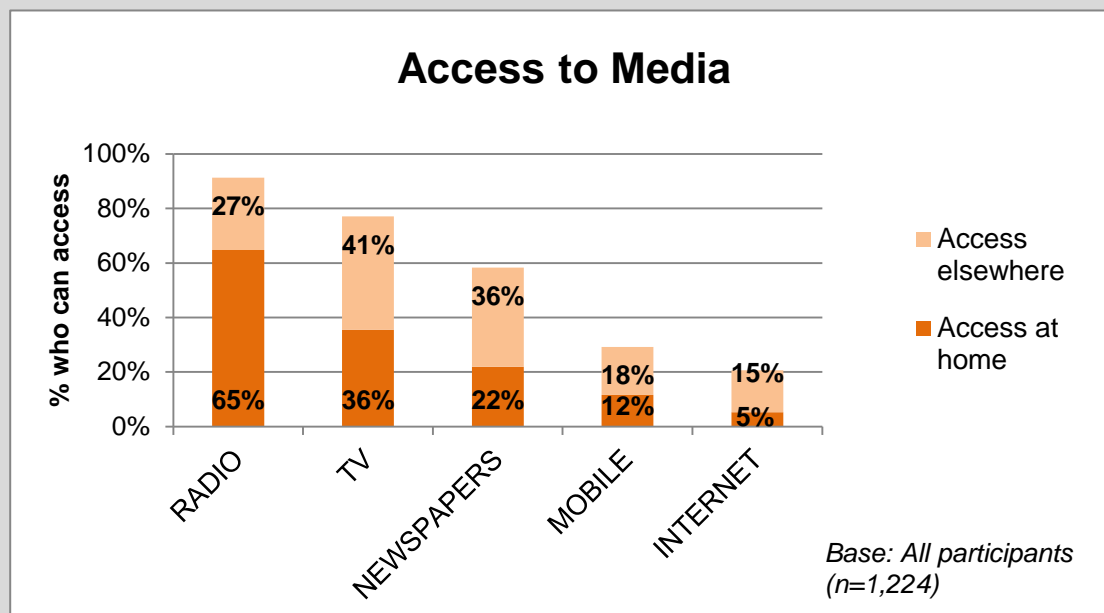
main component of the news broadcast for both FM stations and TV stations.

In contrast, print has traditionally been seen as challenging the government and having a history of activism. The lifting of pre-publication censorship from all media in August 2012 removed the necessity for print content to be cleared by the Press Scrutiny and Registration Division before going to press. However, self-censorship remains (reportedly) widespread, as journalists still face the threat of prosecution under laws such as the 1962 Printers and Publishers Act and the 2004 Electronic Transaction Act.

In 2013 new legislation regarding broadcast, public service media, and printing and publishing, was introduced. These reforms are in various stages of review with parliament. Until the broadcast law is finalised, broadcast owners, editors and journalists face uncertainty about the legal frameworks that regulate and protect them, and will be unlikely to shift focus from entertainment to more hard-hitting journalistic content.

Public Media Consumption

Media access and usage was explored in both the survey and qualitative components of this study.



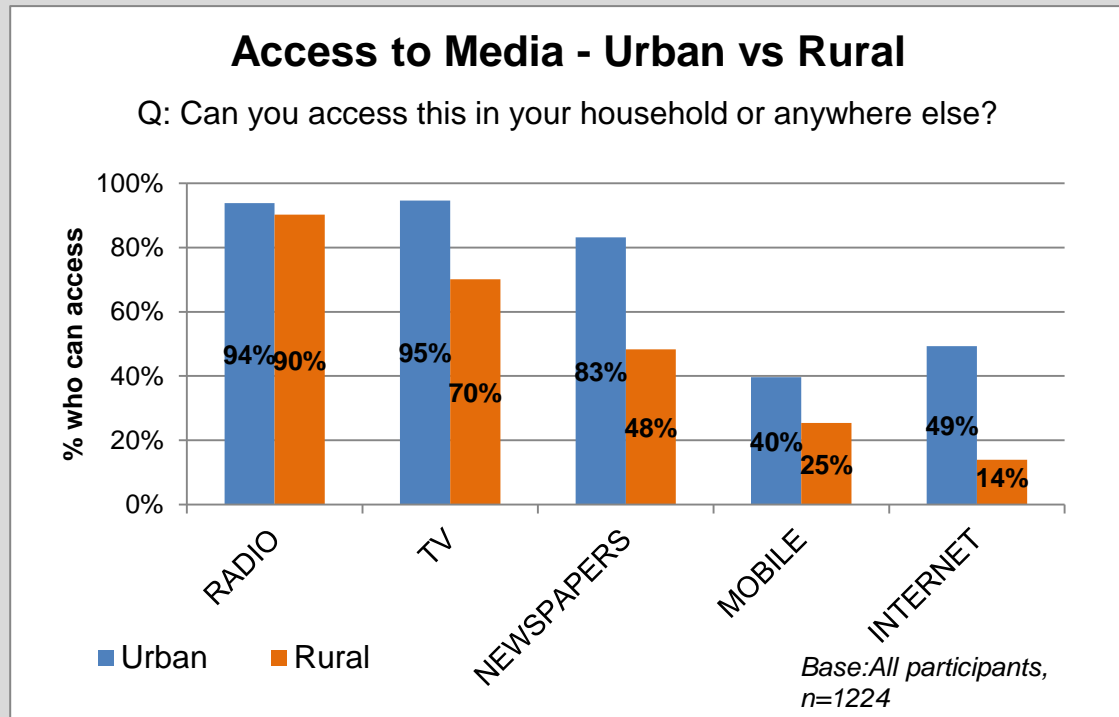
Media access was defined as having access *either in the home or elsewhere*. By this definition, only 7% of those surveyed reported being completely 'media dark' - that is, reporting no access to radio, television, newspapers/journals, internet or a mobile phone.

Radio was the most accessed media platform (91%) followed by television (77%). A total of 58% reported having access to newspapers and journals. However, it should be noted that only 22% accessed print media on a daily or weekly basis, which suggests that more than half of those who have access to this media platform are not

reading up-to-date news and information. Internet access is very low, with just 20% reporting access at home or elsewhere and 5% using internet on at least a weekly basis.

It is likely that access to internet will increase in Burma in future years due to the increasing availability of low cost sim cards and smartphone handsets.

Unequal access to media platforms



There were stark differences between urban and rural media consumption patterns. With the exception of radio, rural populations had less access to all other media compared to those living in urban areas. Only 70% of rurally based participants could access TV, compared with 95% of urban respondents, whilst for newspapers and journals this gap widened to 48% and 83%, respectively. Only 14% of rural people reported access to internet, compared with 48% of urban participants.

Access to all media platforms increased as household purchasing power increased. For example, 34% of those in the lowest purchasing power bracket (those who 'cannot even afford to buy food') had access to newspapers/journals, compared with 83% of those who could 'afford household appliances, but not a new car'.

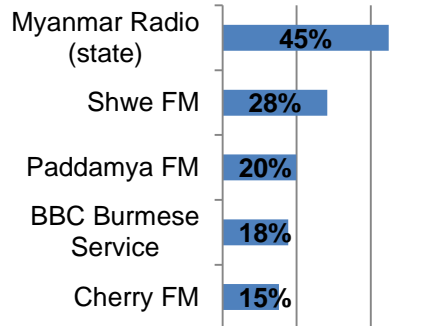
Gender differences only existed around access to journals and newspapers, with 64% of males having access, compared with 53% of females.

Age was only a factor for access to internet, with 19% of people in the 45+ age bracket reporting to have internet access, compared with 29% of those aged 15-24.

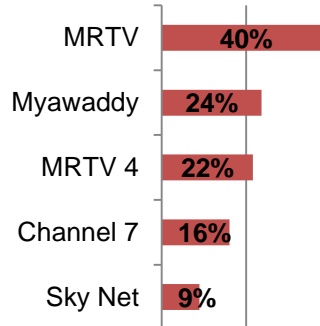
Top five most accessed media in the past year

Survey participants were asked which radio stations, television channels, newspapers/journals and websites they had accessed '*within the past twelve months.*'

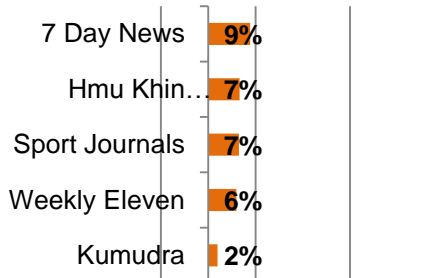
Radio Stations



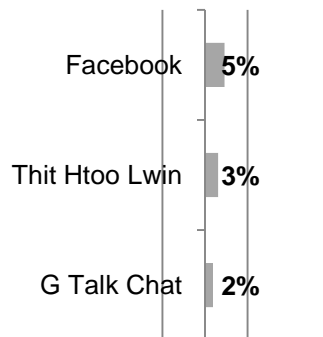
TV Channels



Weekly Journals*



Websites**



Base for all graphs above: All participants, n=1224

*At the time of fieldwork a small number of daily newspapers had fully launched. Only the state newspapers Kyaw Mon and Myanma Ah Lin featured in responses, at 8% and 7% respectively.

**Only three websites were mentioned by more than 1% of respondents, and one of these was an instant messaging app.

2.2 Little perceived relevance of reforms and politics in day-to-day life

Although information access was the primary barrier for people in gaining knowledge about governance issues, many participants also expressed low interest in seeking out information on politics or activities of government where it may be available. For most, the reform process was something that was taking place at high levels of government and they failed to see any relevance for their own lives. The perception that they were not a part of political processes and that reforms would not 'reach the ground' was common.

"Truthfully, we don't know anything about the new laws and policies. We are not interested in them because we cannot be reached by them."

Older Male - Magwe

In addition to low perceived relevance of reforms, the demands of simply ensuring the day-to-day survival of their household meant that they had little time to watch or listen to news, engage in discussion, or participate in local governance processes.

"We don't understand the news. We don't have the time to inquire because we have our own problems and our own jobs to do."

Older Male - Karen State

2.3 Continuing uncertainty about fundamental freedoms

The population of Burma has been subjected to restrictions on freedom of expression and association for decades. Although developments have been noted, such as an increase in permissions granted to hold demonstrations, laws still remain that limit the extent to which people can exercise these rights. One example is the Right to Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act, which states that citizens or organizations who wish to conduct public gatherings or processions must apply for official permission at least five days in advance. People who assemble without permission can be prosecuted under Article 18²¹ of the Act, which holds a maximum sentence of one year imprisonment or a fine of thirty thousand Myanmar Kyat²², or both.

