Strengthening accountability through media in Bangladesh

Final evaluation
The report was written by Md. Arif Al Mamun, Catharine Buckell, and Gillian Kingston. The authors thank Sally Gowland, Georgina Page, Faisal Ahmed and Richard Lace for their review and input into the report. They would also like to thanks Aniqa Tasnim Hossain and Arani Reza Chowdhury for their input in the analysis.

BBC Media Action, the international development organisation of the BBC, uses the power of media and communication to support people to shape their own lives. Working with broadcasters, governments, other organisations and donors, it provides information and stimulates positive change in the areas of governance, health, resilience and humanitarian response. This broad reach helps it to inform, connect and empower people around the world. It is independent from the BBC, but shares the BBC’s fundamental values and has partnerships with the BBC World Service and local and national broadcasters that reach millions of people.

The content of this report is the responsibility of BBC Media Action. Any views expressed should not be taken to represent those of the BBC itself or of any donors supporting the work of the charity. This report was prepared thanks to funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), which supports the research and policy work of BBC Media Action.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Sanglap, what’s the story?

“You don’t find any discussion [in government] that relates to the common people and their problems; they keep on blaming each other on their own political issues.”

Female, 15–30, Barisal (rural), formative study, 2012

For many years, Bangladesh has suffered through a dysfunctional two-party system, marred by the bitter rivalry between the party leaders – dubbed the “battling begums” – and continuous boycotts, violent protests and political deadlock. In this context, BBC Media Action’s TV and radio discussion programme Sanglap (Dialogue) provided Bangladeshis with a space for balanced political debate on critical governance issues. Originally launched in 2005 and broadcast for five years with DFID funding, it came off air in 2010 and was relaunched under the DFID-funded Global Grant governance project in 2012. This was a particularly turbulent period politically, given the 2010 announcement of the establishment of the International Crimes Tribunal to prosecute accused 1971 war criminals.

Between November 2012 and March 2016, BBC Media Action produced 79 episodes of Sanglap, which were broadcast weekly on Channel i (TV) and the BBC Bangla Service (radio). BBC Media Action also provided capacity-strengthening support to Channel i and Bangladesh TV (BTV) with the view to raising standards and producing more inclusive and balanced political programming. Through this work, BBC Media Action aimed to enable citizens to participate in public dialogue, improve interactions between Bangladeshis and their leaders, and contribute to improved accountability.

Given the political challenges Bangladesh faced during the project’s lifetime – which saw the space for civil society and media voices shrink, public trust in the government decline, and political divisions deepen during the instability around the 2014 election – the need for Sanglap increased over this period. Indeed, the election was preceded by widespread political unrest, violence and national strikes that routinely brought the country to a standstill, and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party’s (BNP) boycott (which resulted in 154 of the 300 seats being uncontested) left the Awami League’s (AL) government unchecked by meaningful political opposition. As a result, demands for a re-run of the vote were high and Sanglap provided a much-needed outlet for discussion around this.

BBC Media Action conducted research throughout the project to inform its development and evaluate its impact. Five nationally representative household surveys and two qualitative studies were carried out over the course of the project. This report summarises findings from this portfolio of research to assess and understand the impact of the project in the context of the changing political context in Bangladesh.
Key findings from the research

In this difficult political period, Sanglap provided a platform for people to question and hold politicians to account. This was particularly evident in the run-up to the 2014 election, when Sanglap was able to capitalise on higher levels of interest and engagement with politics and current affairs and reached 36.2 million Bangladeshis (35% of the adult population). As disillusionment set in post-election, Sanglap’s audience reverted to its loyal, highly engaged viewers/listeners – men and those who were slightly more educated and more likely to live in an urban location than the general population.

Audience members appreciated the opportunity that Sanglap provided for Bangladeshis to directly question authority figures about the issues affecting their lives. At endline, 91% agreed that the programme had brought issues that mattered to ordinary citizens to the attention of government officials, and 83% agreed that Sanglap had pushed such officials to provide information about their decisions or actions. Audiences also praised the show’s authenticity and political balance – a particularly valuable attribute during the climate of media self-censorship that emerged in Bangladesh in 2015 – and the way the programme facilitated constructive discussion between opposing political actors.

While Sanglap’s audience reported higher levels of knowledge on key governance issues than those not exposed to the show, the association was not significant when controlling for other factors that might influence this outcome. Nonetheless, Sanglap’s audience reported that they felt informed about key governance issues and that the programme covered these issues in depth. In 2015, the smaller but more loyal and engaged audience was more likely to agree that the show had improved their knowledge compared with the broader audience reached in 2014. Qualitative research, meanwhile, found that Sanglap had strengthened audiences’ understanding of issues and knowledge of how to question their leaders.

Sanglap also contributed to Bangladeshis being more engaged in politics. Compared with non-viewers/listeners, those that tuned into Sanglap regularly discussed politics more with friends and family, were more confident to engage in politics, and participated more in governance-related activities – all factors that support bottom-up accountability. This finding held true even after taking into account other factors that might influence these outcomes (such as education, age and interest in politics). Perhaps unsurprisingly, in a country where women tend to be less interested in politics and face social barriers to active participation in politics, the association between exposure to Sanglap and political participation was much stronger for men.

Audiences also recognised that the programme itself was an important mechanism for accountability. It showcased people’s views from around the country, provided objective moderation, and covered sensitive topics in turbulent political times.

However, the extent to which Sanglap contributed to any increase in the perceived responsiveness of leaders is less clear. While audiences felt that the show informed them of the ways they could question their leaders and inspired them to act, they remained less positive about government responsiveness and the account provided by those in power.
I. INTRODUCTION

This report presents a synthesis of all research and analysis completed under the Global Grant governance project in Bangladesh between 2012 and 2016. Its main focus is the evaluation of the project’s impact on development outcomes among audiences and media partners (media practitioners and organisations). Based on this evaluation, the report reflects on the impact the project has had on the broader governance system and, in particular, on improving accountability. Where relevant, this report draws on formative research and monitoring data collected throughout the project, as well as relevant data from external sources. More detail on the research strategy and methodologies used can be found in section 2.

The report unfolds as follows. Section 1 summarises the project including the background, the governance and media context of the country and the project’s objectives and activities; section 2 describes the research approach; section 3 presents and discusses the evaluation’s findings; and section 4 offers some final conclusions.

1.1 Project background

Bangladesh is a country marred by many years of political turmoil and widespread poverty, a situation compounded by extreme weather events that afflict the country on an almost annual basis. Despite what could often be described as “dysfunctional” political leadership, Bangladesh has made significant progress over recent decades in terms of improving the basic condition of people’s lives, including huge gains in education and health indicators. However, in 2012 (as it does today), Bangladesh still faced significant governance challenges. These included: a lack of government accountability and transparency, weak rule of law, corruption that permeated all branches of state and society, arbitrary restriction of key freedoms, a lack of protection of basic rights, and political polarisation that frequently erupted into political instability and violence.

The Global Grant project was implemented during a particularly turbulent period in Bangladesh’s modern political history. The beginning of the project coincided with the prosecution of several political leaders as part of Bangladesh’s International Crimes Tribunal, which had been established to investigate and prosecute suspected war criminals from 1971. During the course of the project, Bangladesh witnessed: both the polarisation and radicalisation of party politics; a stalemate between the two main parties characterised by accusations, threats and refusal to compromise; multiple instances of civilian protest, clashes and violence; a shrinking space for civil society and media voices; and a steady decline of public trust in the government and in electoral processes, the latter particularly arising following violence and the exposure of fraud during sub-district and city corporation elections.

Political divisions deepened during the political instability around the controversial January 2014 parliamentary election. The election was preceded by widespread political unrest, violence and national strikes that routinely brought the country to a standstill, and the BNP’s boycott (which resulted in 154 of the 300 seats being uncontested) left the AL government unchecked by meaningful political opposition.

