



SUSTAINING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN MYANMAR UNDER PROLONGED
CHALLENGES: A DOCUMENTARY SYNTHESIS OF COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE AND CONTINUITY MECHANISMS

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Abstract

This study examines how communities in Myanmar sustain community development under prolonged challenges. It uses a qualitative, interpretivist documentary synthesis of nineteen publicly available documents published from 2021 to July 2026. The Framework Method combined twelve study-specific analytical domains, developed to operationalise the research objectives and sensitised by the literature, with inductive sub-coding of 118 page-referenced excerpts. The documented community development initiative served as the unit of analysis. Community resilience provides the primary explanatory orientation, while community-driven development (CDD), asset-based community development (ABCD), and social capital provide complementary perspectives. A supplementary post-inductive Buddhist ethical lens is used only to interpret selected practices of non-harm, restraint, mutual care, and non-escalation. Seven context-dependent continuity mechanisms were identified: (1) local institutional adaptation and service continuity; (2) local guidance and coordination; (3) context-adaptive implementation and community safety; (4) resource mobilisation and capacity under prolonged constraints; (5) external partnership and community capacity support; (6) adaptive social relationships and community networks; and (7) safety-oriented and non-escalatory community practices. These mechanisms are partly sequential but not universal: they may overlap, recur, be absent, or operate differently across locations. Community resilience is expressed through adaptive continuity rather than unlimited coping capacity and may involve strain, interruption, resource depletion, and external support. Buddhist peace ethics remains a supportive interpretive lens rather than a causal explanation. The study contributes a context-sensitive account of community resilience and continuity mechanisms while recognising the limits of an uneven English-language documentary record.

Keywords: Community Development; Community Resilience; Myanmar; Prolonged Challenges; Buddhist Peace Ethics

INTRODUCTION

Community development denotes organised collective action through which people in a locality identify shared needs, mobilise resources, and work together to improve local conditions. In this study, “prolonged challenges” is used as an umbrella term for sustained conditions that may include insecurity, displacement, disrupted services and institutions, resource constraints, mobility limitations, and changing local operating conditions. Such conditions can interrupt planning, participation, financing, implementation, and maintenance. Yet reports published since 2021 continue to document communities in Myanmar planning, financing, adapting, and completing local initiatives, often through religious institutions, community-based organisations, local networks, and external partnerships. This persistence of organised local development under sustained constraints is the phenomenon examined in this study (McCarthy, G., 2023).

Community resilience provides the primary explanatory orientation because it focuses on capacities through which communities absorb disturbance, reorganise, and maintain important functions (Norris, F., et al., 2008). Its use nevertheless requires caution because resilience can become circular, functionalist, or overly celebratory if strain and unequal capacity are ignored (MacKinnon, D., and Derickson, K., 2013; Olsson, L., et al., 2015). Community-driven development (CDD) offers a benchmark for local ownership and collective decision-making, while critics caution that induced participation may provide limited substantive voice (Cooke, B., and Kothari, U., 2001; Mansuri, G., and Rao, V., 2004, 2013). Asset-based community development (ABCD) directs attention to existing local strengths and resources (Kretzmann, J., and McKnight, J., 1993; Mathie, A., and Cunningham, G., 2003), although prolonged constraints may deplete assets or make mobilisation difficult. Social capital theory contributes the concepts of bonding, bridging, and linking relationships through which information, assistance, trust, and external connections may be maintained or reconfigured (Woolcock, M., and Narayan, D., 2000).

These perspectives illuminate different parts of the phenomenon but do not by themselves specify how community development continuity is maintained under prolonged and uneven constraints. Conditions vary considerably across Myanmar’s states, regions, communities, and organisational settings. The study therefore does not assume a single pathway. Instead, it asks how institutional arrangements, local guidance, implementation practices, resources, partnerships, social relationships, and safety-oriented practices combine in different documented settings to support continuity.

A supplementary Buddhist ethical lens is included because religious institutions recur in the documentary record and because selected documented practices can be interpreted through established Buddhist ethical concepts. The lens draws on canonical teachings concerning non-hatred (Dhammapada 5), recognition of others' attachment to life and refraining from harm (Dhammapada 129–130, 270), compassion under injury (Kakacūpama Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya 21), and loving-kindness towards all beings (Karaṇīyamettā Sutta, Sutta Nipāta 1.8). These teachings are not treated as evidence that documented actors consciously applied Buddhist doctrine. They are used only after the empirical analysis to interpret selected practices of restraint, non-harm, mutual care, and non-escalation (Buddharakkhita, 1985; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995; Norman, 1992).