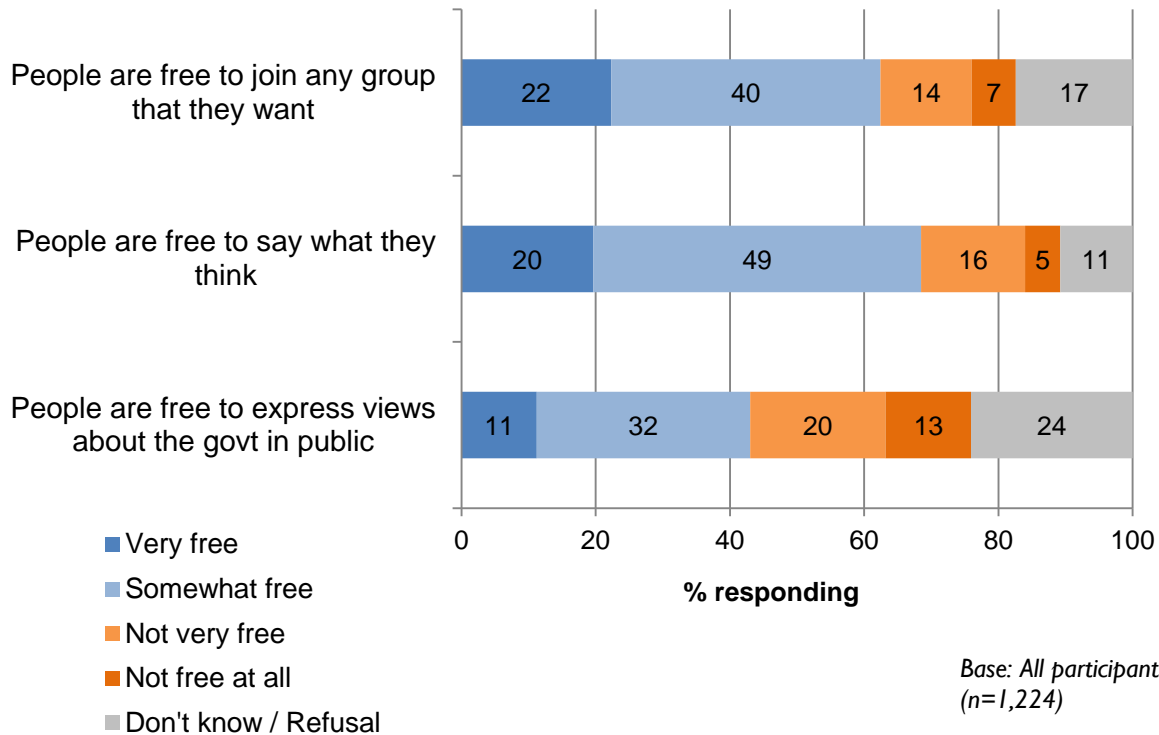
The research illustrated the extent to which the public continues to fear, and face uncertainty regarding, fundamental freedoms.

²¹ Article 18 of the Right to Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act: *If there is evidence that a person is guilty of conducting a peaceful assembly or a peaceful procession, he or she must receive a maximum sentence of one year imprisonment or a maximum fine of thirty thousand kyat, or both.*

²² Approximately \$30 US dollars in March 2014

Perceptions of freedom

Q: In your opinion, in this country how free are people like you to do the following?



When asked how free they felt they were to 'say what they think', 69% of survey participants responded 'Very Free' or 'Somewhat Free'.²³ However, when freedom of expression was qualified to expressing views about *the government* in public, this figure dropped to 43%. Just less than one quarter of participants (24%) responded 'I don't know' to this question.

Focus group participants frequently referred to laws impacting freedoms when discussing their experiences of speaking out on issues of importance. The threat of prosecution was a major deterrent for most, not just in relation to protesting or engaging in other overt political action, but simply asking questions or expressing views about the government.

"I don't have experience of asking question. If we go and ask, we can be taken action for disturbing the duty under the law"

Elder man- Yangon

Confusion about when and how laws, such as the Unlawful Association Act, could be invoked, and fear of not knowing exactly which activities are forbidden under which laws, was directly cited as a barrier to raising voices.

²³ The top two categories in a four- point scale ranging from *Not At All Free* to *Very Free*.

"When we go and talk, we need to understand the law. As we don't understand about law, we could say what we like but then at the end, we could be arrested"

Older Female - Yangon

A female key informant in Karen State reported that when issues had been raised through the local governance structure – by having the village administrator lodge a complaint with township authorities – the authorities had used these laws to threaten the administrator and quell the action.

While the transition has certainly brought some increase in freedoms, for the public, these changes are as yet just incremental.

"In this government the public can talk openly about likes and dislikes. But we need to take their [government] permission. If not we can be prosecuted under Act 18"

Young man - Magwe

2.4 Restrictive social and cultural norms and hierarchies

Focus group participants described a number of different hierarchies within communities that influence who is permitted a place in local decision-making processes. Norms relating to gender, age and status based on wealth and education were found to limit the extent to which the voices of certain groups could be heard.

"Women want to lead and discuss in the meetings but the men are used to doing it"

Female Key Informant - Magwe

Cultural norms particularly influence the role that **women** are permitted to play in local governance processes. Across research locations, participants reported that while women attend community meetings, discussion and decision-making is dominated by men. A number of women expressed a desire to take a more active role, but there was a general acceptance of this status quo.

"We have experience of exclusion as women. We still have it now, although it is not as bad as before. Nowadays women start to participate but not fully yet."

Female Participant - Ayeyarwady

The findings of this research echoed those from a 2011 study produced in collaboration between Oxfam, ActionAid Myanmar and CARE on women's participation in public life in Burma.²⁴ The study found that while women participated at a local level in community groups, such as development committees, their contribution to debate and decision-making was limited. Social norms around the household division of labour mean that when women hold leadership positions outside of the home, this reflects poorly on their husbands and challenges the position of men as a group within the community. The study found that women were minimally represented in village leadership roles, a state of affairs that is not likely to improve in

²⁴ Oxfam, ActionAid and CARE (2011) *If Given the Chance: Women's Participation in Public Life in Myanmar*

light of recently passed local governance legislation. The *Ward or Village Tract Administration Law (2013)* has no specific requirement or principle to ensure participation of women or to ensure gender balance in the administration and its functioning.²⁵ The law specifies that 'heads of households' elect 10 household leaders, who in turn elect village tract leaders. It is very uncommon for the head of a household to be female, so women are indirectly excluded from the process in most cases.²⁶

Showing respect for elders is an important part of Burmese culture, and means that **young people** should not question or challenge their parents or other older people in their community. This limits the space that young people have to make their voices heard in informal debate, community meetings, or other local governance processes. Some young people attributed low youth participation to this lack of space.

"We don't have right to complain. People from the top oppress those in lower positions. We don't have right to correct even what the elders say is wrong. We can say that it's Myanmar's tradition. Children are not allowed to talk back the parents according to religious teaching"

Young Male - Magwe

This expectation to respect older generations manifests at all levels of the community. Participants explained that in community meetings village elders (who are all male) dominate discussions and are rarely questioned by other villagers.

"When there is a meeting for development or an important case in the village, the committee members and elders discuss. If they invite the villagers they also attend the meeting, but when the elders are talking we just listen."

Female Key Informant - Ayeyarwady

Social status, based on wealth and education, was also found to be a major barrier to participation. The low status assigned to poorer, uneducated people, limits the extent to which they can contribute to community decision-making or question authorities. Participants from both Karen State and Ayeyarwady research locations described poor people's lack of confidence to make their voices heard.

"Poor people are afraid to join discussions in case others won't accept what they say. They are embarrassed and feel small. So they just listen to other people. In the meeting, poor people attend rather than the rich. Rich people rarely attend."

Female Key Informant - Ayeyarwady

This regard for people of a 'higher' position even influences interactions with service providers, such as doctors and teachers. In discussing how to raise issues relating to public service delivery, participants described resistance, and sometimes hostility, from professionals when questioned about their practices.

²⁵ ActionAid Myanmar (2013) Research on Traditional Forms and Mechanisms of Accountability in Myanmar

²⁶ Action Aid Myanmar / Susanne Kempel, (2014) - forthcoming

"No-one is not allowed to complain in school, and we do not dare to ask the doctor as he is a respectable person. The doctor said that you have no right to ask. The doctor is from the educated community."

Young Male - Magwe

Participants in Karen State additionally described a powerlessness felt by 'poor, uneducated farmers' in addressing the issue of unpaid compensation with lawyers for a mining business that had damaged farmland with open-pit mining.

"Even though we are not satisfied, we can't do anything. They [the mining company] said they are doing this according to their duties. When they said like this, how will the farmers talk back to them? We can't talk back so we just stay like this."

Young female - Karen State

2.5 Challenges navigating Governance Structures

There are six layers of official structures between a household and the central government or union level in Burma (as illustrated in Figure 1 on page 22). The research explored people's experiences of raising issues around public service delivery through the formal structures.

MPs at both the region and union level were not visible to participants in either urban or rural locations, rarely visiting constituencies. Participants reported a lack of connection between MPs and people on the ground.

"The ward administrator and MP are the government but they [MPs] have never even seen this ward. They don't come to the ground. So, what can they do for us? We cannot communicate with government"

Older Male - Yangon

The village administrator (rural) or ward administrator (urban) is the formal local representative for government and (in principle) directly accessible for community members. In theory, formal structures that extend to such a local level should provide those in even the most rural areas with access to government representatives, and a channel to communicate issues up to township authorities and beyond. However, the research revealed that this was not the case.

The relationship between village and township administrations (responsible for public services) was understood by participants to be one-way. The township administration passes information and orders down to the village administration, to be communicated at the community level. Information does not necessarily flow back up from village to township level.

"They [township authorities] tell us the directions that are given from above. We don't present to them. It depends on the decisions that their township meeting makes"

Male Key Informant, Ayeyarwady

This echoes findings from research conducted in 2013 by ActionAid Myanmar²⁷ which found that communication between district/township and community levels is still very much a top-down affair. In the ActionAid case study villages, only the village tract leader had contact with township level administration and these leaders rarely instigated community-wide planning or decision-making meetings at the local level.

BBC Media Action focus group participants reported that when they had attempted to raise issues around public service delivery with the authorities through their village administrator, they found the process to be complicated, lengthy and inefficient. Rather than facilitating having their voice heard, the layers of governance acted as blocks. Participants referred to going through 'the steps' to have their concerns acknowledged at township or district level, often without satisfactory response.

Moderator: Who will you communicate with about the health service that you need?

Participant: First, we report to ourselves about the needed service. Then we discuss with the village leader. After that we report from the village leader to the chairperson of [village tract name]. Then after discussing with the health officer and the administrator of [village tract], we'll report to the head of the hospital. From the head of the hospital, we'll go to Pyar Pone [township]. Like this, step by step.

Moderator: Do you think you will get the service by doing so?

Participant: It's fate. We will submit it. After that, it's fate."

Older Female - Ayeyarwady

Decentralisation and delegation of decision-making to the subnational level is currently on the government agenda, and this may influence responsiveness and government efficiency in the future.²⁸ However, in the meantime the public faces considerable structural barriers in making their voices heard.

