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## Leadership Development and Training in Community-Based Organizations in Myanmar

Anna Rockett

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Leadership Development and Training in Community-Based Organizations in Myanmar

by

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Undergraduate honors thesis under the direction of

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Submitted to the LSU Roger Hadfield Ogden Honors College in partial fulfillment of  
the Upper Division Honors Program.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In the Southeast Asian country of Myanmar, community-based organizations (CBOs) emerged in response to ongoing conflict. They provide an avenue for leadership and training development in rural communities where traditional forms of higher education and training are not available or not as high quality. Thus, the purpose of this exploratory qualitative study is to understand how leaders of community-based training and education organizations in Myanmar are facilitating their programs and fostering leadership capabilities in young adults. This study utilized a basic interpretive design and thematic analysis. The findings showed four key themes: training for the future; lack of resources; relying on others; and a mindset of perseverance. The findings are discussed as they relate to the motivation of the leader to provide leadership and human resource development at the community level; the use of group training in the CBO context; and the need to build resilience and adapt to crises. Implications for future research and practice include the connection between leaders of CBOs and their servant leadership characteristics and the awareness of the challenges and responsibilities that trainees are facing outside the organization, which would allow them to tailor their training methods to foster engagement and promote retention.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, is a country of 54 million people located in Southeast Asia, northwest of Thailand and in between India and China. It is a lower-middle-income country that has suffered from military rule and poverty for over half a century and was even named the least-developed country in the world by the United Nations in 1987 (United Nations, n.d.). Throughout the years of military rule, the country has had a difficult time developing economically due in part to the low quality of education (Mieno & Kubo, 2016). The lack of government support paired with the nonstop conflict between the military and the ethnic groups have created an environment where the people find it difficult to access quality education, training, and other social services (Maber, 2016; Fink, 2009). Over the years, Myanmar has seen some economic development and even a few years of democracy beginning in 2011 (Odaka, 2016). However, in 2021 the country saw a reemergence of military rule through a coup which has led to ongoing struggles, particularly for Myanmar's ethnic minorities and rural communities (Charney, 2022).

In the year 1948 Myanmar won its independence from the United Kingdom and has since struggled with ethnic rooted conflicts (Fink, 2009). The conflict has consisted of regular fighting between the so-called rebels in Myanmar and the government supporting soldiers. These rebel groups are made up of different ethnic minorities, several of which have armies of their own (Fink, 2009). These groups are seeking to gain more political representation which the military is preventing them from achieving. Throughout the course of the civil war many Myanmar civilians have been killed or forced out of their homes (Fink, 2009).

Community-based organizations emerged in response to the ongoing conflict and provide an avenue for leadership and training development in rural Myanmar. There are currently

approximately 214,000 community-based organizations in Myanmar (Crocco & Cseh, 2021). The rise of community-based organizations is not surprising since the people of Myanmar historically distrust government services. Community-based organizations are private nonprofit organizations that are representative of a community and provide services for their respective communities (Opare, 2007). These organizations offer healthcare, educational, and agricultural services as well as training and leadership development in their communities (Crocco & Cseh, 2021). The young adults in the community are able to learn the leadership skills required from people who are not involved in the government military unrest. The learners obtain skills from these programs that they are able to implement what they learn from them within their communities (Opare, 2007). Community-based organizations allow leadership training and development to be more hands-on and interactive rather than lecture-based (Melaville et al., 2006). According to Crocco and Cseh (2021), social learning processes are heavily relied upon in Myanmar to engage learners on the topics and to give them a more beneficial learning experience (Crocco & Cseh, 2021). This type of learning incorporates four processes which are attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation.