Political discourse was confrontational and largely personality-led, with the leaders of the two main political parties – the AL and the BNP – frequently vying for attention rather than
seeking constructive dialogue and compromise. Such polarisation between the main political parties resulted in the country being characterised by a “winner takes all” political culture in which public policy was often created and implemented through a top-down approach (without public consultation) and policy-makers operated a culture of “blame game” politics that evaded issues affecting ordinary people’s lives, sensationalised issues in order to score political points, and inflamed political debate. This dynamic also increased the risk of political instability. Opposition parties often made reflexive use of protest, mobilising hartals (strikes) and organising parliamentary boycotts to exert political influence when not in government. This approach frequently led to violent clashes.

The political environment in Bangladesh, combined with the lack of opportunities (both within and beyond the media) for Bangladeshis from all sections of society to interact with those in power, resulted in a very real need for more inclusive accountability mechanisms. Formative research respondents – ordinary citizens and experts alike – felt that greater accountability was needed and could be realised if a political culture shift occurred that saw public consultations on new policies, and politicians responsive to citizens’ needs, become commonplace. Research respondents listed their key concerns as including price hikes in daily commodities, relationships with neighbouring countries, the poor quality of education and the healthcare system, political unrest, absence of integrity among politicians, poor infrastructure and radicalisation. Their reported knowledge around these, and other, governance-related issues (particularly poverty, unemployment, entitlement to public services, and how government turns policies into action) was low, especially among women and those living in rural areas.

Until fairly recently, Bangladesh’s media sector had been entirely monopolised by the state. A boom in the print and broadcast markets – that saw the advent of community radio, as well as cable and satellite TV reach rural areas, and the mass penetration of mobile phones – enhanced the diversity of information sources. And, the 2009 Right to Information Act, which made it mandatory for public and private offices to disclose information to citizens, signalled a new government commitment to media freedom and to upholding the constitution. Despite this, in 2012 Bangladesh’s media was failing to play an effective role as a government watchdog; it was not providing a platform for ordinary people to discuss political issues or challenge the government. Increasing clampdowns on some of the media outlets daring to criticise politicians and policy decisions, as well as rumours of a restrictive new National Broadcasting Policy, had no doubt contributed to this situation.

Nonetheless, and reflecting the growth of the media sector, nearly all Bangladeshis had access to some form of media in 2012 and over the course of the Global Grant project. Throughout this period, television remained the most widely accessed media platform and overall internet penetration remained relatively low. Figure 1 tracks Bangladeshis’ access to TV, radio, mobile phones and the internet over the project timeframe.
1.2 Project objectives

Against this backdrop, at its inception in 2012, the project in Bangladesh was designed to address two main sets of identified governance needs. Firstly, the need for greater public understanding of political and governance issues and increased dialogue with power holders – this was particularly important for marginalised groups that had traditionally been under-represented in such discussions. Secondly, the need for higher-quality and more balanced governance radio and television programmes.

BBC Media Action sought to work with mass media to address these challenges, based on the premise that the availability of timely, accessible and relevant information plays a key role in shaping people’s knowledge and understanding of a wide range of governance issues, which can in turn contribute to higher levels of efficacy and participation, both necessary (if insufficient) drivers of accountability.

The overall objectives of the Global Grant governance project in Bangladesh were to:
1. Increase the diversity of people engaged in public dialogue on governance issues
2. Increase direct interaction of ordinary people with politicians and policy-makers
3. Increase public knowledge on key governance issues
4. Increase the capacity of journalists and media practitioners employed by partner TV stations to produce more balanced and inclusive political discussion programmes
5. Improve the quality of consultations between the public and policy-makers on key governance issues

The intended cumulative outcome of the project was that 'more Bangladeshis believe in their right to question policy-makers and are better equipped to proactively participate in the policy decisions that affect their lives', thereby contributing to more accountable state–society relations and governance in Bangladesh.

**BBC Media Action’s governance approach**

BBC Media Action’s governance work aims to support more accountable, peaceful and inclusive states and societies. This is based on the view that the lack of government accountability, the presence of conflict and political and social exclusion can prevent people from living safely and freely, and from exercising their rights.

These factors can act as significant barriers to equitable development. Accountable and inclusive governance can contribute to poverty reduction and the creation of more equal societies. BBC Media Action posits that, as an institutional driver of accountability, the media can directly hold those in power to account by acting as a watchdog over leaders and setting the agenda around certain issues. The media can also indirectly hold those in power to account by equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills and confidence to participate in public life and question power holders to demand and enforce accountability.

In 2012, BBC Media Action developed an **accountability conceptual model** that posited that media can influence a range of individual and collective drivers of accountability that, in turn, reinforce each other. The individual drivers in the conceptual model have been distilled into five key constructs that are operationalised and measured in BBC Media Action’s research. These are: **political knowledge**, **political participation**, **discursive participation** (discussion), **interest in politics** and **political efficacy**.

Through influencing these outcomes, BBC Media Action conceives that media can empower citizens to hold their governments accountable.

The Global Grant governance research programme was developed to explore both direct and indirect influences of BBC Media Action’s programming, enabling the organisation to critically reflect on and adapt assumptions underpinning its work.

The project’s **theory of change**, which was built on BBC Media Action’s governance approach, is detailed in figure 2. This remained largely unchanged throughout the five years of the project, as the needs in the country were relatively constant with regards to poor transparency and accountability. If anything, the suitability of the theory of change improved following the controversial 2014 parliamentary election, when the need for greater transparency and accountability intensified.
1.3 Project activities

To achieve these objectives, the project centred on several key activities and outputs. These included the production of a national accountability-focused discussion programme and partnerships with media organisations to strengthen their capacity. All project components, as well as key national events that took place throughout the project, are depicted in figure 3.
Figure 3: Bangladesh Global Grant project’s timeline

- **DEC 2008**: Return to democratic government
- **MAR 2009**: Right to Information Act passes
- **FEB 2013**: Shahbagh movement
- **APR 2013**: Rana Plaza collapse
- **JUL 2013**: Mayoral elections

**2012**

- **PRE-2012**: Project launches, resuming earlier UK aid-funded debate and discussion programme, Sanglap, on air since 2005

**2013**

- **JUL 2013**: Baseline survey
- **JUL 2013**: Formative study – in-depth interviews and focus group discussions
- **JUL 2013**: Midline qualitative study – focus group discussions
- **JUL 2013**: Three mayoral election-focused Nirbachoni Sanglap episodes air

**2014**

- **JAN 2014**: General election
- **JAN 2014**: Unable to travel outside Daka much to film Sanglap due to strikes
- **JUN 2014**: Reach survey

**2015**

- **JAN 2015**: Bangladesh Nationalist Party declares a nationwide hartal
- **FEB 2015**: Blogger Avijit Roy killed
- **SEP 2015**: Third season of Sanglap ends
- **MAY–JUN 2015**: Endline survey

**2016**

- **MAY–JUN 2015**: Reach survey
- **SEP 2015**: Midline survey
- **APR–MAY 2013**: Reach survey
- **SEP–OCT 2012**: Baseline survey
- **JUL–OCT 2012**: Formative study – in-depth interviews and focus group discussions
- **JUL–OCT 2012**: Midline qualitative study – focus group discussions
1.3.1 Discussion programme: Sanglap

The project’s key output was the production of the third season of BBC Bangla Service’s Sanglap programme that was broadcast nationally on TV and radio. The debate show originally aired between 2005 and 2010, and was relaunched under the Global Grant project. It aimed to provide an inclusive platform for Bangladeshis to question their leaders on issues affecting them and their community. Produced in partnership with the BBC Bengali Service, the third season was founded on the premise that empowerment of ordinary people, by allowing them to engage directly with policy-makers in a constructive dialogue, is key to increasing genuine accountability.