2.6 Low expectations of Government Responsibility and Responsiveness

The final barrier to citizen engagement relates to public expectations of government responsibility and responsiveness.

In Burma, public services such as water and sanitation are often supported by International Non-Government Organisations (INGOSs) or United Nations (UN) agencies, rather than government. The focus groups revealed that in some areas there was confusion about whether the government or an INGO should be ultimately responsible for ensuring that a service was provided to a village. Expectations of what government should be providing for people were lowered as a result.

²⁷ ActionAid Myanmar (2013) Research on Traditional Forms and Mechanisms of Accountability in Myanmar

²⁸ UNDP (2013) Democratic Governance in Myanmar: Current trends and implications

"M: Who is the most responsible to ensure you have the full [education] service?

P1: The president is.

P2: Not the president. The UN.

P3: Parents. Parents."

Older Male Group, Karen State

Focus group participants also reflected an acceptance of a responsibility that the community members themselves have to address service delivery issues themselves. For example, in Ayeyarwady the older male group felt that provision of water for the village was their own responsibility and current shortages were the fault of the inhabitants as the men had sunk the well in the wrong place. In the same region a youth key informant described how the authorities had responded to an alert about damage to the village school building by requesting the village provide photographic evidence of the problem, rather than sending an official to investigate.

Such low expectations of government responsibility appeared to be compounded by negative experiences of raising issues with authorities in the past, reported across all research locations. Both the complexity of reaching the appropriate level of authority, and the likelihood (or unlikelihood) of receiving a satisfactory response, were cited as deterrents from engaging with formal governance structures.

Hierarchies again came into play in relation to government responsiveness, with participants reporting that those with higher status could bypass some of the 'steps' and receive a more immediate response.

"For example, if there is no electricity and a person like me contacts the [electricity] office, the complaint gets shut down by saying 'OK we will come'. But if I am someone of high [military] position they will come as soon as I report to them. We need power for it [to get a response]"

Older Male - Yangon

Despite such strong qualitative evidence that government authorities are not responsive to citizen needs, survey participants were surprisingly positive in their response to questions on government responsiveness. When asked whether they agreed or disagreed that government 'responds to the needs of citizens', 69% agreed that local government was responsive and 64% agreed that central government was responsive. Notably, 'I don't know' responding was high (as much as 24%) for the question on national government responsiveness. Also, the higher the household purchasing power of the participant, the more likely they were to report the government was responsive.

Triangulation of these qualitative and quantitative findings suggests that individuals are generally not familiar with the concept of government responsiveness. The government has not traditionally been accountable to the people for service delivery, and so survey participants do not have a benchmark against which to rate responsiveness. Such low expectations of what government should be responding to, combined with negative experiences of raising issues, may also act as a barrier to public participation.

3. Identifying Target Audiences: Who is Engaged?

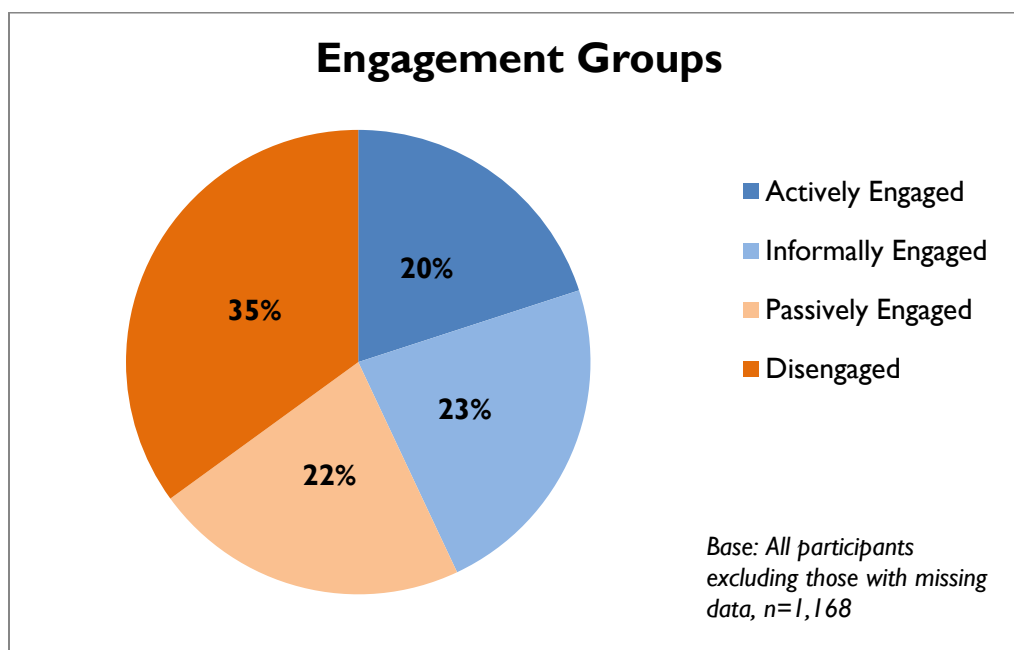
To establish a clearer picture of the relationship between the numerous measures of engagement, described in Section One, an analysis was conducted to *cluster* individual survey participants into broad engagement *types* or *groups*. The prominent demographic characteristics of each group were then observed to identify who is most likely to demonstrate these different types of engagement in the wider population. That is, who is most, or least, engaged in Burma?



Key Findings

- A segmentation analysis identified four distinct groups, representing the spectrum of engagement: *Disengaged*, *Passively Engaged*, *Informally Engaged* and *Formally Engaged*.
- Over a third (35%) of participants were categorized as Disengaged (the 'lowest' level of engagement), and 20% as Formally Engaged (the 'highest' level).
- Young people, women, poor and less educated are significantly more likely to fall into the *Disengaged* group.
- People who are older, male, urban, wealth and more educated are significantly more likely to be *Formally Engaged*.

Four distinct engagement groups or types were identified using a method called Segmentation Analysis. These groups were thought to reflect a spectrum of citizen engagement in Burma and were entitled: Disengaged, Passively Engaged, Informally Engaged and Formally Engaged.



The analysis method clustered participants into these four distinct groups based on their pattern of scoring on a number of indices:²⁹

- Factual political knowledge (*high or low*)
- Interpersonal discussion (*high or low*)
- Attendance at ward or village administration meetings (*has done or has never done*)
- Raising issues of importance with a ward or village administrator (*has done or has never done*)

²⁹ Appendix 3 provides a description of why these particular indices were selected and how the indices were derived. Further technical information on the segmentation method is also provided.

To understand the *type* of engagement that each of the four groups reflected - and so give each group a meaningful name - the scoring patterns were considered alongside an understanding of the Burma governance context established through the qualitative research component.

The Disengaged group was considered to have the lowest level of engagement, as they demonstrated low scores on all of the indices. The group showing the next level of engagement was labelled Passively Engaged - as the participants scored low on all indices except attending meetings (further information on why this was considered passive engagement is provided below). The Informally Engaged and Formally Engaged groups were considered to be more actively engaged than the other two. The Formally Engaged group was considered to demonstrate the highest overall level of engagement.

With just over one third of the sample (35%) falling into the Disengaged group, this group accounts for the largest proportion of survey participants. The remainder³⁰ of participants were divided relatively evenly across the other three groups. The engagement characteristics of each group, and the demographic characteristics of the majority of group members, are illustrated in Figure 2 on page 41.

Box 3: What is segmentation analysis?

A segmentation analysis observes how survey participants cluster together based on their responses to different survey questions. These could be scores on knowledge, behavioural or attitudinal measures.

Participants who respond similarly to survey items - high on particular measures and low on others - are grouped together into a distinct segment. For example, participants who score high on Measure A and B, but low on C would form one group. Participants who score low on Measure A and B but high on C would be assigned to a different group. Participants who score low on all measures - A, B and C - would be assigned to yet another group, and so on.

In this way the analysis will group participants, such that a group member is more similar to others in their group, than to members of a different group.

An optimum number of distinct groups are then determined by statistical means. However the groups, or *segments*, that the analysis produces must be assessed by the researcher, to decide if they reflect some kind of meaningful categorisation of people in the wider population. For this reason, segmentation analysis should only be conducted on measures that are already known to be associated with each other, and are believed to reflect an underlying trait.

³⁰ 5% of the total sample (n=56) could not be added to any cluster due to missing data. These figures therefore reflect a total sample of n=1,168.

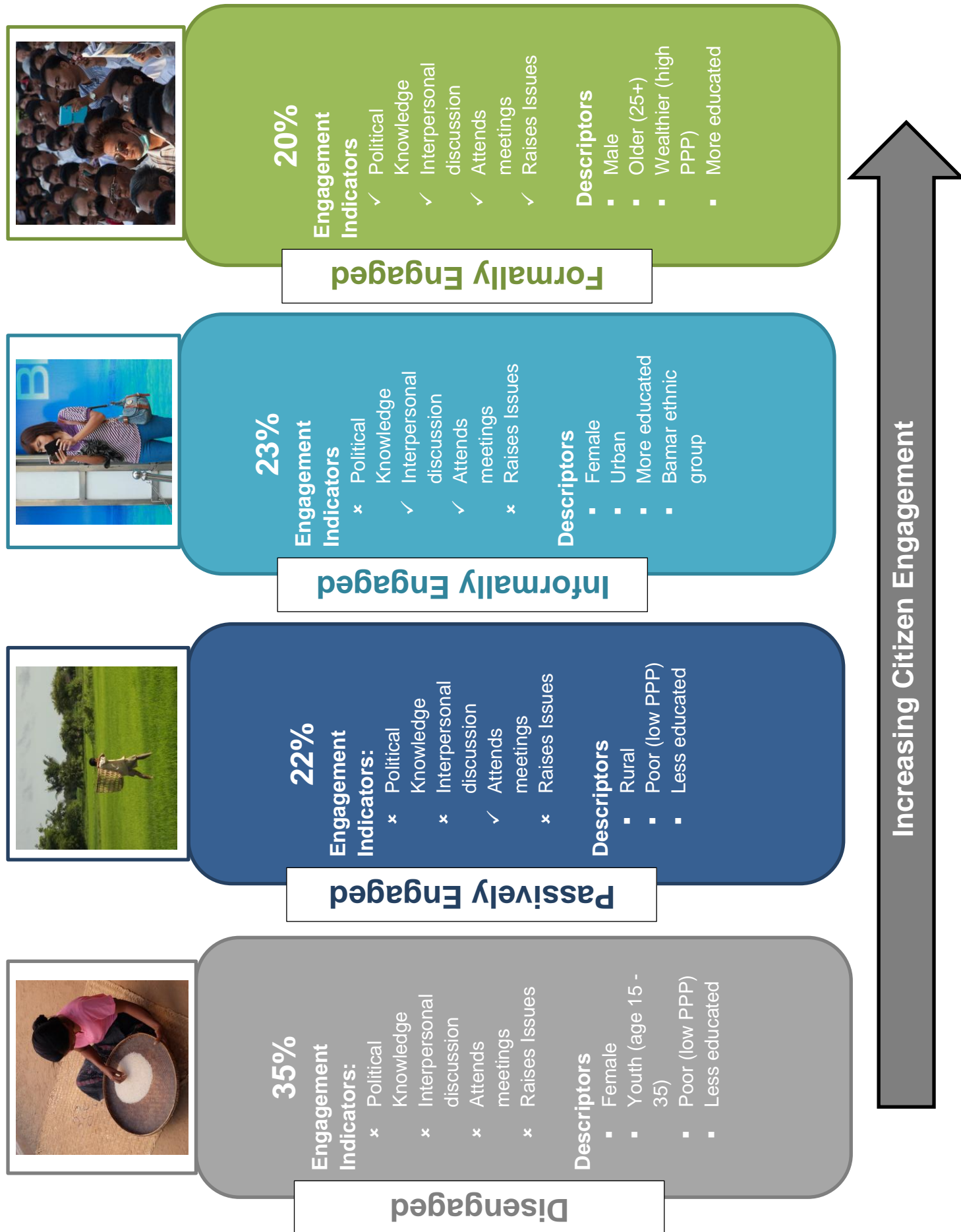


Figure 2: Engagement groups and associated characteristics

3.1 Engagement category descriptions

Disengaged: Young, female, poor and less educated

In the Disengaged group, 100% of participants had *low* political knowledge and reported that they *never* engaged in interpersonal discussion on issues, *never* raised issues with an authority, and *never* attended village/ward administrator meetings.