### **Background of the Study**

The CBOs of interest in this study, are those that offer leadership development and training programs for emerging leaders in their communities, particularly in ethnic minority areas. There is a great deal of research on leadership development in programs in wealthy communities, yet little is known about the role of community-based organizations in offering leadership development in low-middle-income communities such as Myanmar. Thus, this study seeks to build on existing research via the work of Crocco and Cseh (2021) and Crocco (2021) to understand how leaders of community-based training and education organizations in Myanmar

are facilitating their programs and fostering leadership capabilities in emerging leaders even amidst conflict with the military junta. The research of Crocco and Cseh (2021) tackles the research question of "What has been the process of change at the CBO? How, if at all, has the Myanmar context affected learning and change processes?" (Crocco & Cseh 2021, p. 437). It was a study that was created to understand the learning processes and change within organizations in Myanmar. This study also utilized a qualitative research methodology that inspired the methodology that myself and Dr. Crocco used in the research processes of our research study. Since there is limited research done on this topic it was important to take into account the research that has been done to be educated before launching this study.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative study is to understand how leaders of community-based training and education organizations in Myanmar are facilitating their programs and fostering leadership capabilities in young adults. The research questions are:

RQ1: What is the role of community-based organizations in training and leadership development in rural Myanmar?

RQ2: What challenges do leaders of education and training centers in Myanmar face in facilitating leadership development and training?

RQ3: What strategies (mindsets, policies, and practices) have leaders used to achieve the mission of their organizations amidst conflict?

Given that leaders of education and training centers in Myanmar are working in CBOs and that these CBOs are very different and serve different purposes, the first research question helps us to understand the context for the other two research questions. Due to the conflict, many community-based organizations emerged which helped provide training and leadership



development in rural Myanmar (Petrie & South, 2014). The rise of community-based organizations is not surprising since the people of Myanmar historically distrust strict capitalism due to colonial rule (McCarthy, 2019). Community-based organizations are private non-profit organizations that are representative of a community and provide education, through community groups and organizations. In rural parts of Myanmar, these community-based organizations are what make the training and leadership development possible (Rafique & Khoo, 2018). The young adults in the community are able to learn the leadership skills offered by people who are not involved in the government military resistance (Petrie & South, 2014). The learners obtain skills from these programs that they are able to implement within their communities. The community-based organizations allow the leadership training and development to be more hands-on and interactive rather than lecture-based (Opore, 2007). According to Crocco and Cseh (2021), social learning processes are heavily relied upon in Myanmar to engage learners on the topics and to give them a more beneficial learning experience. This type of learning incorporates the four processes of attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1977).

Due to the civil unrest that is taking place in Myanmar the leaders of education and training centers in rural Myanmar face several unique challenges. Students are constantly being pulled in different directions due to conflict and a lack of resources (Fink, 2009). The most prominent struggle that leaders of education and training centers face is keeping the students consistently in attendance (Fink, 2009). As I mentioned earlier Myanmar is a lower-middle-income country and many students feel the need to work for income to provide for their families instead of attending educational courses (Tin, 2008). Also, the leaders of the training programs have the challenge of keeping their students motivated during these uneasy times (Tin, 2008). It can be challenging to hold the attention of students under normal circumstances so leaders need

to find ways to create the most optimal learning environment in their current situation. Finally, technology is a struggle that leaders of training programs face (Faxon & Kintzi, 2022). Different strategies must be utilized to overcome the challenges that are faced in Myanmar.

In the context of leadership training and development in rural Myanmar, the role of mindsets, policies, and practices is heightened (Melaville et al., 2006). The culture in Myanmar revolves around respect based on pedagogical achievements in the form of certificates from universities that receive high levels of respect (Tun, 2018). The attention of the learners is driven by the perceived respect and stature of the individuals in leadership roles (Tin, 2008). Also, the community is something of heightened importance in Myanmar. Human interactions are held to high value and leaders of the training and development programs must find ways to use this to their advantage to find the most success (Tin, 2008).