Sanglap featured a moderated discussion between a live panel of officials and an audience of ordinary Bangladeshis. To ensure that the programme featured a broad spectrum of citizens, the production team travelled throughout the country, recording episodes – and recruiting live audiences – in all divisional headquarters and major districts. For each episode, BBC Bengali Service editors selected questions from those submitted by audiences and audience members asked these directly to the panel. The show followed this format until the run-up to the 2014 parliamentary election, when increasing political unrest and frequent hartals (strike action) hindered travel and resulted in more episodes being recorded in the capital, Dhaka, than originally planned. Nonetheless, Sanglap continued to ensure that it recruited a balanced studio audience in terms of the age groups, genders, socio-economic backgrounds and political views represented.

Although some episodes of Sanglap were initially intended to focus on specific thematic issues, an editorial decision was taken early in the project to ensure that the show remained responsive to a fast-moving governance environment by centring on issues of national concern in each episode. The issues featured in the episodes included: the International Crimes Tribunal, the Shahbagh and Hefazat movements, mayoral elections, the Rana Plaza building collapse, pre-election violence, political abduction and extra-judicial killings. Episodes also often tapped into public sentiment on wider issues stemming from these specific events. For example, the Rana Plaza episode captured public discontent with working conditions. Notably, pre-election Sanglap episodes focused on current affairs as these were the most relevant governance issues to the country.

Additionally, the Bangladesh Electoral Commission requested that BBC Media Action produce three special episodes — Nirbachoni Sanglap (Election Dialogue) — in advance of the July 2013 mayoral elections. Each episode featured a live audience of around 200 Bangladeshis, with mayoral candidates comprising the panel. The episodes gave voters an opportunity to ask mayoral candidates, in person, about their manifestos and their plans for improving voters’ lives.

During the course of the project, BBC Media Action and BBC Bangla Service co-produced a total of 79 Sanglap episodes that were broadcast weekly in Bengali on Channel i (TV) and the BBC Bangla Service (radio). The three Nirbachoni Sanglap episodes aired live on national broadcasters BTV and Bangladesh Betar (radio). All TV episodes were available on Sanglap’s YouTube channel and the programme was also active on social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter). Sanglap was additionally supplemented by a complementary 15-minute-long phone-in radio programme, which invited radio listeners to call and further discuss the topics raised during the last Sanglap episode.
1.3.2 Capacity strengthening with media partners
While Bangladesh’s media sector was well established at the outset of the project, there was a clear need for it to take on more responsibility for acting as a governance watchdog. The project aimed to address this through supporting TV journalists and media practitioners to raise standards and produce more inclusive and balanced political programming.

To achieve this, BBC Media Action provided ongoing mentoring and on-the-job training for Channel i crew members, as well as camera training for BTV staff working on Nirbachoni Sanglap. In 2014, BBC Media Action also delivered two one-day-long workshops for moderators and producers from a number of TV stations that focused on the editorial standards, balanced panel and moderation needed to produce a high-quality political debate show.

Although capacity strengthening was an important objective of the project, research was not carried out to evaluate its impact and, as such, an evaluation of the capacity-strengthening activities is not included in this report.
2. RESEARCH

Research was a core component of the project in Bangladesh and was implemented by BBC Media Action’s Research and Learning group. The programme of research was designed to:

• Inform project activities
• Monitor results and report to the aggregate-level Global Grant logframe
• Evaluate the project against country-specific objectives and key individual outcomes (such as knowledge, discussion, efficacy and political participation) based on BBC Media Action’s governance approach

Over the course of the project, BBC Media Action undertook five nationally representative quantitative surveys, as well as two qualitative studies.

The quantitative surveys, conducted in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015, focused on measuring audience-level indicators. These included the key monitoring indicators of reach,\(^1\) impact\(^2\) and outcome\(^3\) – that were used to report to the aggregate Global Grant logframe each year\(^4\) – as well as standardised measures linked to BBC Media Action’s conceptual models of the pathways and drivers of change in relation to accountability. These included knowledge, attitudes, discussion, political efficacy, political participation and perceptions of accountability.\(^{xvi}\) The surveys also tracked key issues affecting Bangladeshis (both at the national and local level), trust in governance institutions and sources of information, media access and consumption, and socio-demographic characteristics. An overview of the quantitative surveys undertaken under the Bangladesh Global Grant governance project is provided in table 1.

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1 Reach is defined as: all those who report having seen or listened to BBC Media Action governance programming within the last 12 months at the point of data collection.

2 The impact indicator is defined as: the percentage of people reached by BBC Media Action accountability-focused programming who strongly agree that the programme plays a role in holding government to account.

3 The outcome indicator is defined as: the percentage of people reached by BBC Media Action governance programmes who agree that the programmes have increased their knowledge on a range of governance issues either ‘a lot’ or ‘a bit’.

4 The Global Grant logframe is the monitoring framework to which all countries within the Global Grant report annually. The logframe includes the key indicators of reach, outcome and impact (defined above) that were measured annually, as well as other key indicators related to project outputs.
A range of quantitative analysis methods were undertaken to explore data collected across these studies. This includes basic descriptive analysis\(^5\) and tracking of trends over time, and regression modelling to compare key outcomes (such as improved knowledge and increased political participation) between those exposed to Sanglap and those not exposed — testing the impact of the programme on audiences while controlling for potential confounding factors such as age, education levels or location.

Alongside this, qualitative studies were conducted throughout the project to both shape the project and to explore the impact of Sanglap on audiences in more nuanced ways than quantitative analysis allows, and to attempt to understand if and why change in governance outcomes occurred. Table 2 provides an overview of the two qualitative studies completed under the Global Grant governance project in Bangladesh.

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\(^5\) To test whether differences between groups (including between those exposed and those not exposed to BBC Media Action programming) were significant, significance testing was carried out using a T-test. Throughout this report, only differences between two ‘groups’ where \(p \leq 0.05\) are reported as significant.
Table 2: Overview of qualitative research studies

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<th>Study</th>
<th>Data collection</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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| Formative study        | July – October 2012 | 20 in-depth interviews with experts 19 focus group discussions (FGDs) with audiences | Experts: policy-makers, influencers and critics Audiences: female and young (aged 15–30) cable and satellite viewers in four divisions of the country | • Provide useful insight into Bangladeshis’ framing and prioritisation of issues that affect them in their daily lives  
• Provide useful insight into Bangladeshis’ understanding of accountability and processes for public consultation on policy-making  
• Provide useful insight into why some Bangladeshis do not watch/listen to governance discussion programmes  
• Gather information for the design of the baseline study |
| Midline qualitative study | July 2013 | 12 FGDs with audience members | People exposed to Sanglap (a mix of rural and urban, men and women from a range of socio-economic backgrounds across Chittagong, Dhaka and Rajshahi) | Explore the impact of exposure to Sanglap to:  
• Inform ongoing project development  
• Collect insights and qualitative evidence on how Sanglap is contributing to people’s knowledge, and changes in attitudes and behaviour |

A member of the live studio audience asks a question during the filming of Sanglap
This report synthesises findings from the programme of research outlined above and presents the findings as an evaluation of the Global Grant governance project in Bangladesh.

**Research strengths and limitations**

This report utilises both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the extent to which the project has achieved its objectives and, within this, the relationship between exposure to BBC Media Action programming and key governance outcomes. It is not the aim here to describe individual groups or factors in detail, but instead to identify patterns that can aid in understanding the influence of BBC Media Action’s project activities.

A series of validity checks were implemented throughout the research process to ensure that data collection and analysis were rigorous and robust. All quantitative samples were fielded to be nationally representative in order to create a cross-sectional snapshot of the population at one point in time. Data was cleaned and weighted to account for any errors or limitations in data collection. Advanced statistical methods were used to analyse the relationship between exposure to BBC Media Action programming and governance outcomes of interest as accurately as possible.