Scholarship on Myanmar since 2021 has expanded across humanitarian assistance, local service provision, livelihoods, social relations, institutional change, and community adaptation. Studies also document the long-standing importance of non-state welfare and community-based service provision (Jolliffe, K., 2014; McCarthy, G., 2023), as well as the effects of changing access conditions and local economies on rural livelihoods (McCarthy, G., and Nyana, K., 2026). Within this wider literature, however, the initiative-level organisation of community development — how a particular activity is selected, resourced, adapted, implemented, connected to partners, and sustained — often remains secondary to broader institutional or humanitarian analysis.

Two gaps therefore motivate the study. The first is evidential: documentary evidence on community development under prolonged challenges in Myanmar is fragmented across organisations, sectors, and regions and is often produced for programme or accountability purposes rather than comparative analysis. The second is theoretical: existing perspectives do not fully explain how organisational arrangements, participation, assets, relationships, external support, and safety considerations combine to maintain community development functions under sustained constraints. The study responds by identifying recurring continuity mechanisms. “Mechanism” is used in a deliberately modest sense: not as a proven causal mechanism (Hedström, P., and Ylikoski, P., 2010), but as a recurring, describable practice or arrangement that documentary sources associate with continuation, consistent with thematic synthesis of qualitative evidence (Thomas, J., and Harden, A., 2008).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study addressed one central question: how is community development sustained across communities in Myanmar under prolonged challenges, and what recurring continuity mechanisms are documented? Five objectives operationalised this question:

1. To identify the organisational and institutional arrangements documented within community development initiatives in Myanmar under prolonged challenges;
2. To examine how community development initiatives are planned, coordinated, adapted, and implemented under prolonged challenges;
3. To identify the community assets, local resources, and external supports mobilised to sustain community development initiatives;
4. To examine adaptive continuity mechanisms, including safety-oriented, harm-reducing, and non-escalatory practices, that support the continuation of initiatives; and
5. To identify recurring enabling conditions and barriers that influence the continuity and sustainability of community development across documented initiatives.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using qualitative documentary synthesis within an interpretivist paradigm (Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y., 1994). Publicly available documents were treated as legitimate sources of evidence for examining social action (Bowen, G., 2009). Documentary synthesis was selected as the principal methodological approach because primary fieldwork across multiple locations in Myanmar may be impracticable and may pose additional risks to both participants and researchers. Moreover, access constraints may influence the types of phenomena that can be observed and documented (Wood, E., 2006). Documentary synthesis therefore offers a lower-risk, although inherently limited, basis for identifying recurring patterns across locations and organisations.

The unit of analysis was the documented community development initiative, defined as a bounded instance of collective action oriented towards local development or community welfare. Accordingly, the organisation, village, programme, or report in which an initiative was described was not treated as the primary unit of analysis.

2. Key Data Sources

The study drew on nineteen publicly available documents addressing community development, resilience, humanitarian action, and related community processes in Myanmar between 2021 and July 2026. A purposive, criterion-based sampling strategy was employed (Patton, M., 2015). Documents were included if they met the following criteria: (1) substantive engagement with community-level development, resilience, welfare, or self-help processes; (2) a geographic focus on Myanmar or the inclusion of an embedded Myanmar case; and (3) public availability.

The documentary corpus comprised peer-reviewed studies, theses, evaluation reports, working papers, allocation reports, programme-design documents, a financial audit, and organisational reports or accounts. Each document was catalogued and classified according to its degree of relevance in order to assess the evidential weight of individual sources based on their proximity to the phenomenon under investigation. Several documents framed at the global level yielded relatively limited codable evidence specific to Myanmar. Consequently, the substantive analysis relied primarily on the subset of documents that directly documented community practices during the study period. The nineteen documents were assigned identifiers D1–D19 for use in reporting and presenting the findings.