### **Significance of This Study**

The topic of this study has a limited amount of research in all aspects. Leadership development and training is a relatively new field of research (Day et al., 2014). It is connected to the field of human resources which is a topic with more literature. Once organizations discovered leadership development and training directly led to the heightened success of their organization, more research began on this area of LHRD (Day, 2011). As more literature has emerged from this research on leadership development and training within developed organizations, it became clear the effectiveness of this research and discussion began on how else leadership development and training could be helpful. Other avenues began to be explored, one of which was how leadership development and training could benefit lower-income communities. The community-based organizations in rural Myanmar have created a number of benefits for their respective communities on the grass root level. Over the years the individual

learners have taken what they have learned from these leadership development and training courses into their communities and implemented the skills. This study highlights these leadership development programs within community-based organizations and seeks to understand how they found so much success. This is unique due to the fact that these communities are under difficult circumstances such as conflict, and limited resources. The rationale of this study is to gather data in order to build an understanding of the leaders lived experiences. This is important since little is known about their lived experiences as they navigate the difficult situations they are in. Through the information gathered in this study the leaders of these organizations will see how to better serve their communities. They can learn from the successes and struggles of the other participants in this study to make necessary adjustments. However, even despite all of these challenges, tangible benefits can be cited as being direct results of the leadership development and training provided by community-based organizations.

The reality is that Myanmar is not the only country that seems to be stuck in a lower-middle-income economy. In 2020, it was determined that 51% of people in the world were categorized as being lower-middle class (Kochhar, 2021). Even though there has been economic growth around the world over the last couple years, it has not been drastic growth. This is such a large amount of people on the planet that are economically struggling in their communities. If more could be known about leadership development and training in rural Myanmar, then the research could be used to help other lower-middle-income countries and rural communities. Even in countries that are considered to have upper-middle- or upper-class economies, there are always parts of those countries that are struggling and not reaping as many benefits. The information gained from this type of research study can help launch leadership development and training in these communities via community-based organizations. Based on the research the

community-based organizations provide excellent avenues for providing communities with these leadership development and training programs. Also, based on this study lower-middle economy communities will experience improvements from these leadership development and training programs. These improvements might include how to deal with a lack of technology, how to keep students motivated, how to successfully implement group work, and how to build connections with others to collaborate.

### **Overview of the Methodology**

The methodology of this study is basic interpretive design (Merriam, 2002). An exploratory qualitative study method was utilized to gather the appropriate data needed to thoroughly answer the research questions. This type of study allowed my Thesis Director (Crocco) and I to discover what the interview subjects thought, and what their motivation was. It provided us with in-depth insights and well-rounded data to give us the best understanding of how the community-based organizations implement successful leadership and training amidst conflict. It will allow us to gain an understanding of how leaders of community-based training and education organizations in Myanmar are facilitating their programs and fostering leadership capabilities in young adults. We created the inclusion and exclusion criteria with our purpose and research questions in mind. We also had to take into consideration ethical guidelines and protocols. Dr. Crocco and I both completed an IRB to be granted permission to carry forward with our study through LSU (my respective university). The inclusion criteria for this study were: individuals who are 18 years or older and are working as leaders or managers of community-based training and/or education organizations in Myanmar. The exclusion criteria are based on the inclusion criteria: individuals under the age of 18 years old and not working as leaders or managers of community-based training and or education organizations in Myanmar.

To participate in the study individuals must meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Ideally, the interview will take 45-90 minutes via zoom. Via these zoom interviews, we selected five leaders of community-based education and training organizations in Myanmar. There were limited risks involved in this study. The only factor that could have potentially been a risk would be the confidentiality of the participants. Dr. Crocco and I took extensive steps to quell any of these risks. The zoom room that was used during the interviews was a private, password-protected room. Before we began the recording of the meeting we clarified and reviewed the purpose of the study, and the potential risks before giving them the option to opt-out of the interview. Upon completion of the interviews, the recording was saved as well as transcribed and saved in a password-protected drop box that only Dr. Crocco and I can access. The participant is given the opportunity to request certain information that they shared to be taken out of the recording and transcript and not be used in the final report. Also, the names of the participants remain confidential and pseudonyms have been put in place of their real names. Prior to submitting this thesis, the participants were able to read through and were given a final opportunity to edit out any information they provided in their interview.