Nevertheless, limitations of the research should be considered when interpreting the findings detailed in this report. Primarily, it is not possible to control for the effects of all variables that may influence the outcome in question. For example, when analysing political participation, analysis does not account for broad contextual factors such as the political environment, personal motivation, or distance to a polling station. The measures used were often self-reported and, therefore, may have been prone to response bias. For example, many questions rely on a respondent’s perception of how much they know about politics. Results should be interpreted with this in mind. Moreover, analysis does not identify the direction of an association (whether one thing (i.e. exposure) comes before the other (i.e. participation)). In sum, causation cannot be inferred from this analysis – significant findings demonstrate a relationship between two variables, but do not suggest that one causes the other.

Finally, because survey data is cross-sectional, change in outcomes over time may be due to a change at the population level, as opposed to change as a result of exposure to the programme. Analysis among those not exposed to BBC Media Action programming over time provides insight into population-level changes and results are interpreted with this in mind.

To account for some of these limitations, a mixed methods research approach has been used, and qualitative methods have been utilised alongside surveys to strengthen and validate findings, where appropriate. While qualitative methods do not provide numbers or nationally representative findings, they provide a more in-depth understanding of engagement, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours, and why and how change does or does not happen. When brought together these findings provide a more holistic account of the relationship between exposure to BBC Media Action programming and governance outcomes.
3. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The following sections outline findings from the evaluation of the project. This includes performance against headline indicators monitored throughout the project, a breakdown of the reach of Sanglap, feedback on audience engagement with the programme, and evaluation of the impact of the programme on key outcomes related to governance.

3.1 Headline indicators

Figure 4: What did the project achieve?

Definitions:

- **Adult population**: Those aged 15 years and above
- **Potential audience**: All those who report having access to TV, radio or the internet in the household or elsewhere
- **Audiences reached**: Those who report having seen/listened to Sanglap within the last 12 months at the point of data collection
- **Audiences regularly reached**: Those who report having seen/listened to at least every other episode of Sanglap within the last 12 months at the point of data collection
- **Outcome**: The percentage of Sanglap viewers/listeners who agree that the programme increased their knowledge on a range of governance issues ('a lot' or 'a bit')
- **Impact**: The percentage of Sanglap viewers/listeners who ‘strongly agree’ that the programme played a role in holding government to account

Note: figures exclude those who answered ‘don’t know’ and those who did not answer
3.2 Audience reach and profile

Key insights

- Sanglap reached an estimated cumulative audience of 40.7 million Bangladeshis over the course of the project.
- Sanglap successfully capitalised on higher levels of interest and engagement with politics and current affairs surrounding the 2014 election – its audience peaked that year, with 36.2 million people (35% of the adult population) tuning in.
- By 2015, Sanglap’s audience had fallen to 12.1 million people (12% of the adult population). This post-election drop in reach reflected a pattern seen in earlier Sanglap seasons and across other similar governance programmes on air that year.
- Overall, the project achieved limited success in reaching an audience that was representative of the population. This was most pronounced in 2015, when Sanglap’s audience was significantly more likely to be male, urban and educated.

3.2.1 Reach of the programme

One of the main advantages of media and communications-based interventions is the level of scale that can be achieved through the broadcast media. As such, reach (the number of people who watch or listen to a programme) is one of the key measures of a project’s success (though it is certainly not the only measure of success). In order to achieve the broadest reach possible, Sanglap was broadcast on national radio and television platforms.

Over the course of the project, Sanglap was watched or listened to by an estimated 40.7 million Bangladeshis cumulatively. The programme secured a peak audience in 2014 (the year in which the general election was held), reaching 36.2 million people (35% of the adult population). Sanglap’s reach declined significantly in 2015, reaching just 12.1 million (12%) adults overall. This is depicted in figure 5.

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4 Estimated cumulative reach refers to the number of people who have been reached in Bangladesh by BBC Media Action's governance programming over the lifetime of the project, acknowledging an amount of churn in programme audiences year-on-year. Cumulative reach is calculated using an assumption that 10% of the audience are new listeners/viewers within existing audiences year-on-year. More detail on the cumulative reach calculation can be found in appendix 1.
Sanglap’s widespread reach in 2013 and 2014, followed by the significant decline in 2015, may reflect the political context in Bangladesh at the time. In the lead-up to a controversial 2014 election, interest in political issues and current affairs was high: 70% of Bangladeshis reported being somewhat or very interested in these topics (see figure 6). In the post-election period of 2015, when the country was in the midst of a volatile political environment, many Bangladeshis reported feeling disillusioned with politics and current affairs. Indeed, as figure 6 shows, only 54% of respondents reported being somewhat or very interested in these topics in 2015. This pattern of post-election decline in viewership was also observed in Bangladesh around the 2008 general election. The first two seasons of Sanglap achieved significantly greater reach in the run-up to that election (21 million viewers in 2008), followed by a return to a more modest level of reach afterwards (11 million in 2009).³⁷

Sources: 2013 reach (n=3,440), 2014 reach (n=2,599) and 2015 endline (n=2,650) surveys. Note: the 2013 reach figure includes those that tuned into the three Nirbachoni Sanglap episodes, but the 2013 regular reach measure does not as these episodes were one-offs.

Sources: 2013 baseline (n=5,620), 2014 midline (n=3,555) and 2015 endline (n=2,650) surveys. Note: the differences seen at endline, compared with baseline and midline, were significant at p≤0.05.

³⁷ The reach figures between 2005 and 2010 used the ‘ever reached’ definition rather than the Global Grant reach definition of reached in the past 12 months. Therefore, any direct comparison between these and Global Grant reach figures should be treated with caution.
BBC Media Action recognises that watching or listening to a programme once is unlikely to affect outcomes and that detectable impact requires frequent engagement with programme outputs. As such, it is hypothesised that those who watch or listen to BBC Media Action programming regularly are more likely to demonstrate impact as a result of the intervention. Despite its declining annual reach overall, each year more than half of those reached by Sanglap tuned into at least every second episode. Indeed, at its peak in 2014, 19.7 million (20% of the adult population) watched or listened regularly, and in 2015 8.8 million (9% of the adult population) did the same.

Throughout the project, television was the main platform through which Sanglap’s audience accessed the programme. Only a small proportion of the overall audience tuned in via radio (1.6 million people in 2015), and a similarly small number reported listening to the associated phone-in programme (the programme reached just 1 million adults in 2015).

### 3.2.2 Audience profile

A key objective of the project was to create a national and inclusive conversation that engaged all Bangladeshis in national democratic processes. As such, Sanglap aimed to reach and engage an audience that was representative of the country’s diverse population. In particular, the project aimed to reach the most marginalised members of society, who are often left out of national discussion and debate as a result of being poor or lacking education, or because of their ethnicity, age (youth aged 15–24) or gender (women).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engaging diverse audiences</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During the production of Sanglap, various efforts were made to ensure that the programme appealed to a diverse and nationally representative audience. One way the production team tried to achieve this was by filming a number of episodes in a range of locations, with 29 of the total 130 episodes recorded outside of the show’s main recording location in Dhaka.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In order to appeal to female audiences, two episodes specifically focused on women’s participation in politics; one of these featured an all-female panel and audience, and a female presenter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general, the production team tried to ensure that at least one member of the panel was a woman. This resulted in an average female representation on Sanglap’s panel of 30%. The production team also screened applications to participate in the programme’s studio audience and carefully monitored audience recruitment to ensure the presence of women. This resulted in an average female representation of 44%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The programme also tried to represent youth audiences, achieving an average youth representation of 57% in Sanglap’s live studio audience over the course of the project.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Overall, Sanglap’s regular audience represented a broad spectrum of the Bangladeshi population in terms of age and income. However, despite the production team’s efforts to achieve diversity, the show’s audience was disproportionately male, urban and more educated than the general population (see figure 7).  

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8 National population statistics are based on the overall survey sample (which is nationally representative).
Figure 7: How representative is BBC Media Action’s audience?

When Endline data was collected, Mymensingh was part of the Dhaka region. Therefore reach and population figures represent the Dhaka region, inclusive of Mymensingh. Mymensingh was officially created in September 2015, after Endline data collection had concluded.