Table 1 Corpus register: documents, identifiers, and relevance classification

ID	Document (organisation)	Year	Geographic focus	Relevance
D1	Socioeconomic endurance during the post-coup conflict (Chulalongkorn University)	2023	Mandalay Region	Core empirical
D2	Diffusion of protection norms and practices (Creating Safer Space)	2025	Kachin & N. Shan	Core empirical
D3	Myanmar's northern borderlands since the coup (XCEPT)	2025	Kachin State	Core empirical
D4	Gold mining and social well-being of local communities (MERAL)	2022	Waingmaw, Kachin	Core empirical
D5	Flagship Initiative final report (ALNAP/OCHA)	2025	Global	Peripheral
D6	Community engagement research and learning (AAH/ALNAP)	2024	Multiple contexts	Peripheral

ID	Document (organisation)	Year	Geographic focus	Relevance
D7	Disaster risk reduction and management in community (MERAL)	2022	Tachileik, Shan	Core empirical
D8	Household disaster preparedness and resilience (DKKV)	2021	Yangon	Contextual
D9	Kayah Integrated Nutrition VfM analysis (IRC/LIFT)	2022	Kayah State	Core empirical
D10	Market-based resilience in fragile settings (Mercy Corps)	2024	Multiple (incl. Myanmar)	Partial
D11	CLiFS action document (EU)	2023	Central & coastal	Programme design
D12	Locally-led action through humanitarian pooled funds (IASC)	2024	Global	Peripheral
D13	Locally led development strategy and annual report (Pact Myanmar)	2022–23	National	Peripheral
D14	Energising agriculture in Myanmar (Smart Power)	2021	National / rural	Technical
D15	Financial audit, Metta Development Foundation (USAID)	2023	National	Contextual
D16	Myanmar rapid response displacement (UN CERF)	2023	National	Core empirical
D17	Earthquake recovery with Caritas support (Caritas/KMSS)	n.d.	National	Core empirical
D18	Resettlement of displaced people (Caritas/KMSS)	n.d.	National	Contextual
D19	ASSET mid-term evaluation	2023	Multi-country	Multi-country

3. Research Instruments

The research instruments consisted of a keyword schedule for documentary analysis, an extraction matrix, a coding matrix, and an evidence-basis tagging system. The keyword schedule was developed to operationalise twelve study-specific analytical domains aligned with the research objectives. These domains were informed by the relevant literature but were not claimed to constitute a pre-existing validated scale or analytical framework.

The twelve analytical domains were: (1) community organisation; (2) decision-making; (3) resource mobilisation; (4) project implementation; (5) local guidance; (6) accountability; (7) external support; (8) capacity building; (9) contextual adaptation; (10) community outcomes; (11) social relationships; and (12) problems and failures.

An extraction matrix was used to record verbatim excerpts together with document identifiers and page numbers. A coding matrix was employed to organise the extracted material according to the analytical domains. In addition, each coded segment was classified according to its evidential basis as a primary finding, recommendation, planned activity, or contextual statement. This classification enabled a clear distinction between what a source directly observed and what it proposed, planned, or cited.

4. Data Collection

Each document was converted into machine-readable text and indexed by page number. The keyword schedule covering the twelve analytical domains was then applied to locate potentially relevant segments within the documentary corpus. After candidate segments had been identified, each was read closely in its original context. Verbatim excerpts that provided evidence relevant to one or more analytical domains were extracted and recorded together with the corresponding document identifier and page number, thereby enabling direct verification against the original source. This process generated an auditable extraction matrix comprising 118 page-referenced excerpts.

5. Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the Framework Method (Ritchie, J., & Spencer, L., 1994; Gale, N., et al., 2013) using a hybrid deductive–inductive analytical strategy (Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E., 2006). In the first stage, the extracted data were organised according to the twelve analytical domains. Within each domain, inductive sub-codes were subsequently developed to capture specific practices and patterns emerging from the data. Every coded segment was also tagged according to its evidential basis in order to distinguish direct observations from recommendations, planned activities, and contextual statements. Community resilience was employed as the primary explanatory orientation. Community-Driven Development (CDD), Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), and social capital were used as complementary analytical lenses only after inductive patterns had been identified from the documentary evidence.

A supplementary Buddhist ethical lens was subsequently applied, comprising peace (santi), non-harming (avihiṃsā), loving-kindness (mettā), and non-hatred (avera). This lens was used only to interpret coded practices that demonstrated restraint, protection of life, mutual care, or non-escalation. Buddhist scriptures were not included in the empirical corpus and were not used to generate or recode the findings. Accordingly, correspondence with Buddhist doctrine was reported as a supportive interpretive dimension rather than as a causal explanation. The analysis proceeded through cross-document thematic synthesis. Within each analytical domain, excerpts were compared across documents in order to identify recurring practices, areas of convergence, tensions, differences, and negative or deviant cases.