Women and young people were significantly more likely to fall into the Disengaged group, compared to men and people aged 35+. Rural and urban inhabitants were equally represented, but likelihood to be disengaged decreased significantly as education level and household purchasing power increased.



Passively Engaged: *Rural, poorer, less educated*

The Passively Engaged group was identical to the Disengaged group on all characteristics, except for attending meetings. While all members had *low* knowledge and levels of discussion and raising issues, 100% *had attended* ward and village administrator meetings in the past. The qualitative research revealed that many of those who attend village meetings do so only because they are instructed to, and discussion and decision-making in these meetings is limited to elders and officials. Most who attend do so in a passive, observer mode - hence the name assigned to this group.

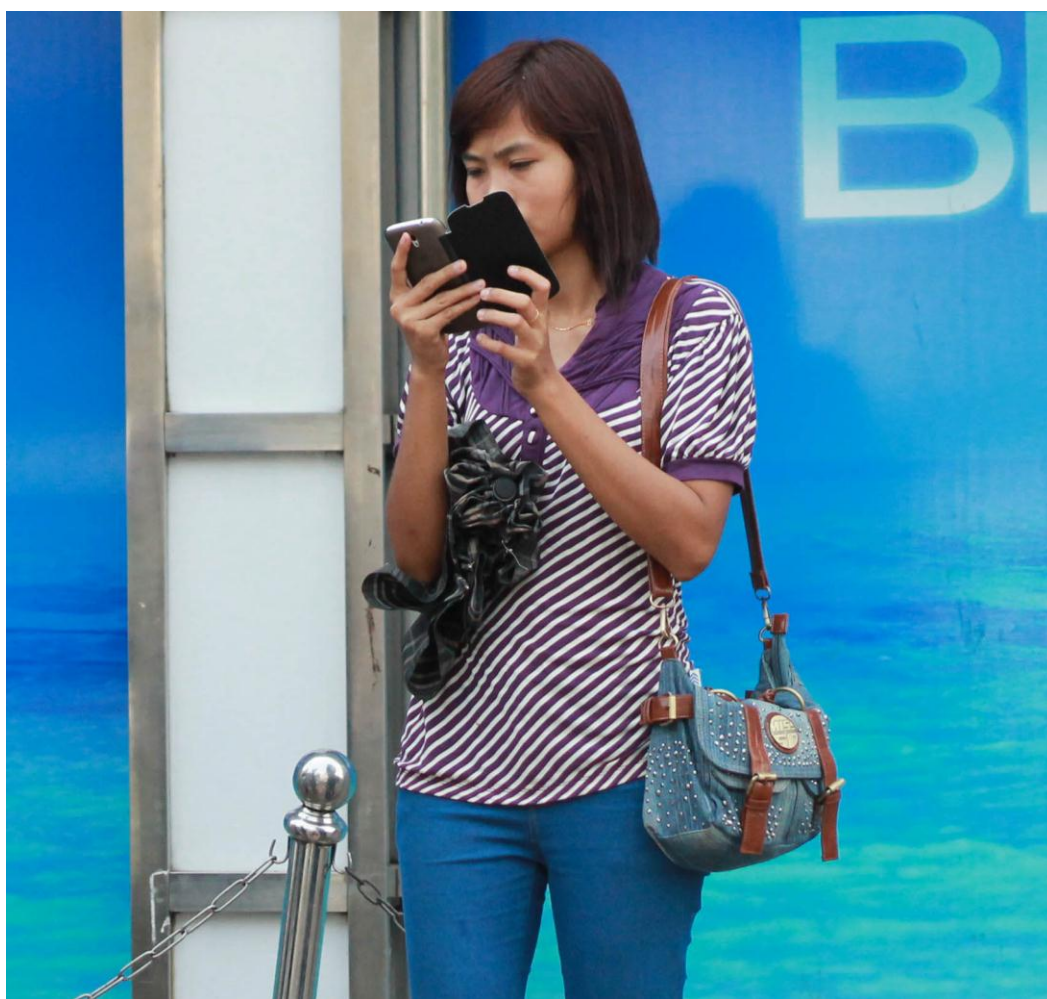
People living in rural areas, with just primary education or lower, and who had low purchasing power (defined as *unable to afford more than food and clothes*) were significantly more likely to appear in this group.



Informally Engaged: *Female, urban, more educated, Bamar ethnic group*

Like the first two groups, the Informally Engaged group had *low* political knowledge and had *never* raised an issue with an official. However, 100% of members engaged in *high levels* of interpersonal discussion with family and friends, and more than half (51%) *had attended* village or ward administrator meetings. In this sense, this group demonstrates more active engagement than the Disengaged or Passively Engaged groups, but in an informal manner.

Women and people living in urban areas were significantly more likely to fall into this group. Membership of this group also increased with education level - significantly higher proportions of those with primary schooling were Informally Engaged, compared to those with no schooling, as were those with secondary or university education compared with those with a primary education or lower. A significantly higher proportion of Bamar ethnic group members fall into this group compared with non-Bamar minorities. This was the only group where significant differences were found for ethnicity.



Formally Engaged: *Older, male, urban, wealthier, more educated*

The Formally Engaged group showed high rates of knowledge and participation. Sixty three per cent of this group demonstrated *high* political knowledge; 70% *had attended* meetings; 59% *had discussed* issues of importance with others; and 60% reported that they *had raised* an issue with an official in the past. All participants who had high political knowledge and reported raising an issue with authorities fall into this segment. The characteristics that differentiate those who are Formally Engaged from those who are Informally Engaged are knowledge of formal political processes, and actively raising issues through a formal governance structure (i.e. village or ward administrator). The group was therefore labelled Formally Engaged.

People aged 25+ were significantly more likely to be Formally Engaged than youth, as were males, people living in urban areas, and those who had higher purchasing power (defined as *having money to spend on household appliances or more*). Membership of this group increased with education level - the significant differences being between those with university and secondary levels of education, and secondary and lower levels of education.

Graphs comparing levels of group membership across the key demographics of age, gender, urban/rural location, education and household purchasing power, are provided in Appendix 3.



3.2 Summary

This segmentation analysis helps to describe patterns of citizen engagement in Burma. At the most engaged end of the spectrum are males, older people and those who are more highly educated and financially well off. At the most disengaged end of the spectrum are young people, women and people who are disadvantaged in terms of education and wealth.

Such categorisation of engagement can be useful in identifying priority beneficiaries for interventions that aim to support governance, and in setting expectations of impact. The Disengaged group could be considered to have the farthest distance to travel with regard to becoming engaged with governance processes. Supporting an increase in engagement amongst this group could focus on prompting interest in governance processes or building confidence or motivation to engage in discussion. Knowing that women and youth are more likely to fall into this category can help to shape media communications aimed at increasing engagement - or other types of interventions.

In contrast, efforts to support Informally Engaged people to become more Formally Engaged could focus on increasing knowledge levels. This could be through improved information provision through media or directly at the community level. Again, targeting communications at those most likely to fall into this category - female, more educated and urban dwellers – could be the most effective approach.

Further research is required to understand the full range of factors that influence membership of these groups and what might support or motivate individuals to move from an informal level of engagement to a more formal level, for example.

Section 4 presents the outcome of an analysis that attempts to understand the extent to which access to media plays a role in distinguishing membership of these different engagement groups.

4. The Influence of Media Access on Citizen Engagement

To date, little objective evidence has existed for the influence that access to media and information may have on knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of people in Burma. To address this evidence gap, the research sought to understand the extent to which media might influence engagement. To do this the survey included questions around media usage, in addition to those on engagement. Analysis of the data explored the association between media access and engagement, relative to other characteristics of the individual and their context.



Key Findings

- The analysis provides evidence that media access, defined as regular access to any one public service oriented media, is associated with citizen engagement.
 - o Having regular access to public service oriented media increased the likelihood of being Formally Engaged rather than Disengaged by 11 times;
 - o Having regular access to public service oriented media increased the likelihood of being Formally Engaged rather than Informally Engaged by 3 times;
 - o Having regular access to public service oriented media increased the likelihood of being Informally Engaged, rather than Disengaged by 4 times.
- This association exists when controlling for the effects of age, gender, urban/rural location, education, household purchasing power, ethnicity and literacy.
- Media access was a stronger predictor of being Formally Engaged compared to gender, age and urban/rural location. Only having a university level education was a stronger predictor.
- Ethnicity, household purchasing power, and literacy were not found to have significant effect in the overall predictive model.

4.1 Background to the analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted to understand the association between the level of media access an individual had, and their level of engagement. The analysis looked at the extent to which media access played a role in distinguishing between membership of the different groups identified in Section 3 - Disengaged, Passively Engaged, Informally Engaged, or Formally Engaged.