No respondents interviewed for the 2015 endline survey identified themselves as being in the highest financial well-being (income) category (‘no financial difficulties’). This is an anomaly in the sample, as opposed to a true reflection of the proportion of the population that falls into this category.
Over the course of the project, the proportion of women in Sanglap’s regular audience declined – falling from 29% in 2014 to just 17% in 2015. The challenge of attracting regular female audience members may reflect the fact that women in Bangladesh tend to be less politically engaged than men: in 2015, 40% of women reported being interested in politics compared with 67% of men.

Attracting an audience that was representative in terms of location also proved to be challenging throughout the project, but particularly in the post-election year. In 2014, rural inhabitants accounted for 65% of regular viewers and listeners (compared with 77% of the Bangladeshi population) and, by 2015, this had fallen to 60%.

The fact that Sanglap was able to attract a broader audience in 2014 may reflect the heightened interest in politics – even among those traditionally less interested in politics – during a national election, which reverts back to the usual level post-election. This would suggest that Sanglap’s ‘traditional’ audience was that observed in 2015; that is, male, urban inhabitants who are often the most politically engaged.

BBC Media Action has also observed similar disparities in political engagement between men and women in several other countries where governance programmes have been broadcast as part of the wider Global Grant activities.
3.2.3 Reach in a competitive landscape

Within a relatively competitive media landscape in which a number of programmes address governance issues, **Sanglap** was unique in featuring a large studio audience whose members were invited to put questions directly to a balanced panel. This aspect of **Sanglap** may have helped it to attract a higher number of viewers and listeners during the lead-up to the elections in Bangladesh in 2014 than its competitors: it reached 32% of the adult population compared with its competitors’ reach of between 14% and 24% of the adult population (see figure 8).

**Figure 8: Competitor programme reach (2014 and 2015)**

![Figure 8: Competitor programme reach (2014 and 2015)](image)

Sources: 2014 reach (n=2,600) and 2015 endline (n=2,650) surveys.
Although each of the competitor programmes measured in 2015 also experienced a decline in their overall audiences in the post-election period, the fall in reach was most pronounced for Sanglap. Nevertheless, in 2015 Sanglap continued to provide a platform for citizens to hold senior leaders from both major political parties to account. This was despite political turmoil and the pressure on media outlets to self-censor.

Comparative analysis of the audience profile of competitor programmes suggests that, in 2015, these shows attracted a higher proportion of female viewers than Sanglap, with women making up between 24% (Tritiyo Matra) and 27% (Gol Table) of their overall audiences. While women were still under-represented in each of these programmes’ audiences, they were less so than in Sanglap’s audience in the final year of the project, when just 17% of its audience was female. However, Sanglap was more successful in reaching other marginalised groups, for example those in the lowest income categories: 7% of Sanglap’s audience came from this group, compared with between 4% (Tritiyo Matra) and 3% (Gol Table and Ajker Bangladesh) of its competitors’ audiences. Sanglap was also on par with these programmes in terms of how representative it was of young people and those with the lowest levels of education.

### 3.3 Engagement with the programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key insights</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Audience members appreciated the high-quality, balanced discussion achieved on Sanglap and noted that the programme was unique in featuring constructive discussion between opposing political actors</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issues that mattered to ordinary Bangladeshis to the attention of government officials, and 83% agreed that Sanglap had pushed such officials to provide information about their decisions or actions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Viewers and listeners reflected positively on the opportunity that Sanglap provided for ordinary citizens to directly question authority figures about the issues affecting their lives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience members praised Sanglap’s authenticity and political balance – a particularly valuable attribute during the climate of media self-censorship that emerged in Bangladesh in 2015</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ninety-one per cent of Sanglap’s audience agreed that it had brought</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through the discussion programme Sanglap, the Global Grant governance project in Bangladesh aimed to support individuals and communities across the country to become better informed about, and more engaged in, governance. Specifically, it sought to create a national and inclusive conversation and debate on governance. The programme was designed to increase Bangladeshis’ engagement and interaction with political leaders by raising awareness of, and encouraging people to discuss and seek out information about, the key governance issues affecting the country. The following section explores how and why audiences engaged with Sanglap, and looks at their perspectives on the programme.
Representative voice – hearing ‘people like me’ on Sanglap

A central objective of the project was to increase the diversity of views shared in public fora, and to ensure that discussion and debate of politics was inclusive of all Bangladeshis. Sanglap aimed to achieve these objectives by featuring a diverse live audience and panel, which would provide an opportunity for people from all sections of Bangladeshi society to express their views on key issues.

BBC Media Action’s 2015 endline survey revealed that 93% of Sanglap’s audience agreed that the programme provided an opportunity for ‘people like them’ to question government officials about their decisions and actions (of whom, 44% strongly agreed). Results from the 2013 midline qualitative study suggested that this feature of Sanglap represented a unique contribution to the media landscape in Bangladesh; audience members explained that Sanglap’s format – particularly its inclusion of people from all socio-economic classes in its studio audience and the opportunity it provided for them to directly question panellists – set it apart from other governance programmes.

“Ordinary people of different classes can participate here, which makes Sanglap different and more participatory than other talk shows.”

Female, 31–45, Rajshahi (urban), midline qualitative study, 2013

Facilitating balanced, audience-driven discussion

A key element of the programme was the portrayal of high-quality discussion of governance issues that was constructive and audience-driven. Audience members commented that Sanglap had facilitated such a discussion, in particular achieving balance between panellists representing contrasting political standpoints. They viewed this as an especially beneficial contribution to Bangladesh’s media landscape, and contrasted Sanglap with the more combative, less constructive tone adopted by competitor political programmes.

“In other talk shows they [the panellists from the two top parties] only quarrel with each other, but in Sanglap their real faces are seen in the presence of another two panellists and the people.”

Male, 31–45, Chittagong (rural), midline qualitative study, 2013

Viewers and listeners also explained that Sanglap successfully brought issues to the attention of political leaders and helped citizens to hold officials to account. At endline, 83% of respondents agreed that Sanglap had pushed such officials to provide information about their decisions or actions, and audience members praised the authenticity of the information provided during the show.

Sanglap’s role as a platform for politically balanced discussion was particularly important during the challenging political climate of 2015. Following the controversial 2014 election, political pressure forced many media outlets to self-censor their discussion of politics. However, during this period Sanglap continued to field questions from audience members, and managed to maintain political balance.
Covering topical issues
In selecting issues to cover, programme makers aimed to feature debates on the political issues and current affairs that mattered to the people of Bangladesh. Audiences generally concurred that they had succeeded: 91% of endline respondents agreed that Sanglap had brought issues that mattered to ordinary citizens to the attention of government officials. Indeed, people who watched or listened to Sanglap reported high levels of engagement with the issues covered: at endline (2015), 90% of those reached said that they had searched for more information on the issues discussed in the programme, and 83% reported either frequently (19%) or occasionally (64%) talking about these with family, friends or others.

3.4 Impact on audience-level governance outcomes

Key insights

- Research findings show positive associations between regular exposure to Sanglap and key governance outcomes that support greater accountability. Compared with people who were not exposed to the programme, and even when controlling for other factors that might influence these outcomes, Sanglap’s regular audience was more likely to discuss politics, had greater confidence to participate, and was more likely to report having taken part in political activities.

- While the relationship between regular exposure to Sanglap and higher levels of knowledge and confidence to engage in politics was strong among both men and women, the association between exposure and political participation was much weaker for women. This suggests that women face significant barriers to active participation that go beyond a lack of confidence to engage in politics.

- Sanglap’s audience felt informed about key governance issues and thought the programme covered these issues in depth. Qualitative research showed how Sanglap helped to contribute to their understanding of issues and knowledge of how to question their leaders.

- However, while Sanglap’s viewers and listeners attributed increased political knowledge to the show, no meaningful association was found between exposure and higher levels of political knowledge when others factors that might influence this outcome were controlled for.