A coverage matrix was constructed to make the uneven distribution of evidence across the corpus transparent. Two documents accounted for approximately one-third of all coded items, while several themes were supported by only one or two sources. The evidence-density labels used in the analysis were qualitative analytical descriptors based on the researcher's contextual judgement of recurrence, distribution across documents, relevance to the mechanism under examination, and the nature of the supporting evidence. They were not numerical scores or predetermined thresholds. Where a pattern depended on a single document, it was reported as a case-specific finding rather than as a corpus-wide regularity.

The seven continuity mechanisms were developed through cross-document comparison of recurring practices. These mechanisms were interpreted as partly sequential and context-dependent. They may overlap, recur, be absent, or operate differently across locations. The analysis therefore does not claim that they constitute a universal, linear, or deterministic causal pathway. Methodological rigour was addressed in relation to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E., 1985). Every analytical claim was anchored in a verbatim, source-referenced excerpt and checked against the original text. The keyword schedule, extraction matrix, coding matrix, and evidence-basis tags collectively constituted a complete audit trail.

The study analysed only publicly available documents and involved no human participants or primary data collection. Where source documents used pseudonyms for sensitive locations, those pseudonyms were retained in order to minimise the risk of re-identification. The analysis was subject to four limitations. First, survivorship bias may favour initiatives that continued and were documented. Second, the documentary corpus was concentrated and unevenly distributed. Third, initiatives documented in Burmese and ethnic languages were under-represented. Fourth, coding was undertaken by a single analyst; this

limitation was mitigated through verbatim source verification and the maintenance of a systematic audit trail.

RESULTS

Sources are cited by corpus identifier (D1–D19; Table 1), with page numbers for verbatim excerpts. Cross-document analysis identified seven continuity mechanisms — recurring practices or arrangements that sources associate with the continuation of an initiative — summarised in Table 2. The mechanisms are related but not assumed to form a universal sequence. Their presence and relationship vary by location and documentary context. The evidence is concentrated: D1 and D16 supply about one third of coded items, and claims resting on one or two documents are reported cautiously. The corpus is also weighted towards resilience, community safety, humanitarian coping, and harm reduction rather than a complete community-driven development cycle. This asymmetry is treated as a finding of the documentary record rather than proof that such practices are absent in reality.

Table 2 Recurring mechanisms, related research objectives, principal documents, and evidence density

Mechanism	Objective(s)	Principal documents	Evidence density
1. Local institutional adaptation and service continuity	1	D1, D2, D3, D16	Moderate
2. Local guidance and coordination	1, 4	D1, D2, D3, D7, D16	Adequate
3. Context-adaptive implementation and community safety	2, 4	D1, D2, D7, D9, D10, D16	Strong
4. Resource mobilisation and capacity under prolonged constraints	3	D1, D9, D10, D14, D16, D17	Thin (erosion-dominated)
5. External partnership and community capacity support	2, 3	D2, D9, D11, D16, D17, D19	Adequate (external-tilted)
6. Adaptive social relationships and community networks	5	D1, D2, D8	Concentrated (two cases)
7. Safety-oriented and non-escalatory community practices	4, 5	D1, D2, D7, D16	Interpretive; concentrated

Objective 1: To identify the organisational and institutional arrangements documented within community development initiatives in Myanmar under prolonged challenges.

The findings revealed that existing institutions and community structures frequently assumed additional organising and service functions when conventional arrangements were disrupted. Religious and community-based organisations were reported as filling service gaps and providing shelter, food, education, health-related support, and coordination (D1, pp. 98, 113; D2, p. 20). Other documents described village- and ward-level committees, camp committees, community committees, and food-management committees performing administrative or service-delivery functions in different settings (D3, p. 11; D16, pp. 34, 44). Across the corpus, continuity frequently relied on existing religious, customary, community, or programme-supported structures adapting their functions rather than on the creation of new development committees.

The findings further showed that locally recognised individuals and community structures played important roles in providing guidance, communication, coordination, and connections that enabled initiatives to continue under changing conditions. Religious leaders, elders, customary leaders, village heads, and trained community facilitators appeared in these roles across the corpus (D1, pp. 99, 110; D2, p. 19; D7, p. 58; D16, p. 34). Their functions included organising assistance, facilitating locally appropriate dialogue, sharing early-warning information, and supporting accountability. However, the evidence also indicated that local guidance could weaken under prolonged social and economic pressure (D4, p. 44).