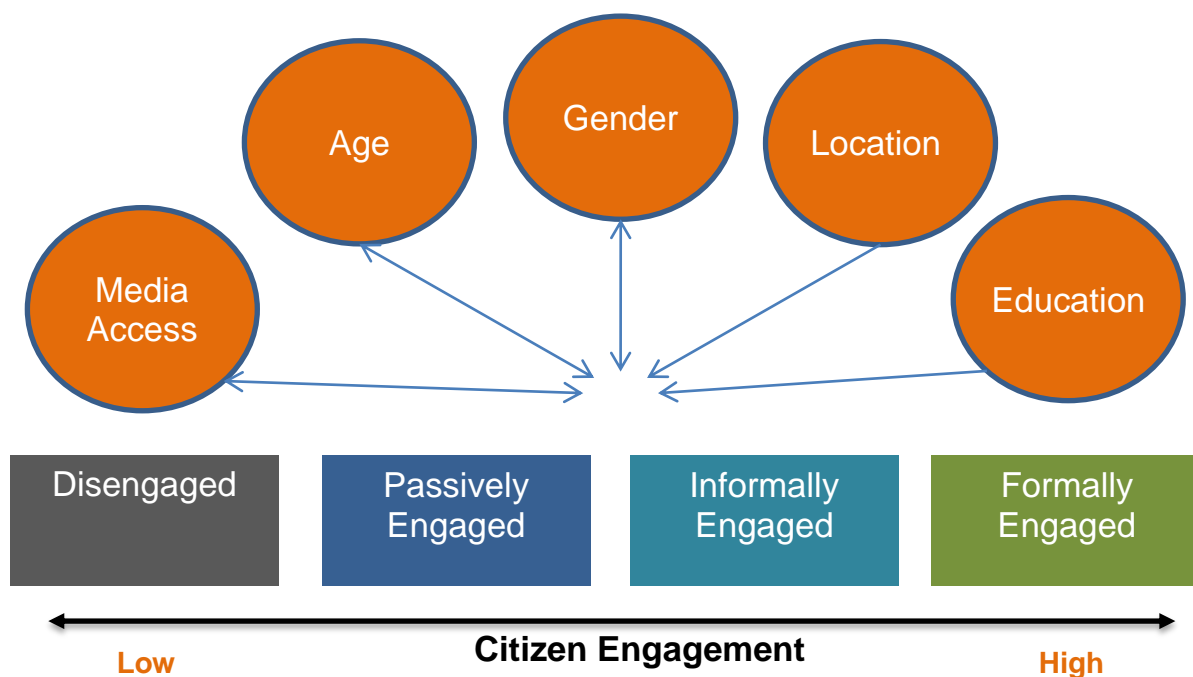
Initial survey and focus group data analysis had already pointed to the influence that demographic characteristics might play in citizen engagement. Therefore this analysis also accounted for the influence of such characteristics, namely age, sex, urban/rural location, and education.³¹

The analysis sought to answer the following research question:

Compared to other significant demographic characteristics, and accounting for the influence of these characteristics, how strong is the association between media access and citizen engagement?

³¹ These characteristics were selected from a wider selection of potential demographic factors, as described in Box 4, on page 50.

Figure 3: Characteristics explored in analysis of association between media access and citizen engagement



The definitions of engagement, media access, and the demographic characteristics included in this analysis are described in Box 4 on page 50. A full technical description of the analysis method is provided in Appendix 4.

4.2 Findings

The results of the analysis indicated that media access plays an important role in distinguishing between levels of engagement even when accounting for demographic characteristics such as age, gender, urban/rural location and education.

Participants who had regular access to public service oriented media were 11 times more likely to be Formally Engaged rather than Disengaged (when compared to those who had no regular access to media). Having regular access to ‘other media’ increased the likelihood of being Formally Engaged by 2 times, compared to no regular media access.

Table 1: Likelihood of being Formally Engaged rather than Disengaged

Potential Predictor		Increased odds of being FORMALLY ENGAGED by:
Media	Regular access to PSO media (versus no regular access to media)	10.5 times
	Regular access to other media (versus no regular access to media)	2.2 times
Education	University education (versus no schooling)	33.3 times
	Secondary education (versus no schooling)	7.9 times
	Completed primary education (versus no schooling)	4.2 times
	Some primary (versus no schooling)	No association
Gender	Male (versus female)	2.3 times
Age	Each one year increase in age...	1.1 times
Location	Urban (versus rural)	No association

Only education had a stronger association with engagement than media access. Participants with a university education were 33 times more likely to be Formally Engaged. However public service oriented (PSO) media access was a stronger predictor of engagement than other levels of education, as well as age and gender.

For example, being male only increased the likelihood of being Formally Engaged by 2 times. Notably, being located in an urban or rural environment was not significantly associated with Formal Engagement in this way.

Box 4: Conducting the Analysis

Regression analysis, as was used in this instance, is a statistical tool that estimates the relationship between different characteristics of an individual. In this case, relationships between an outcome of interest - engagement - and several different characteristics of the individual that potentially influence that outcome - such as age, education or media access - were explored. The analysis aims to understand how engagement increases or decreases, as those other characteristics increase or decrease.

In estimating the relationship between one characteristic - such as media access - and the outcome of interest - engagement - the analysis 'controls' for the influence of the other variables. For example, the regression analysis will account for the influence of age on engagement when estimating how much influence media access has on engagement.

The characteristics that were included in the analysis are described here. A technical description of the regression analysis method is provided in Appendix 4.

Engagement

The outcome of interest was engagement. That is, to what extent does media access distinguish an individual's level of engagement when other characteristics are accounted for?

Participants' level of engagement was classified according to the four engagement groups identified in the segmentation analysis in Section 3. Participants were classified as:

1. Disengaged
2. Passively Engaged
3. Informally Engaged
4. Formally Engaged

Media access

Media access was included in the model as it was expected to have some relationship to engagement. Three 'levels' of media access were defined:

1. Non-regular access to media (29% of the sample)
2. Regular access to 'other media' (36% of the sample)
3. Regular access to at least one public service oriented media (36% of the sample)

Participants classified as having 'regular access' (categories 2 and 3) were those who reported having access to any one media platform (radio, television, newspapers/journals, internet) at least once in a fortnight. Participants classified as having 'non-regular access' were those who had less frequent (less than fortnightly) or no access to any media platform.

Participants who had regular media access were split into two further levels of media access, based on the type of media they accessed. This was based on the specific radio stations, television channels and newspapers participants had accessed within the past year. As described in Box 2 on page 27, the level of information provided by different media outlets in Burma varies widely. Local FMs and television stations do not produce their own news, and the information provided by the state media lacks completeness and diversity of perspectives. While the quality of Burma's 350 odd weekly journals and newspapers cannot be verified, private publications do provide perspectives beyond those of the government, as do overseas radio and television stations. Therefore overseas radio, overseas television, news producing non-state local broadcast media, and non-state owned newspapers, were all classified as 'public service oriented media'. All other media - state and non-news producing local media - were classified as 'other media'.

Combining these two measures, participants were assigned to one of two regular access media categories 'Regular access to at least one public service oriented media' or 'Regular access to other media'. The public service oriented media category was considered to be the highest level of media access, as it had the potential to provide participants with plurality of perspectives and information beyond that provided by the state media or entertainment media.

Demographic characteristics

A number of demographic characteristics were included in the model as other potential predictors of engagement. The characteristics included were those that had been found to have a significant association with engagement in earlier stages of analysis (see Appendix 3). These were:

- **Age** (by year)
- **Gender:** Male or Female
- **Location:** Urban or Rural

- Highest level of **education** achieved: No Schooling, Some Primary, Completed Primary, Completed Secondary, Completed University or College
- **Ethnicity**: Bamar or Non-Bamar
- Household **Purchasing Power**: 5 levels ranging from 'Cannot afford to buy even food' to 'Can afford to buy a car or other more expensive items'
- **Literacy**: Literate in Burmese, Literate in a Language Other than Burmese, Non-Literate.

In the first stage of analysis it was found that household purchasing power, literacy and ethnicity did not have a significant effect on the overall model. That is, when all other factors were accounted, these factors did not have any unique influence on citizen engagement. These factors were therefore removed at the first stage, leaving just age, gender, location and education in the final model.

Additional comparisons between engagement groups were made.

Media access was found to be significantly associated with being Informally Engaged, even when accounting for all other characteristics in the model (*age, gender, urban/rural location, education*).

Participants who had regular access to public service oriented media were 4 times more likely to be Informally Engaged rather than Disengaged (when compared to those who had no regular access to media). Having regular access to 'other media' increased the likelihood of being Informally Engaged by 2 times, compared to non-regular media access.

Table 2: Likelihood of being Informally Engaged rather than Disengaged

Potential Predictor		Increased odds of being INFORMALLY ENGAGED by:
Media	Regular access to PSO media (<i>versus no regular access to media</i>)	4.1 times
	Regular access to other media (<i>versus no regular access to media</i>)	1.6 times
Education	University education (<i>versus no schooling</i>)	27.5 times
	Completed secondary education (<i>versus no schooling</i>)	13.1 times
	Completed primary education (<i>versus no schooling</i>)	9.0 times
	Some primary (<i>versus no schooling</i>)	6.1 times
Gender	Male (<i>versus female</i>)	No association
Age	Each one year increase in age...	1.05 times
Location	Urban (<i>versus rural</i>)	No association

When compared with the other demographic characteristics, media was second to education in the strength of relationship to engagement. Participants with a university education were 28 times more likely to be Informally Engaged rather than Disengaged, and having completed secondary education increased the likelihood by 13 times. However PSO media access was a stronger predictor of engagement than age. Gender and urban/rural location were not significant predictors.

Media access was also found to distinguish between the two active engagement groups - Formally Engaged and Informally Engaged.

Participants who had regular access to public service oriented media were 3 times more likely to be Formally Engaged rather than Informally Engaged (when compared to those who had no regular access to media). Having regular access to 'other media' was not a significant predictor of being Formally Engaged, compared to Informally Engaged.

Table 3: Likelihood of being Formally Engaged rather than Informally Engaged

Potential Predictor		Increases odds of being FORMALLY ENGAGED by:
Media	Regular access to PSO media (versus no regular access to media)	2.5 times
	Regular access to other media (versus no regular access to media)	No association
Education	University education (versus no schooling)	No association
	Completed secondary education (versus no schooling)	No association
	Completed primary education (versus no schooling)	No association
	Some primary (versus no schooling)	No association
Gender	Male (versus female)	2.4 time
Age	Each one year increase in age...	1.03 time
Location	Urban (versus rural)	1.02 time

When compared with other demographic characteristics, public service oriented media access was the strongest predictor of being Formally Engaged rather than Informally Engaged. Education and urban/rural location were not significant predictors.

4.3 Summary

This analysis provides evidence that media access, defined as regular access to any one public service oriented media, is associated with citizen engagement. Having access to media increases the likelihood of being Formally Engaged rather than Disengaged, and Informally Engaged rather than Disengaged. It also increases the likelihood of being Formally Engaged rather than Informally Engaged. This association exists when controlling for the effects of age, gender, urban/rural location, education, household purchasing power, ethnicity and literacy.

An analysis of this kind cannot prove that media access *causes* membership of different engagement categories. It is instead a measure of the relationship between these two.³² However, the analysis does provide more confidence that, as access to public service-oriented media increases, an individual's level of citizen engagement also increases. This is because regression analysis takes into account other characteristics (as described above) which removes their distorting effect. That is, these characteristics could be associated both with the engagement outcome and media access itself. Following the removal of these characteristics, the effect of media access was still evident.

These findings present a case for harnessing media to improve engagement, particularly amongst marginalised groups. This research revealed many ways in which demographic characteristics can act as a barrier to engagement. For example, females were less likely to be informed about politics and did not feel able to play an active role in meetings. However, this analysis shows media access may have an influence on engagement, even when accounting for the negative impact that gender appears to have on knowledge or raising voices.

In light of this, it can be concluded that improving public access to quality, balanced, comprehensive information on governance and political processes could support greater citizen engagement in Burma. Recommendations for the ways in which this could be done are provided in the final section of this report.

³² Regression, like many other statistical methods used in analysis of data from studies of a cross-sectional design, proves correlation but not causation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Through a multi-method research approach, involving almost 1,500 participants nationally, this research aimed to establish a picture of citizen engagement in Burma at present. The current picture is one of a public that, to varying degrees, lacks knowledge, confidence, motivation and space to participate in governance processes and make their voices heard. The research identified barriers that need to be overcome in order for engagement levels to increase. These included:

- poor access to information;
- uncertainty about fundamental freedoms;
- constraining cultural norms and hierarchies; and
- negative experiences of engaging with official structures and government responsiveness.

Many of these barriers require change at the highest levels of policy and legislation. For example, to fully address public uncertainty around limits of freedom of expression, reform and clarification of the laws contributing to this uncertainty is crucial. And without effective strengthening of institutions at the subnational level, tangible improvements in government responsiveness to local needs are unlikely.

This report presents objective evidence for the role that media plays in predicting engagement. When controlling for the effects of age, gender, urban/rural location and education, having regular access to public service oriented media significantly increased the likelihood of being Formally Engaged or Informally Engaged, rather than Disengaged. Media access also increased the likelihood of being Formally Engaged rather than Informally Engaged. That is, **the higher the level of media access a participant has, the more actively engaged they appear to be.** These findings echo those of a BBC Media Action study in Nepal (2013), which found evidence that viewing political debate and discussion programmes was positively associated with interpersonal discussion and political participation.³³

This evidence provides a compelling case for the need to promote citizen access to public service media or other quality, balanced, comprehensive sources of information. Be that through a strengthened local media sector, or other information provision initiatives, such as grassroots civic education and community mobilization programmes. In terms of scale, strengthening national media could mean promoting engagement of millions of people across the country.

The following recommendations reflect the findings of this research, and of the role that media has played in other developing countries where BBC Media Action has undertaken similar studies:

- Media should be harnessed to raise awareness and reduce knowledge deficits: High-quality, balanced media can be a crucial source of impartial information on individual rights and government policies. Without understanding what policies their leaders are debating or implementing, and how their communities will be affected, there is little impetus for citizens

³³ BBC Media Action (2013): *How do political debate programmes influence political participation? A case study from Nepal*

to question those in power. The existence of a trusted public service media can play a crucial role in providing this information.³⁴

- Media can provide a platform for public deliberation: Media can act as a platform to raise issues and connect leaders with the public. The discourse of political reform in Burma does not, as yet, appear to have permeated to the general population level and formal structures for populations to engage in the political process do not yet exist. Media can bridge the gap through formats that enable citizens to air their views, pose their questions, and hear directly from politicians and other decision-makers. Where citizens are not yet confident about raising issues with leaders directly, media can raise those issues on their behalf. Naturally, this requires a media that is in touch with the needs and concerns of its audience and is itself granted access to address leaders in this way.
- Use media to stimulate discussion and participation among the general population: Continuing uncertainty about the limits of freedom of expression and the individual's role in governance processes limit the extent to which citizens engage in interpersonal discussion or raise their voice with authorities. Media can provide a safe space to engage in, and observe, discussion of social and political issues, while preserving an individual's anonymity.
- Promote greater inclusion of marginalised groups through media: Creative programming can confront problematic cultural and social norms, and address controversial or taboo topics in a way that traditional news media might not currently have the freedom to do. Programmes that raise the visibility of marginalised groups - such as ethnic minorities and women - can highlight role models, raise awareness of needs and experiences, and represent 'alternative' options for such individuals and groups. Showcasing the active participation of women, young people, and poorer communities in governance processes, through factual and entertaining media formats, can challenge acceptance of cultural hierarchies that currently exclude such groups from governance processes.

BBC Media Action is working in Burma to support improved governance through media. To date, activities have focused on building capacity of local journalists and media organisations to meet audience needs with more balanced, relevant, and comprehensive news and information. BBC Media Action also produces a radio programme for young people, which aims to increase knowledge and promote discussion of important social issues, and encourage greater participation of youth at the community level.

However this research suggests there is a need, and potential, for media to do more in Burma. These findings will be built on through continuing research into the public experience of governance, and the extent to which media is supporting greater citizen engagement and other outcomes at the population level. This will help to ensure that media development initiatives are evidence-based and addressing the changing needs of citizens as the country progresses towards national elections in 2015.

³⁴ A public service media is, by definition, one that seeks public benefit, rather than commercial gain. It serves the entire population and ensures a high technical standard, with a balance of views and a range of topics.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Household Survey Sampling Strategy

The survey sampling strategy aimed to achieve a sample that represented the urban/rural, age and gender spread of the population. In the absence of up-to-date census information, the sampling frame was constructed based on population estimates from the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) Yearbook 2010.³⁵ Burma's last census was in 1983 and use of such out of date data would have led to inaccuracies.

A sample of 34 cities/townships were selected using the probability proportionate to size (PPS) method, a self-weighting method, from all of the 283 townships in the five states and seven regions included in the study. Depending on urban and rural population ratio, samples were allocated to wards and village tracts in each township. In most cases, three sampling units were selected from each township by simple random sampling method - that is by numbering all wards and village tracts and selecting a number generated randomly by a computer. Selection of these later stage clusters units was not self-weighting. This was because up-to-date population data, which is required for a self-weighting cluster design, was unavailable at the ward/village level. For village tracts, a further stage of simple random sampling was conducted to select a village. This resulted in 31 urban wards and 72 rural villages, with a total number of 102 sample points.

Households were then selected in these wards and villages by systematic random sampling. The total number of households in a selected ward/village was counted in the field, and the total number of households divided by the required sample size for that ward/village, to set an interval. A starting point in the ward/village was determined by the fieldwork team –for a village this was usually either the village entrance or a significant building such as a school, and for wards this was generally the corner of a residential block. A random number between one and the interval was generated (n) and then every ' n^{th} ' household from the starting point was sampled.

A kish grid was used at the household level to select the participant from among all members of the household aged 15+. Excluded from the kish grid were only those family members who lived elsewhere, visitors temporarily staying in the house, those who were employed by the household (such as housemaids, drivers, etc.), and those who were mentally ill. If the selected household member refused, or was not available after three call-backs by the interviewer, the household was substituted by a household randomly selected by the field supervisor.

The achieved sample is provided in the table below. Following data collection, demographic characteristics were compared to CSO Yearbook 2011 and weighting was used to correct for any significant imbalances in the sample.

³⁵ Statistical Yearbook is the only official data on population in Burma and it is prepared by Central Statistical Organization (CSO), Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development. Unfortunately Population Reference Bureau and other population data sources do not provide the regional breakdown required for sampling and weighting. Central Statistics Yearbook 2011 was used in this sampling strategy.

	Weighted %	Unweighted %	Unweighted base (n)
Age			
15-24 years	26	12	152
25-34 years	23	19	235
35-44 years	19	21	255
45+ years	32	48	582
Sex			
Male	50	45	550
Female	50	55	674
Urban/Rural location			
Urban	29	31	374
Rural	71	69	850
Education			
No schooling	9	11	137
Some primary	23	25	301
Completed primary	38	37	449
Completed secondary	22	20	240
Completed college or university	8	8	97
Literacy			
Literate in Burmese	93	91	1117
Literate in other language but not Burmese	3	3	40
Non-literate	5	5	67
Purchasing Power			
Don't have enough money even for food	10	10	127
Can buy food but not clothes	17	18	226
Can buy food and clothes, but not household appliances like a refrigerator or washing machine	53	51	627
Can buy household appliances, but not a new car	16	15	189
Can buy a new car, but not real estate	2	2	29
Can buy real estate or anything we need	1	2	22
DK	0	0	4
Ctd...			

Sample demographics continued...	Weighted %	Unweighted %	Unweighted base (n)
Region			
<i>Ayeyarwaddy Region</i>	15	15	180
<i>Bago Region</i>	13	12	144
<i>Kayin State</i>	3	3	36
<i>Magway Region</i>	9	9	108
<i>Mandalay Region</i>	17	15	180
<i>Mon State</i>	5	6	72
<i>Rakhine State</i>	6	6	72
<i>Sagaing Region</i>	11	12	144
<i>Shan State</i>	8	9	108
<i>Tanintharyi Region</i>	3	3	36
<i>Yangon Region</i>	10	12	144
Total unweighted base			1224

Appendix 2 - Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research was conducted in urban Yangon, and rural locations in Magwe, Ayeyarwady and Karen State.

In each location, focus group discussions and key informant interviews explored experiences of governance and accountability in relation to public service delivery. This included the extent to which there was demand for services; who people saw to be responsible and accountable for providing or improving those services; experience of participating in community level discussion and decision-making on issues of importance; and experience of exercising voice with authorities and others in relation to public services or other needs.

A participatory approach was taken where each group selected the service that they wished to discuss - from health, education or water and sanitation - based on what they felt was most needed in that particular community. Grounding discussions in public service delivery enabled participants to reflect more easily on their experience of engaging with governance processes on real issues, where there was real demand, rather than discussing engagement in more abstract terms.

Participants were assigned to discussion groups based on age and gender - young males, young females, older males, and older females. 15-30 year olds were assigned to 'youth' discussion groups and 30+ to the older groups. Separating age and gender in this way aimed to create a space for peer discussion that would be less influenced by social and cultural dynamics between old and young, and men and women.

Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with prominent male, female and youth figures in each location. The male key informants tended to be village elders, while female and youth key informants were mainly those involved in community development projects or active in their communities in some other way.

A total of 163 individuals participated in the qualitative component of this study.

Research Location	KII		FGD			
	Female	Male	Young Female	Older Female	Young Male	Older Male
Yangon	1	1	7	7	8	7
Magwe	1	1	10	8	16	10
Ayeyarwady	1	2	7	7	9	10
Karen	1	2	11	12	14	10
Total	4	6	69			84
	10		153			
	163					

It should be noted that the qualitative research was conducted in villages where Action Aid Fellows were already established. These young mobilisers, who are trained to support discussion among youth groups in rural villages, may have already had some significant influence (in terms generating discussion on key issues within these communities) which may

set these villages apart from the wider population in some way. However, the insights that can be gained from people confident enough to exercise voice in a research setting are invaluable in a country where so little data on the individual experience of governance exists.