- Within a challenging political context and increased disillusionment with government responsiveness, BBC Media Action data suggests that Sanglap had less success influencing audiences’ attitudes towards government responsiveness.

3.4.1 Sanglap’s influence on political participation and its drivers

BBC Media Action believes that by influencing change among individuals and populations, the media can indirectly hold those in power to account by increasing individuals’ participation in accountability mechanisms and supporting their empowerment. Participation in this context is viewed as the extent to which individuals and groups within society are actively involved in the public sphere, political processes, debate and decision-making. BBC Media Action defines ‘empowerment’ as the process through which individuals: (i) become aware of the forces that
have an impact on their situation; (ii) become more aware and trusting of their own ability, knowledge and experience; and (iii) build on these to gain self-confidence and the self-belief required to be active in improving their life situations.

Based on this premise, Sanglap aimed to increase political participation in Bangladesh by providing access to accurate information, stimulating discussion, and enabling people to interact directly with decision makers: all things that BBC Media Action believes contribute to increased participation in politics. The mixed-methods research strategy implemented throughout the project sought to provide evidence of the extent to which, and the ways in which, Sanglap influenced key governance outcomes among individuals and, ultimately, in what ways and to what extent this contributed to supporting improved accountability. This section examines the role Sanglap played in encouraging individuals to become more politically active, both as a direct consequence of watching the programme, and via key drivers of increased political knowledge, discussion and political efficacy.

3.4.1.1 Improving political knowledge and understanding

Political knowledge is regarded as one of the key prerequisites of a well-functioning democracy. As such, improving people’s knowledge of key governance issues was a primary objective of the Global Grant governance project in Bangladesh. The project sought to achieve this by providing Bangladeshis with access to reliable, trustworthy information via Sanglap. The programme covered key topical issues such as the International Crimes tribunal’s decisions and issuing of death penalties, the violence and hartal following the 2014 general election, and the need for increased discussion between the government and opposition to end ongoing political unrest.

BBC Media Action’s qualitative research (conducted in 2013) indicated that the programme had achieved this, with audiences attributing an increase in their knowledge of key governance issues to Sanglap. Viewers and listeners mentioned that the information they received from Sanglap was more comprehensive than that which they received elsewhere.

"I didn’t know the background of the Rana Plaza collapse and the importance of maintaining a building code, which I came to know from Sanglap."

Male, 18–30, Chittagong, midline qualitative study, 2013

Supporting this finding, 90% of endline respondents directly attributed an increase in their knowledge of key governance issues (either a bit or a lot) to the show. This was a significant increase from the proportion of respondents reporting this in 2014 (64%) and was seen despite overall programme reach falling; it thus suggests that Sanglap had a greater influence on its core audience in 2015. Over this same period, Freedom House cited declining freedom of expression and increasing media self-censorship, which suggests that this type of content may have become less available elsewhere.

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12 Based on the survey item: How much has watching/listening to the programme improved your understanding about [key governance] issues? Would you say it has improved your understanding a lot, a bit, not very much or not at all?
Performing the role of government ‘watchdog’ in a turbulent time

In the tumultuous post-election environment of 2015, during which the battle between the two main political parties virtually paralysed the country, Sanglap appears to have succeeded in keeping audiences abreast of key political events. The endline survey revealed that almost all audience members (95%) at least agreed that Sanglap informed citizens about the decisions and actions of government and 83% concurred that it helped them to understand different political parties’ positions on national issues.

“I learnt from Sanglap that the government is supporting the Shahbagh movement but not the movement of Hefajat, and that the opposition party BNP is doing the opposite.”

Male, 18–30, Rajshahi (urban), midline qualitative study, 2013

Throughout the duration of the project, audience members held positive perceptions of the programme’s ability to help them to feel confident about their voting choice, with almost three-quarters agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement at midline (73%) and endline (71%).

Exploring the relationship between exposure to Sanglap and higher levels of political knowledge using regression analysis on the 2013 midline data (see box) showed that people who watched or listened to Sanglap were more knowledgeable about the positions of main political parties than non-viewers/listeners. This relationship existed even when controlling for other factors that could influence levels of perceived political knowledge, such as income, education, gender or reported interest in politics.

What is regression?

Regression analysis is a statistical technique that is used to examine the relationship between two variables while controlling for the distorting effects of other factors or characteristics. For instance, someone who is more highly educated may be more likely to watch Sanglap and also be more likely to frequently discuss politics. Regression allows researchers to see whether or not there is an association between watching or listening to Sanglap and discussing politics, even once the effects of other explanatory factors like education have been cancelled out.

This analysis cannot prove that exposure to BBC Media Action’s programming causes a particular outcome, as it does not identify the direction of the association. For instance, watching or listening to Sanglap could increase political discussion, or increased political discussion could make someone more likely to tune into Sanglap. However, it provides a more robust method of understanding the association between BBC Media Action’s programme and key governance outcomes.

Despite audiences attributing higher levels of political knowledge to Sanglap at endline, similar advanced analysis on 2015 endline data – that controlled for confounding factors (such as education, income and interest in politics) – detected no association between exposure and
higher perceived knowledge of politics.\textsuperscript{13} This result may reflect the smaller and less diverse \textit{Sanglap} audience of 2015, which was biased towards older, urban males who tended to report higher engagement with, and knowledge of, politics.

3.4.1.2 Prompting and modelling discussion

BBC Media Action believes that encouraging discussion of political issues between family members, friends and other members of the community, can also support greater engagement with politics. Citizens talking to one another about politics can spread knowledge, support understanding of issues, and expose people to a range of different views. Discussion of politics at home and in the community is considered a key influence on a person’s confidence to engage in and influence politics (internal efficacy) and an important driver of political participation. Ultimately, transparent, inclusive conversation and debate about key political issues – from the grassroots level right up to formal mechanisms of government – can help to build engagement with, and trust of, democratic processes. The project, through \textit{Sanglap}, aimed to prompt informal and formal discussion of governance issues among audiences and to model constructive and inclusive political debate.

\textbf{Prompting political discussion}

In general, Bangladeshis tend to discuss politics frequently, although men do so a lot more than women (see table 3). Quantitative surveys in 2012, 2013 and 2015 indicated that the majority of Bangladeshis (at least 60\% at each time point) reported discussing politics with family and/or friends either occasionally or frequently. Fewer Bangladeshis (around 40\%) reported talking about politics with people outside of this immediate group (i.e. with others in their community).

\textsuperscript{13} While ordinary least squares (OLS) regression showed that regular exposure to \textit{Sanglap} was associated with higher levels of knowledge, the effect size was so small that it was deemed meaningless and, therefore, is not reported as significant. The adjusted R square of the model was 0.219 and the F value was 20.519 (significance <0.001). See the technical appendix for full results including confounders.
At both baseline and endline, women were less likely than men to report discussing politics: only 70% of women surveyed at endline said that they talked about politics at all (compared with 85% of men), and this was generally limited to conversations within their families.

Table 3: Political discussion by gender (2012 and 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall discussion</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: 2012 baseline (n=5,628) and 2015 endline (n=2,650) surveys.

Women’s lower levels of discussion outside the family environment may reflect their perceptions about how free they are to say what they think. Indeed, throughout the project they consistently reported feeling less free than men, and this gap widened between baseline and endline.

At endline, female audience members were also less likely than their male counterparts to discuss Sanglap: 65% said that they frequently or occasionally talked about topics from the programme compared with 86% of male audience members. However, as with overall political discussion, women reported being more likely than men to talk about the show with family members: 71% of women who had discussed Sanglap had done so with their family, compared with only 20% of men.
Who people talked with about politics shifted notably over the course of the project, suggesting discussion became increasingly private as the political environment became more turbulent. Political conversations with friends decreased (57% in 2012 compared with 51% in 2015), while discussion with family members increased (62% in 2012 compared with 66% in 2015). In this time, there were also small but statistically significant reductions in the proportion of Bangladeshis that reported feeling somewhat or very free to say what they think (from 62% at baseline to 59% at endline) and to talk negatively about the government in public (from 43% at baseline to 36% at endline).

At endline, people who watched or listened to Sanglap were significantly more likely than those who did not to engage in political discussion: 92% of those regularly reached said that they frequently or occasionally discussed politics compared with 76% of non-viewers/listeners. Exploring this relationship further through regression analysis indicated that the relationship between regular exposure and political discussion was significant even after controlling for possible confounding factors, including income, level of education or reported interest in politics.\(^{14}\)

### 3.4.1.3 Building political efficacy

Political efficacy is considered an important mediator of political participation, with low political efficacy being a barrier to engaging and participating in politics.\(^{xviii}\) BBC Media Action defines political efficacy as ‘the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process’. Political efficacy is commonly understood to comprise two components – an internal measure that corresponds to an individual’s belief in their own ability to engage in, and exert influence on, the political process, and an external measure

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\(^{14}\) OLS regression showed regular exposure to Sanglap was associated with more frequent discussion. The adjusted R square of the model was 0.096 and the F value was 15.81 (significance <0.001). See the technical appendix for full results including confounders.
that constitutes the individual’s belief that government institutions are responsive to citizens’ demands.\textsuperscript{xix}

As a platform where ordinary citizens were able to directly question power holders and decision makers and demand a response, Sanglap aimed to influence political efficacy among audiences by modelling good state–society accountability in action and by building people’s confidence to engage in the democratic process. The extent to which the programme influenced individual political efficacy is discussed below.

**Internal efficacy: building confidence to engage in politics**

The Global Grant governance project in Bangladesh aimed to build political efficacy throughout the population by creating a public platform via which Bangladeshis would be able to directly question officials on key governance issues. By broadcasting this action on television and radio, the project also aimed to inspire widespread political efficacy by inspiring ordinary people to question political leaders.

Internal political efficacy is a difficult concept to measure, particularly quantitatively. BBC Media Action used a number of survey items to measure efficacy, and combined the following three survey items to create an overall measure of internal political efficacy:\textsuperscript{15}

1. When political issues or problems are being discussed, I usually have something to say
2. I think that I am better informed about politics than most people
3. I feel that I could do as good of a job as a local elected leader as most other people

The proportion of people who agreed or strongly agreed with the three internal efficacy statements measured at endline is shown in figure 10.

**Figure 10: Individual self-efficacy and Sanglap (2015)**

![Individual self-efficacy and Sanglap (2015)](image)

Source: 2015 endline survey (regularly reached n=226; not reached n=2,341).

Note: the differences between those regularly reached and those not reached were significant at $p<0.05$.

\textsuperscript{15} A fourth statement was also included in baseline, midline and endline surveys: ‘Sometimes, politics seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on’. When included in factor analysis of the endline items, this statement had relatively low reliabilities and was not included in the regression analysis. It is, therefore, also left out of the comparisons between audiences and non-viewers/listeners herein.
Across all three items, people who regularly watched or listened to Sanglap were consistently and significantly more likely to agree with each statement compared with those not exposed to the programme, indicating that they had higher levels of internal political efficacy. The association between regular exposure to Sanglap and higher levels of internal political efficacy (when all three measures were taken together) was significant even after controlling for other factors that may influence one’s confidence, such as education, level of income, age or location (urban or rural).16

Other data from the endline survey (2015) also revealed that those who tuned into Sanglap regularly were significantly more likely than non-viewers/listeners to agree that they felt entitled to question, that there were ways for them to do so, and that they would question politicians and policy-makers given the chance (see figure 11). Such sentiments were also captured in qualitative research in 2013, when respondents attributed their increased understanding of their entitlement and opportunities to question leaders to having listened to or watched Sanglap.

“People have the right to hold the government and policy-makers accountable, which I learned from Sanglap. I [previously] thought the duty of people was only to vote in the democratic process.”

Male, 18–30, rural, midline qualitative study, 2013

Figure 11: Additional measures of internal efficacy (2015)

Source: 2015 endline survey (regularly reached n=226; not reached n=2,341).
Note: the differences between those regularly reached and those not reached were significant at p<0.05.

16 OLS regression showed regular exposure to Sanglap was associated with higher levels of internal efficacy. The adjusted R square of the model was 0.044 and the F value was 7.292 (significance <0.001). See the technical appendix for full results including confounders.
External efficacy: fostering confidence in responsiveness

Formative research revealed a lack of confidence in political actors’ responsiveness to the needs of the general population. Respondents felt that there was a strong culture of ignoring constituents and, as such, that accountability was not an established practice in Bangladesh.

“They [politicians] need us only during the time of election – every five years.”

Female, 31–45, Rajshahi, formative study, 2012

This was reflected at endline in audiences’ reported satisfaction with Sanglap’s panellists: 71% agreed or strongly agreed that panellists did not provide satisfactory answers to questions raised on the programme. Likewise, qualitative research indicated that viewers and listeners felt that there was a limit to the role that Sanglap could play in supporting citizens to hold those in power to account because, without follow-up, there was no way to ensure that panellists acted on the commitments they had made on the show.

“Sanglap can hold government or policy-makers accountable, but follow-up episodes are needed after the election so that people can ask them again or remind them about their promises.”

Male, 18–30, Dhaka, midline qualitative study, 2013

Indeed, at endline, people regularly exposed to Sanglap were significantly less likely than those not reached by the programme to report feeling satisfied with the account that politicians and policy-makers gave of their actions and decisions (44% compared with 50% respectively). This suggests that Sanglap audiences, who also reported higher levels of interest in politics, may have been more critical of the government compared with those who did not watch or listen to the show.

Overall, while Sanglap provided a platform for people to question their leaders, the extent to which this translated to increased responsiveness beyond the programme was limited. In other words, it seems that the format worked to expose leaders and air issues, but less to follow up on how the issues were addressed or to convince audiences that leaders would act upon these.

3.4.1.4 Increasing political participation

Increasing political participation is seen as one of the key routes to building accountability between citizens and leaders. As such, Sanglap aimed to provide a platform where people from every segment of Bangladeshi society would have an opportunity to participate in and influence the decisions affecting their lives. BBC Media Action hoped that, by demonstrating ordinary people participating in political decision-making, audiences of Sanglap would be inspired and empowered to participate in other political fora – whether private (with family and friends) or public (for example, in a town hall meeting). The frequency of, and ways in which, Bangladeshis participated in politics was tracked throughout the project.
Overall, the proportion of the Bangladesh population that reported participating in political activities increased over the course of the project; for example, 25% had participated in an organised effort to solve a problem (the most common form of political participation reported in Bangladesh) at endline in 2015, compared with 19% at baseline in 2012. Similarly, the proportion of Bangladeshis who had attended a meeting of the local town council at least once increased from 10% to 18% over the same period. Indeed, the only form of political participation to decline was lodging a complaint with a government body or civil society organisation (CSO) (see figure 12).

Figure 12: Reported political activities (2013 and 2015)

Sources: 2012 baseline (n=5,628) and 2015 endline (n=2,650) surveys

**Sanglap and political participation are linked**

When considering Sanglap’s impact on levels of political participation, findings suggest that it was associated with even higher levels of political participation among people who had listened to or watched the programme. Figure 13 shows the difference between Sanglap’s regular audience and those who did not watch or listen to the programme at all.
The biggest differences in political participation between regular audience members and non-viewers/listeners were observed at the local, more informal level. For example, 42% of those regularly reached by Sanglap said that they had attended a town council meeting, compared with 15% of those that did not tune into the show. Furthermore, Sanglap’s regular viewers and listeners were significantly more likely to report taking part in such meetings more than once: 23% had done so, compared with only 6% of their unexposed counterparts. Similarly, 47% of regular audience members said that they had participated in an organised effort to solve a problem at least once, compared with 23% of non-viewers/listeners. Furthermore, 31% of Sanglap’s regular audience had done this more than once, compared with 12% of non-audiences.