### **Summary**

Chapter One has outlined the need to investigate further the issues of leadership development in rural Myanmar. It has also provided the appropriate background information of other studies that have been and have paved the way for this study. The limited prior research on this topic has allowed Dr. Crocco and I to have a great deal of freedom in the research process and in determining the direction of this study. This chapter also provided an overview of the methodology of this study to familiarize the reader with the research processes addressed throughout this thesis. Chapter Two presents a review of the relevant literature on community-

based organizations, training, leadership development, and leader resilience. Chapter Three explains the research tools and methodology that will be applied to explore this topic. The methodology will include the participant sample, data collection protocols, and analytic strategy. Chapter Four provides an overview of the data analysis completed in this study. Chapter Five provides a discussion of what was found in the study, including recommendations for research and practice moving forward.

## **CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter presents the relevant literature on the key areas of community-based organizations, training, leadership development, and leader resilience. These areas have been identified by me and Dr. Crocco as being important to understating when learning about our study. They provide and baseline of information and set the stage for what is to come throughout the study.

### **Community-Based Organizations**

Community-based organizations, CBOs, are nonprofit local groups that work to create positive change within a community (Mosley & Grogan, 2013). For the purpose of this study, a CBO is defined as non-profit organizations that offer direct human services. When an area that needs improvement is identified, CBOs are able to formulate a project-based plan to nullify the issue. Since these organizations are community-based, they only deal with development on the local level of their respective community (Mosley & Grogan, 2013). They have few paid positions and are largely volunteer-based with individuals from the community (Petrie & South, 2014). Also, due to the local nature of CBOs, their resources are largely limited to the community and location geographically (Opare, 2007). CBOs rely on the community and the people just as much as the people depend on it, "one must understand that there is an interdependence between organization and environment" (Decman et al., 2021, p. 2). This mutual reliance is necessary for finding success and improvement within the respective communities (Hussain et al, 2008).

There are many connections that flow between the environment and the organizations, and it is even noted that the organizations find order in the activities and happenings of the environment (Decman et al., 2021). Due to this, they are typically found in communities striving

for improvement whether the improvement is within or outside their reach (Opare, 2007). CBOs make it possible for communities to achieve improvements that are not directly within their reach. Residents of the community will "come together to pool available resources, skills, talents, and time for their common good" (Opare, 2007, p. 251). The issues that are tackled by CBOs are primarily large-scale such as crime and poverty, yet they deal with smaller issues as well (Hussain et al, 2008). These organizations allow average citizens the avenue to make meaningful changes in their communities, as well as deal with larger groups including government organizations (Opare, 2007). Community-based organizations can be found in peaceful environments however they are more notable during times of chaos or community development processes. This is due to the fact they create excellent avenues to help the members of the community to solve problems and help teach skills that the members will be able to utilize for long-term success (Hussain et al, 2008).

Community-based organizations are found to have less structure than more formal institutions; however, the job descriptions and responsibilities of those within community-based organizations were more clearly defined (Decman et al., 2021). This is contributed to the fact that CBOs rely heavily on the buy-in of individuals and less on strict rules flowing down the hierarchy (Mosley & Grogan, 2013). Without the buy-in of those within the community, these types of organizations would crumble. CBOs act as a public voice for the community's wants, needs, and struggles (Rafique & Khoo, 2017). Individuals need to feel as though their voice matters and is heard. This leads to a high rate of collaboration within community-based organizations. This way the people of the surrounding environment are able to put forth their wants and needs so that they may be rectified and addressed (Rafique & Khoo, 2017). Due to



these more flexible roles individuals have with CBOs, there is "more opportunity for meaningful professional learning and communication in times of chaos" (Decman et al., 2021, p. 4).

There are several different types of CBOs that have unique processes and deal with unique issues. Since CBOs exist due to the community they are in, they have accommodated the issues in their immediate environment (Carman, 2007). The CBOs structure and legal processes are determined by the type of CBO that it is (Universal Class, n.d). The different types of CBOs are common interest groups, micro-finance institutions, village development committees, user associations, and faith-based organizations (Universal Class, n.d.). Common interest groups are made up of members of the community who share similar goals and interests. This type of CBO is the most commonly found in communities as well as in community development (Galbraith, 1995). