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BURMA

SNAPSHOT

A local youth organization rallied to counter violence and intolerance with messages of peace.



Photo: Thet Htoo

Youth volunteers provided materials with messages of peace and tolerance in Rangoon and Mon State

"I was so proud to participate in sharing the knowledge of loving peace with others during Thingyan water festival."

*--Mo Mo,
Activity Participant*

Telling Our Story

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Fostering Peace and Tolerance

May 2013 - In the spring of 2013, conflicts between Buddhist and Muslim communities in Meiktila resulted in the death of over 40 community members, and the destruction of numerous homes and community buildings. Violence continued to spread southward, increasing concern about a widespread outbreak of violence.

In April, following these outbreaks of inter-communal violence in Burma, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) supported a local youth organization to disseminate their messages of tolerance and peace.

As the traditional water festival of *Thingyan* approached, OTI and local groups saw an opportunity to promote messages of tolerance among the large crowds that gather for the New Year celebration. OTI supported the Pandita Development Institute to share their message: "With Thingyan Water, May Peace Be with Myanmar". Thousands of stickers and bandannas emblazoned with the message and peace logo were distributed. Volunteers wore t-shirts and caps bearing the same message and toured sites where crowds gathered, distributing materials to people around Rangoon and Mawlamyine in Mon State.

"I felt more joyful this year to join the water festival than before because I learned from the campaign that peace depends on us, and it is our duty to carry the peace of our country," volunteer Wai Yan Phyoo said.

In anticipation of the campaign, the Pandita Development Institute created the Facebook page "[Peace for Myanmar](#)," which hosts an array of photographs that capture the spirit of the campaign and messages from volunteers and participants alike. "Peace for Myanmar" will continue to be a forum to distribute information about events focused on peace and tolerance around the country.

To extend outreach and leverage the quickly-expanding levels of mobile phone ownership, OTI distributed 100,000 text messages to mobile users with the same message: "With Thingyan Water, May Peace be with Myanmar." This text message was sent the day prior to the New Year celebration, ensuring that a wider audience was impacted by the peace and tolerance campaign.

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