Regression analysis revealed that Bangladeshis who regularly watched or listened to Sanglap were more likely to report participating in political activities, even after the effect of other factors had been controlled for (for example, interest in politics, age, education and gender).17 However, the association between exposure and political participation was much stronger for male than for female audience members.18 At endline, the gap between men and women in terms of reported political participation was wide: 62% compared with 15%. This reflects the barriers women in Bangladesh face to taking action (e.g. the lack of freedom to move outside the home and of available opportunities to participate).xxi Findings suggest that for many women in Bangladesh, these barriers may be too great to be shifted by a single governance programme.

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17 OLS regression showed regular exposure to Sanglap was associated with more frequent political participation. The adjusted R square of the model was 0.206 and the F value was 19.443 (significance = <0.001). See the technical appendix for full results including confounders.

18 OLS regression showed that the association between exposure and participation was much lower for women than men. The adjusted R square of the model was 0.206 and the F value was 18.970 (significance <0.001). See the technical appendix for full results including confounders.
3.5 Overall impact: contributing to improved accountability

Key insights

- The majority (89%) of Sanglap’s audience at least agreed that the programme played a role in holding the government to account, with 28% strongly agreeing that this was the case.

- Generally poor perceptions of government responsiveness, audience dissatisfaction with some of the answers provided by the programmes’ panellists, as well as a call for additional follow-up to ensure that promises made were kept, all likely contributed to audiences feeling that there was a limit to the role Sanglap could play in this respect.

- Nonetheless, Sanglap was valued by audiences; most agreed that it was very informative and motivated people to question decision makers and hold them to account.

- However, Sanglap did not provide viewers and listeners with more confidence that leaders would act on issues raised, as they felt that it was not possible to subsequently follow up on any commitments made during the programme.

Through the production of the political debate programme Sanglap, the Global Grant project in Bangladesh ultimately aimed to harness the media to improve state–society accountability. Based on BBC Media Action’s governance approach, the project sought to harness the media to improve audience-level outcomes, including knowledge and understanding of politics, private and public discussion of politics, confidence in people’s ability to engage in and influence political processes, and active engagement in political activities among all citizens in Bangladesh.

Accountability, as conceptualised by BBC Media Action, is an amorphous and complex concept and, as such, the extent to which accountability is increased, or how a particular media programme may have played a role in that, is virtually impossible to accurately measure. One way that BBC Media Action attempted to capture this in relation to Sanglap was simply by asking audiences whether they felt that the programme had played a role in holding government to account.

At endline in 2015, the majority of people reached by the programme in the previous 12 months (89%) at least agreed that it had played a role in holding government to account. Within that, just under one-third of respondents (28%) strongly agreed that this was the case. The majority (between 76% and 95%) also either agreed or strongly agreed that Sanglap functioned in ways that support accountability – for instance, providing an opportunity to question government officials, exposing officials’ wrongdoings or failures, and informing citizens about the decisions and actions of government.
Table 4: Audiences’ perception of Sanglap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Total agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informs citizens about the decisions and actions of government</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides an opportunity for people like me to question government officials about their decisions and actions</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposes the wrongdoings or failures of government officials</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports on actions taken following promises made on the programme</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives me information on whether, and how, the government delivers on its promises</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlights where the information provided by the government is untrue or insufficient</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushes government officials to provide information about their decisions and actions</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes government officials react to the needs of ordinary citizens</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Endline survey 2016 (all reached population n=309).

Qualitative research provided further insight into the role that audiences perceived Sanglap to have played in supporting accountability. Much of this related specifically to the programme itself as a mechanism of accountability, with it being deemed a unique platform that helped to overcome barriers to accessing officials by bringing leaders face-to-face with ordinary citizens.

“**We can’t go directly to the government to ask questions, but Sanglap is a platform to ask questions.**”

*Female, 31–45, midline qualitative study, 2013*

However, viewers and listeners were not convinced about the extent to which questioning leaders resulted in higher responsiveness. Findings suggest that watching or listening to Sanglap did not give people more confidence that officials would take action on issues raised, as they felt that leaders were often evasive and non-committal and, when they did commit to actions, it was not possible to press them to follow through on those commitments beyond the programme. This points to the limited sanctioning power a show can have in the context of a complex governance system.
4. CONCLUSIONS: to what extent has the project met its objectives?

At the end of the five-year-long Global Grant project in Bangladesh, are Bangladeshis better informed and more engaged in tackling challenges in governance? And are state–society governance relations more accountable? If so, to what extent did BBC Media Action’s intervention influence these outcomes?

Evidence from BBC Media Action’s evaluation of the Global Grant governance project in Bangladesh suggests that there were associations between watching or listening to Sanglap and higher levels of discussion, internal political efficacy and participation in political activities, which existed even after taking into account other factors that might have explained these differences (such as age, level of education or interest in politics). Although these outcomes indicate that Sanglap had a positive impact at the audience level, limitations in the diversity of its viewers and listeners mean that this was mostly seen among urban and/or male Bangladeshis – its core, loyal audience. Although it is precisely this audience that continued to engage with Sanglap throughout the project’s lifetime, the programme did manage to draw a large and broader audience at times of national importance, such as in the run-up to the 2014 election.

The extent to which state–society governance relations are more accountable, and what part Sanglap played in contributing to that, is more difficult to ascertain and even more problematic to measure. Audiences reported that Sanglap played a role in the state–society accountability mechanism by providing an opportunity and platform for individuals to question their leaders on important issues. As such an opportunity is not considered to be available to all Bangladeshis as standard, this is a marked achievement.

However, there is limited evidence beyond such audience perceptions of the effect, if any, Sanglap might have had in improving accountability beyond the programme. Indeed, Bangladeshis remain sceptical of their leaders’ responsiveness when issues are raised and of their likelihood to honour commitments made on the show. Such a sentiment has only been heightened by the continued political divisions present in Bangladesh – namely the lack of meaningful opposition to the government due to the BNP’s boycott of the 2014 election and the sustained stalemate in Bangladeshi party politics.
5. APPENDIX

1. Cumulative reach calculations

Cumulative reach measures long-term engagement in a particular country and across all countries, and the measure was used to set the overall reach targets at the beginning of the Global Grant. The measure utilises a calculation acknowledging 10% of new listeners and/or viewers within existing audiences year-on-year. The 10% is seen as a conservative estimate and takes into account the following:

- 15-year-olds entering the survey data and older people leaving
- New viewers or listeners reached by programming
- Natural turnover – people reached previously but no longer viewing or listening
- Increased geographical reach, improved access and new broadcast partnerships

This 10% is applied on the principle of adding the 'lowest reach'; this means that if the reach figure for the prior year is higher than the current year, then 10% of the reach from the current year is added on to the cumulative reach figure. In turn, if the reach figure in the current year is higher than the reach figure from the prior year, then 10% of the reach figure from the prior year is added to the total amount.
ENDNOTES


2. The Global Grant was a centrally managed grant from DFID that supported implementation of the Global Grant project in 14 target countries across Africa, Asia and the Middle East between 2012 and 2017. The five-year-long grant focused on three core themes (governance, health and resilience) and aimed to produce media and communication outputs that contribute to better governance, healthier populations and an increased ability to cope with humanitarian crises.


11. The research strategy for the Global Grant was built upon using multiple complementary research methods to answer the overall research questions. The strategy draws on multiple pieces of research to generate a broad evidence base, both across and within countries covered by the grant. Ultimately, the strategy aimed to build evidence of impact while also determining how and why change occurs. It did this by looking across multiple data sets and aggregating insights, combined with information from other existing data sources, to enable a level of confidence in the inferences around the relationship between being exposed to BBC Media Action programmes and the intended outcomes. Quantitative data from comparable questions across Global Grant countries can be found here: http://dataportal.bbcmediaaction.org/site/