Objective 2: To examine how community development initiatives are planned, coordinated, adapted, and implemented under prolonged challenges.

The findings showed that implementation was sustained through continuous adaptation to access, timing, procurement, communication, monitoring, and public visibility. Documents described routing goods according to accessibility, procuring supplies closer to communities when transport became difficult, using remote monitoring when access was limited, maintaining early-warning arrangements, and reducing public visibility where exposure could create risk (D1, p. 72; D2, pp. 16, 18, 22; D9, p. 3). Programme approaches also changed as operating conditions shifted (D10, p. 26). These findings indicate that the continuation of community development initiatives depended not simply on adherence to predetermined plans but on adaptive implementation. The mechanism involved the capacity to modify how

activities were carried out while maintaining attention to community safety and changing local circumstances.

Coordination was also supported by locally recognised leaders and community structures. Religious leaders, elders, customary leaders, village heads, and trained community facilitators contributed to organising assistance, communicating information, facilitating locally appropriate dialogue, and supporting accountability across different settings (D1, pp. 99, 110; D2, p. 19; D7, p. 58; D16, p. 34). At the same time, prolonged social and economic pressure could weaken these coordinating capacities (D4, p. 44).

Objective 3: To identify the community assets, local resources, and external supports mobilised to sustain community development initiatives.

The findings revealed both resource mobilisation and resource depletion under prolonged constraints. Local giving could contract under sustained economic pressure, while informal support networks could become increasingly stretched as community needs expanded (D1, pp. 88, 124). Nevertheless, small-scale in-kind support continued in some settings, including food assistance channelled through religious institutions (D1, p. 96). Co-financing of collective assets was more visible in programme-supported cases. Examples included farmer investment alongside project subsidies and community contributions to mini-grid development (D10, p. 26; D14, p. 45). These findings demonstrate that resilience should not be interpreted as unlimited community capacity, because prolonged constraints can progressively erode the assets and resources on which continuity depends.

The findings also identified external partnership and community capacity support as important components of continuity. In some initiatives, locally based organisations led or substantially shaped activities while external partners provided finance, technical support, or connections. In other cases, external organisations played a substantial role in programme design or service delivery through local implementing partners. Examples included nutrition activities, water provision, and livelihood recovery delivered through local or faith-based partners (D9, p. 2; D16, p. 32; D17, p. 2). External support should therefore be understood as complementary to local capacity in some cases and as a substantial component of delivery in others. The documentary record does not support the assumption that all externally supported activities were necessarily community-led.

The findings further indicated that social relationships and community networks constituted important, although unevenly documented, community assets. In one setting, community networks supported early warning and mutual assistance, including the sharing of

food with older people and neighbours (D2, p. 21). In another, trust became more strategic and situational, while social cohesion weakened under prolonged pressure (D1, pp. 72, 95). Bonding, bridging, and linking relationships could therefore be maintained, redirected, weakened, or revalued according to context, and their effects should not be assumed to be uniformly positive or stable.

Objective 4: To examine adaptive continuity mechanisms, including safety-oriented, harm-reducing, and non-escalatory practices, that support the continuation of initiatives.

The findings identified seven interrelated continuity mechanisms across the documentary corpus: (1) local institutional adaptation and service continuity; (2) local guidance and coordination; (3) context-adaptive implementation and community safety; (4) resource mobilisation and capacity under prolonged constraints; (5) external partnership and community capacity support; (6) adaptive social relationships and community networks; and (7) safety-oriented and non-escalatory community practices. Local institutional adaptation was evident where existing religious, customary, community, or programme-supported structures assumed additional organising and service-delivery roles when conventional arrangements were disrupted (D1, pp. 98, 113; D2, p. 20; D3, p. 11; D16, pp. 34, 44).

Local guidance and coordination operated through religious leaders, elders, customary leaders, village heads, and trained community facilitators who organised assistance, facilitated locally appropriate dialogue, shared early-warning information, and supported accountability (D1, pp. 99, 110; D2, p. 19; D7, p. 58; D16, p. 34). However, this form of local guidance could weaken under prolonged social and economic pressure (D4, p. 44). Context-adaptive implementation was the most densely documented mechanism in the corpus. Continuity was maintained through adjustments to access, timing, procurement, communication, monitoring, and visibility. These included routing goods according to accessibility, procuring supplies closer to communities, using remote monitoring under access restrictions, maintaining early-warning arrangements, and reducing public visibility where exposure could generate risk (D1, p. 72; D2, pp. 16, 18, 22; D9, p. 3). Programme approaches also changed in response to shifting operating conditions (D10, p. 26).