Appendix 3 - Technical Detail for Segmentation Analysis

1. Identifying characteristics to segment participants

A number of different knowledge, attitude and behaviour indices were considered for the segmentation analysis. Because participants could only be segmented through a limited number of characteristics, the usefulness of the variables measuring them needed to be assessed. Usefulness was assessed by reviewing BBC Media Action's governance Theory of Change for Burma, and also using two statistical procedures - regression and collinearity tests.

Due to high levels of 'I don't know' responding with attitudinal measures, which raised concerns about the genuineness of participant responses on these questions and, therefore, the accuracy of these findings, only behavioural and factual knowledge measures were included in the analysis.

While a number of different variables were explored for the segmentation analysis, this report only covers the approach to scoring the final variables included in the model. The approach was as follows:

- *Attending ward/village administration meetings and raising an issue with a ward/village administrator* were individual measures in the survey. Participants were assigned to one of two categories for both of these measures: Has done (reported doing the action 'once' or 'more than once') and not done (reported 'never' doing the action).
- Factual political knowledge and interpersonal discussion indices were both composite scores of responses to a number of survey items. The factual political knowledge index is a composite score for 4 factual knowledge items (*knowing the length of presidential term, the three levels of parliament, name of own state/region's Chief Minister, and who elects the president*). Participants were assigned to high/low knowledge categories based on their average score across these items. The factual political knowledge scale was used instead of self-reported knowledge as it was considered a more objective measure.
- The interpersonal discussion index was a composite score on three discussion items - *discussion with family, friends or other people*. Participants were again assigned to high/low discussion categories based on their average score across these items. For both indices the mid-point of the score range was used to categorise high and low.
- For both the political knowledge and discussion indices, factor analysis (using a Principal Axis Factoring approach) was conducted to ensure criterion validity of the scales prior to creating the composite score. Collinearity diagnostics were run on both scales to ensure multi-collinearity was not an issue. Reliability analysis was run on the resulting scales to check internal reliability and ensure that adding or removing items would not improve the reliability of the scale. The factual knowledge index had a Cronbach's alpha of .758 and discussion index had a Cronbach's alpha of .708.

Logistic and multinomial regression was first used to identify key variables for segmentation. Small cell counts were a problem with this procedure, due to low levels of knowledge and participation across the board, as outlined in Section 1.3. This prompted re-categorising of many variables as binary and use of logistic regression for analysis. The logistic regression examined the relationships between the variables deemed potentially useful for segmentation and variables that were thought key to segmentation. The key variable was *raising an issue*

with local administrators and this was treated as dependent, while the other variables deemed potentially useful were treated as independent. Odds ratios, collinearity and other variable performance information were observed, and through this process variables were shortlisted for segmentation.

The final logistic regression run on the shortlisted independent variables (factual knowledge, discussion and attending meetings) found that all three variables were significant in predicting likelihood to raise issues.

2. Cluster definition

A two-step clustering approach was used because of its ability to handle binary data, and produce the most meaningful cluster results for this type of data. The distance method used was log likelihood. A meaningful four-cluster solution was identified, with membership distributed in a relatively equal manner across the groups. The silhouette measure of cohesion and separation was good (between 0.5 and 1).

Based on the profiles to be discussed, the clusters were named as follows:

- Cluster 1 (35%) - Disengaged – 100% low on knowledge, discussion, attending meetings and raising issues
- Cluster 2 (22%) - Passively Engaged - As cluster 1, but high on attending meetings
- Cluster 3 (23%) - Informally Engaged - Low on knowledge and raising issues, but high on discussion and medium on attending meetings
- Cluster 4 (20%) - Formally Engaged - Mid to high on all characteristics

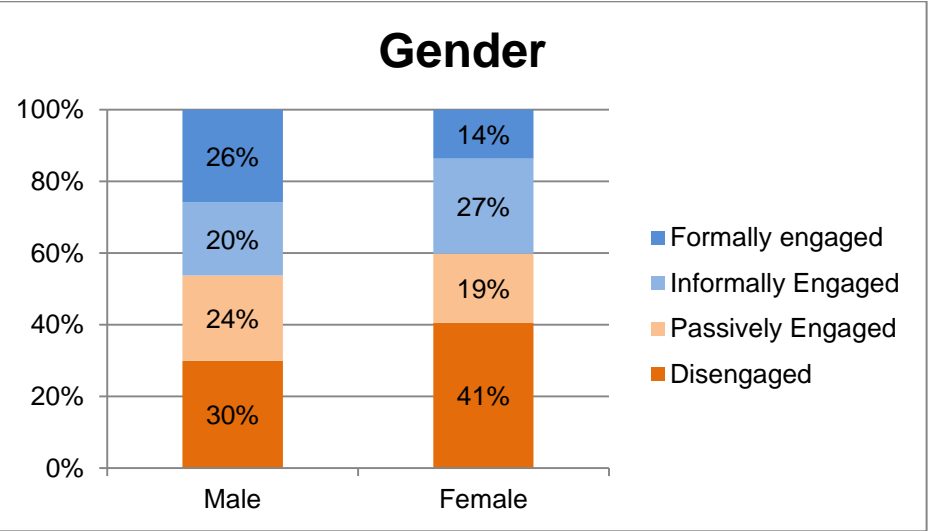
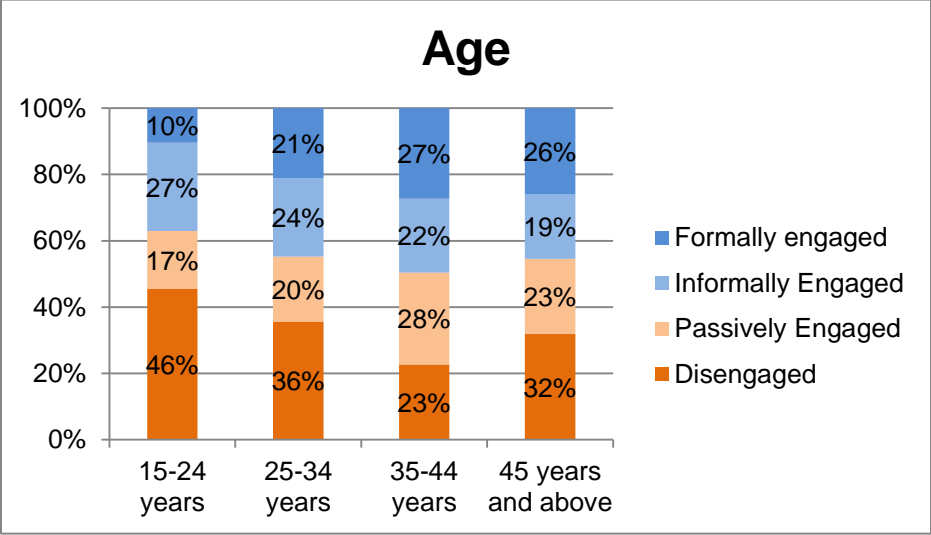
Interpersonal discussion was the predictor of highest importance, followed by attending meetings, factual knowledge and raising issues. That is, interpersonal discussion was the most important variable in cluster definition.

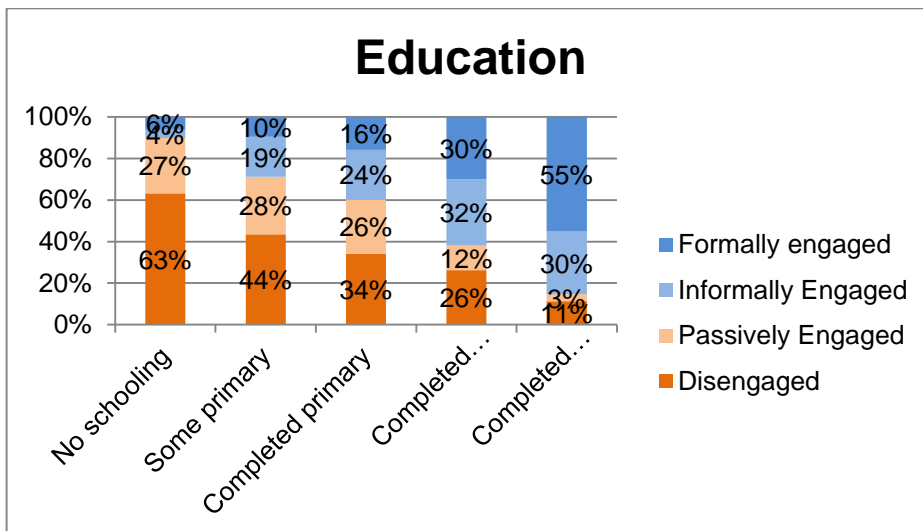
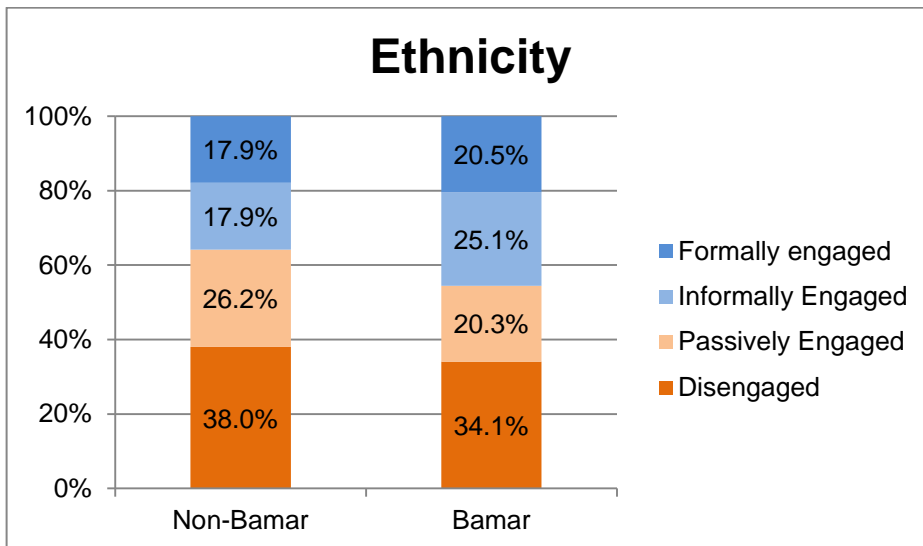
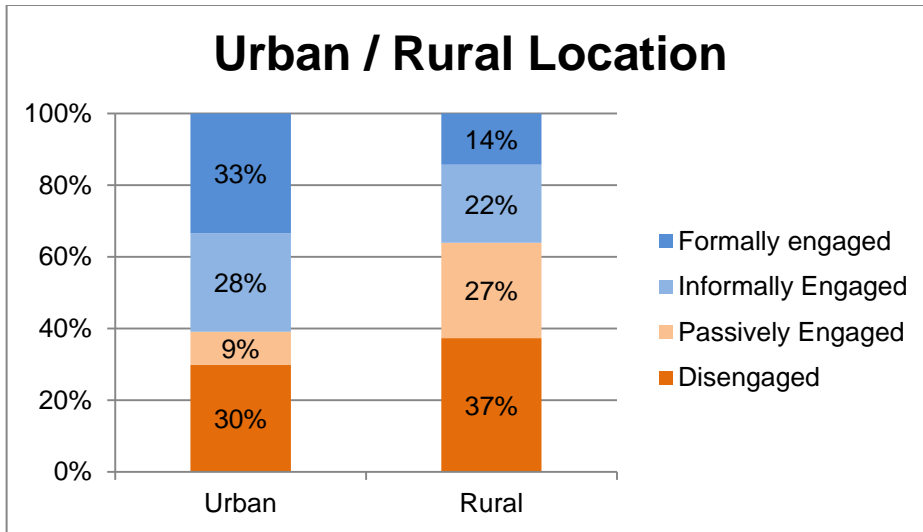
CLUSTER NAME	CHARACTERISTICS				% of sample* in this cluster:
	Political Knowledge	Interpersonal Discussion	Attends Meetings	Raises Issues	
FORMALLY ENGAGED	63% High	59% High	70% Has done	60% Has done	20%
INFORMALLY ENGAGED	100% Low	100% High	51% Has done	100% Never	23%
PASSIVELY ENGAGED	100% Low	100% Low	100% Has done	100% Never	22%
DISENGAGED	100% Low	100% Low	100% Never	100% Never	35%

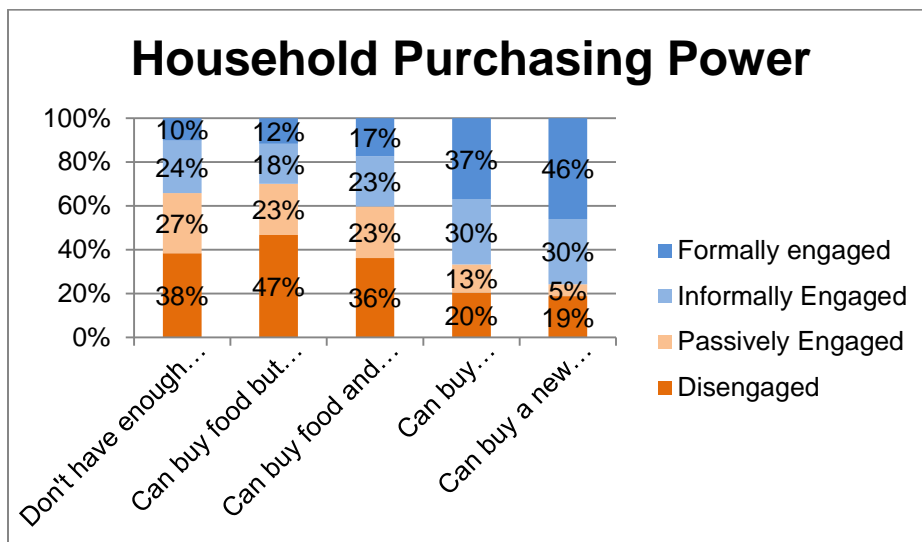
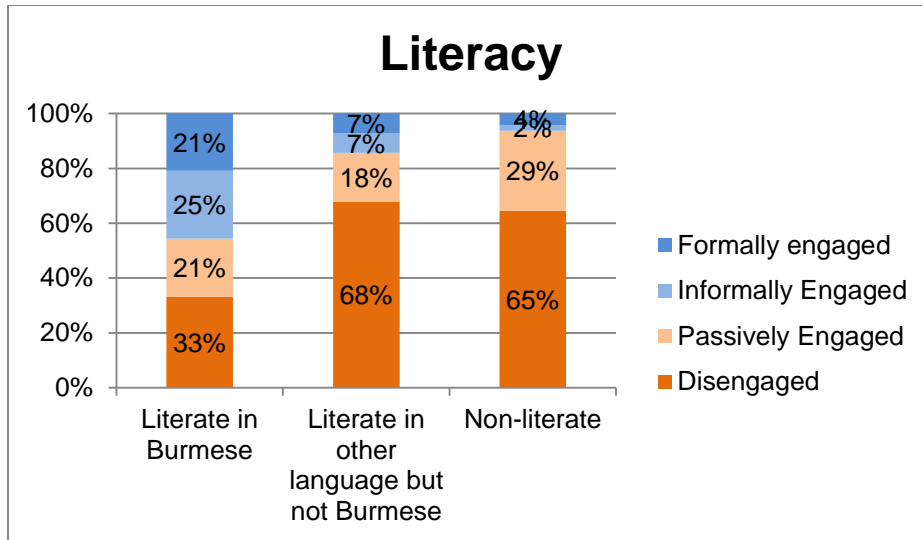
3. Demographic characteristics of clusters

The following graphs illustrate levels of group memberships across the key demographics of age, gender, urban/rural location, education and household purchasing power.

All graphs are based on a sample of n=1,168 survey participants.







Appendix 4 - Technical Detail for Regression Analysis

Multinomial logistic regression analysis was conducted to predict membership of engagement segments, using media access, age, gender, education, location, household purchasing power, literacy and ethnicity as predictors. Multinomial logistic regression was the most suitable method as the engagement segments represent a nominal variable.

The outcome variable *Engagement* was ordinal categorical with four levels (from high to low):

Variable	Categories
Engagement	1 Formally Engaged 2 Informally Engaged 3 Passively Engaged 4 Disengaged

For the predictor variables, *Age* was entered as a continuous variable. The categorical variables were as follows:

Variable	Categories
Media access	1 Regular access to one or more public service oriented media 2 Regular access to other media 3 No or non-regular access to media*
Gender	1 Male 2 Female*
Location	1 Urban 2 Rural*
Education	1 University education 2 Completed secondary 3 Completed primary 4 Some primary 5 No schooling*
Literacy	1 Literate in Bamar language 2 Literate in another language, not Bamar 3 Non-literate*
Household purchasing power	1 Don't have enough money even for food 2 Can buy food but not clothes 3 Can buy food and clothes, but not household appliances 4 Can buy household appliances, but not a new car 5 Top HPP combined [<i>Can buy a new car & Can buy real estate</i>]*
Ethnicity	1 Bamar 2 Non-Bamar (combined code for other ethnic groups)*

Note: * Indicates reference category

The last engagement category - Disengaged - was set as the reference category against which all other engagement categories were compared. This was chosen as the reference category in order to observe the extent to which media access predicted being Formally Engaged or Informally Engaged, compared with Disengaged.

Household purchasing power, literacy, and ethnicity were not found to be significant in the overall model fit and so were therefore removed from the analysis at the first stage. The remaining predictors entered into the model were age, gender, location, education and media access.

A test of the full model against a constant only model was statistically significant, indicating that the predictors as a set reliably distinguished between being Disengaged compared to the other engagement categories (chi square = 426.48, $p < .000$ with $df = 27$). Nagelkerke's R^2 of .328 indicated a moderate relationship between prediction and grouping. The model was also tested with the continuous age variable excluded (chi square = 364.36, $p < .000$ with $df = 24$). The continuous age variable was excluded because when left in, the assumptions of the Goodness of Fit test were undermined due to small cell counts. Goodness of Fit excluding age indicated a significant fit (chi square 166.96, $p < .047$).

Bootstrapping was run to ensure significance tests and standard errors (see below) were robust against violations of their assumptions. Following bootstrapping, only one change in significance levels was found.

In comparing likelihood to be Informally Engaged rather than Disengaged, the location factor (urban) was not significant in the bootstrapped model. Therefore the figures reported in Table 2 below are bootstrapped. All other results presented in Tables 1 and 3 are non-bootstrapped.

Predicting likelihood to be Formally Engaged compared with Disengaged:

The Wald test demonstrated that age, gender, education and media access made a significant contribution to prediction. Location was not a significant predictor.

For media access, the odds ratio value ($\text{Exp}(B)$) indicates that even when accounting for all other characteristics in the model (age, gender, urban/rural location, education), having regular access to public service oriented media significantly increased the likelihood of being Formally Engaged (rather than Disengaged) by **10.6 times** when compared to those who had no regular access to media. Having regular access to 'other media' increased likelihood by **2.2 times**, compared to non-regular media access.

Table 1. Formally Engaged compared with Disengaged

Predictor	Wald	p	Odds Ratio
Age	54.181	.000	1.048
Location: Urban	1.175	.278	.781
Location: Rural			
Gender: Male	16.915	.000	2.259
Gender: Female			
Education: University	31.432	.000	33.281
Education: Completed secondary	16.096	.000	7.932
Education: Completed primary	8.759	.003	4.156
Education: Some primary	1.897	.168	1.992
Education No schooling			
Media: Regular PSO access	65.771	.000	10.556
Media: Regular other access	8.310	.004	2.200
Media non-regular access			

Predicting likelihood to be Informally Engaged compared with Disengaged:

The Wald test demonstrated that age, education and media access made a significant contribution to prediction. Location and gender were not significant predictors.

For media access, the odds ratio value indicates that even when accounting for all other characteristics in the model (age, gender, urban/rural location, education), having regular access to public service oriented media significantly increased the likelihood of being Informally Engaged (rather than disengaged) by **4 times** when compared to those who had no regular access to media. Having regular access to 'other media' increased likelihood by **2 times**, compared to non-regular media access.

Table 2. Informally Engaged compared with Disengaged

Predictor	Wald	p	Odds Ratio
Age	4.367	.037	1.012
Location: Urban	1.681	.062	.796
Location: Rural			
Gender: Male	.222	.637	.923
Gender: Female			
Education: University	24.854	.000	27.532
Education: Completed secondary	21.123	.000	13.146
Education: Completed primary	16.829	.000	9.012
Education: Some primary	11.245	.001	6.127
Education No schooling			
Media: Regular PSO access	35.809	.000	4.144
Media: Regular other access	5.174	.023	1.582
Media non-regular access			

Predicting likelihood to be Formally Engaged compared with Informally Engaged:

To observe the extent to which media access predicted being Formally Engaged compared with Informally Engaged, the second engagement category - Informally Engaged - was set as the reference category against which all other engagement categories were compared. The overall model fit statistics did not change.

The Wald test demonstrated that age, gender, and media access made a significant contribution to prediction. Location and education were not significant predictors.

For media access, the odds ratio value indicates that even when accounting for all other characteristics in the model (age, gender, urban/rural location, education), having regular access to public service oriented media significantly increased the likelihood of being Formally Engaged (rather than Informally Engaged) by **3 times** when compared to those who had no regular access to media. Having regular access to 'other media' was not a significant predictor.

Table 3. Formally Engaged compared with Informally Engaged

Predictor	Wald	p	Odds Ratio
Age	29.832	.000	1.036
Location: Urban	.004	.948	1.015
Location: Rural			
Gender: Male	20.806	.000	2.446
Gender: Female			
Education: University	.067	.795	1.209
Education: Completed secondary	.531	.466	.603
Education: Completed primary	1.324	.250	.461
Education: Some primary	2.648	.104	.325
Education No schooling			
Media: Regular PSO access	10.196	.001	2.547
Media: Regular other access	1.240	.265	1.390
Media non-regular access			