Resource mobilisation and capacity constituted another continuity mechanism, although the evidence also demonstrated the depletion of local resources. Local giving could decline, and informal support networks could become overstretched under prolonged pressure (D1, pp. 88, 124). At the same time, small-scale in-kind support, farmer investment,

project subsidies, and community contributions to collective assets continued in some cases (D1, p. 96; D10, p. 26; D14, p. 45). External partnerships supported continuity through finance, technical support, connections, programme design, and delivery through local or faith-based partners. This was visible in nutrition activities, water provision, and livelihood recovery (D9, p. 2; D16, p. 32; D17, p. 2). Adaptive social relationships and community networks also contributed to continuity. Community networks supported early warning and mutual assistance in some settings, while in others prolonged pressure altered patterns of trust and weakened social cohesion (D1, pp. 72, 95; D2, p. 21). These relational mechanisms were therefore context-dependent and could strengthen, weaken, or be redirected over time.

The seventh mechanism consisted of safety-oriented and non-escalatory community practices. Documented examples included locally facilitated dialogue, early-warning and evacuation arrangements, lower public visibility where exposure could create risk, mutual assistance, and the provision of shelter, food, education, and health-related support (D1, pp. 98–99; D2, pp. 18–22). The documents did not consistently describe these practices in religious terms; therefore, the empirical finding concerns the observable form of action rather than the declared motivation of the actors involved. When interpreted through the supplementary Buddhist ethical lens, selected aspects of these practices resonate with non-hatred, non-harming, compassionate restraint, and loving-kindness (Buddharakkhita, 1985; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995; Norman, 1992). This correspondence is supportive and interpretive rather than causal.

Objective 5 : To identify recurring enabling conditions and barriers that influence the continuity and sustainability of community development across documented initiatives.

The findings revealed a set of recurring enabling conditions supporting the continuity of community development initiatives. These included established community structures, local guidance, social relationships, available skills and assets, flexible implementation, external partnerships, communication, and locally appropriate safety practices. At the same time, a number of recurring barriers constrained continuity and sustainability. These included resource depletion, displacement and mobility difficulties, service disruption, limited institutional capacity, communication problems, restricted access, safety concerns, and prolonged uncertainty. Community-led project selection and community-run social audit were only thinly documented across the corpus, whereas programme-facilitated consultation and externally supported accountability mechanisms were more visible (D1, p. 67; D16, pp. 33,

43). This uneven pattern suggests that some dimensions of community participation and accountability were more strongly represented in programme-supported processes than in fully community-run arrangements.

The Mandalay case provides an important caution regarding the limits of community resilience, describing resilience as “neither universal nor endlessly sustainable” and indicating that coping may become resource-draining and reactive under prolonged pressure (D1, pp. 124–125). The findings therefore show that continuity does not necessarily imply long-term sustainability and that the capacity of communities to maintain development activities may diminish when constraints persist.

Finally, absence from the documentary record should not be interpreted as evidence of absence in practice. The corpus is English-language, weighted towards publications produced by international organisations, and uneven across geographic and organisational contexts. Accordingly, the identified enabling conditions and barriers should be interpreted as recurring patterns within the available documentary evidence rather than as an exhaustive representation of all community development practices in Myanmar.

DISCUSSION

The findings provide a direct answer to the research question. Community development continuity is not explained by a single factor or universal pathway. It is sustained through context-dependent combinations of the seven continuity mechanisms identified in the Results. These mechanisms are partly sequential in some settings, but they may also overlap, recur, be absent, or operate differently across locations. The documentary record therefore supports a configuration of continuity mechanisms rather than a fixed linear model.

Three broad conditions help explain why these mechanisms take the forms observed. First, highly visible forms of participation may create additional risks in surveillance-affected or insecure settings; participation and accountability arrangements therefore need to be adapted to local safety conditions, including lower-visibility approaches where appropriate. Second, local financial and material capacity can erode over time, constraining community co-financing and increasing dependence on flexible resource mobilisation and external support. Third, changing access, service availability, mobility, and institutional arrangements can interrupt conventional project cycles. Continuity therefore depends not only on participation or assets, but also on the ability to adapt the form, timing, visibility, and support structure of collective action.

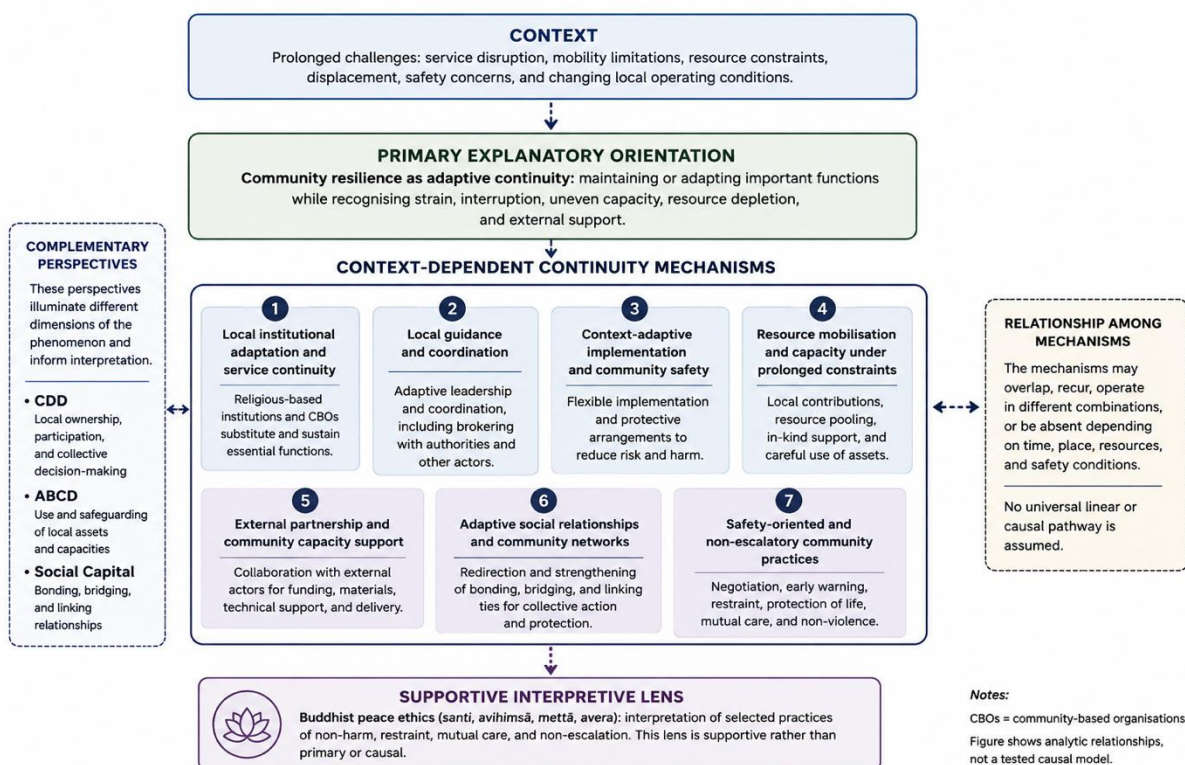
Tested against the findings, community resilience provides the strongest overall explanatory orientation when defined as adaptive continuity rather than successful or unlimited coping. The corpus shows communities and organisations maintaining or adapting functions while also experiencing strain, interruption, resource depletion, and uneven capacity. This addresses critiques that resilience can become circular or normalise the conditions communities endure (MacKinnon, D., and Derickson, K., 2013; Olsson, L., et al., 2015). Social capital adds relational detail; ABCD remains useful for identifying local assets but requires attention to depletion and accessibility; and CDD remains valuable as a benchmark for local ownership and participation even though the complete community-driven cycle is only partially visible. The perspectives are therefore complementary but unequal: community resilience explains adaptive continuity most directly, while social capital, ABCD, and CDD illuminate specific relational, resource, and participatory dimensions.

The supplementary Buddhist ethical lens adds a bounded normative interpretation to selected safety-oriented and non-escalatory practices. Peace (*santi*) and non-harming (*avihiṃsā*) can interpret practices that seek to reduce preventable harm, while loving-kindness (*mettā*) and non-hatred (*avera*) provide an ethical vocabulary for mutual care and restraint. This reading is consistent with the *Dhammapada*, the *Kakacūpama Sutta*, and the *Karaṇīyamettā Sutta*. The interpretation remains deliberately supportive rather than primary: the corpus does not establish that actors consciously cited or applied these texts, and the empirical mechanisms were identified independently of Buddhist doctrine. The contribution is an ethical interpretation of selected practices, not a claim of doctrinal causation (Buddharakkhita, 1985; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995; Norman, 1992).

The mechanisms also show why a context-sensitive approach is necessary. Myanmar's states, regions, communities, and organisational environments differ in institutional capacity, local resources, social relationships, external connections, access conditions, and service arrangements. The evidence therefore cannot support an assumption that all seven mechanisms are present or interconnected everywhere. In some settings, existing institutions may provide the organisational base from which local guidance, adaptive implementation, partnerships, and safety practices develop; in others, external support or community networks may be the principal entry point. The weighting of the evidence towards continuity, safety, and externally supported activity may reflect both actual operating conditions and the composition of an English-language documentary archive. These possibilities cannot be fully separated with the present corpus.

NEW KNOWLEDGE

The new knowledge from this research is a context-sensitive account of community resilience expressed through continuity mechanisms under prolonged challenges. Continuity is documented through seven mechanisms: local institutional adaptation and service continuity; local guidance and coordination; context-adaptive implementation and community safety; resource mobilisation and capacity under prolonged constraints; external partnership and community capacity support; adaptive social relationships and community networks; and safety-oriented and non-escalatory community practices. These mechanisms are partly sequential but not universally interconnected. Depending on context, they may overlap, recur, operate in different combinations, or be absent. Community resilience is understood as the capacity to sustain or adapt important community development functions while recognising strain, temporary interruption, resource depletion, unequal capacity, and reliance on external support. A supplementary Buddhist ethical lens interprets selected practices of non-harm, restraint, mutual care, and non-escalation without being treated as a primary explanatory framework or causal driver. The model is descriptive and interpretive rather than predictive.



Model 1. Community resilience and context-dependent continuity mechanisms under prolonged challenges

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined how community development initiatives in Myanmar are sustained under prolonged challenges. Based on nineteen documents and 118 page-referenced excerpts analysed through the Framework Method, seven context-dependent continuity mechanisms were identified: local institutional adaptation, local guidance and coordination, context-adaptive implementation, resource mobilisation, external partnership, adaptive social networks, and safety-oriented and non-escalatory practices.

The findings show that community resilience is expressed through adaptive continuity. However, such continuity may remain fragile, interrupted, resource-constrained, and dependent on external support. Existing community, religious, customary, and programme-supported structures often adapt their roles to sustain services and collective action. A supplementary Buddhist ethical lens was used only to interpret practices related to non-harm, restraint, mutual care, and non-escalation, rather than to explain the mechanisms causally.

1. Policy Recommendations

- 1) Policies should strengthen existing community, religious, customary, and local institutional structures rather than automatically creating new parallel mechanisms.
- 2) Local organisations should receive financial, technical, and organisational support appropriate to their responsibilities and operating conditions.
- 3) Participation and accountability mechanisms should be flexible and sensitive to local safety conditions, particularly in insecure or surveillance-affected settings.
- 4) Community development policies should incorporate locally appropriate safety, harm-reduction, early-warning, dialogue, and non-escalatory practices.

2. Suggestions for Utilization

- 1) Practitioners should identify and build on existing community structures that already provide services, coordination, and collective support.
- 2) Local partners should be supported according to their actual capacities, responsibilities, and operational needs.
- 3) Programme implementation should remain flexible in timing, location, communication, visibility, procurement, monitoring, and service delivery.
- 4) Participation and accountability approaches should be adapted to local risk conditions while maintaining meaningful community involvement.

5) Safety-oriented practices, including dialogue, early-warning arrangements, careful communication, non-harm, and mutual assistance, should be integrated into programme implementation according to local context.

3. Suggestions for the Next Research

1) Future studies should examine whether the limited visibility of the full community-driven development cycle reflects actual practice or limitations in the documentary record.

2) Further research should include Burmese- and ethnic-language sources and under-represented geographic areas.

3) Future qualitative studies should strengthen dependability through multiple coders or inter-coder checks.

4) Comparative studies across states and regions should examine which continuity mechanisms are recurring and which are context-specific.

5) Further research should explore when adaptive continuity contributes to long-term sustainability and when prolonged challenges erode community capacity.

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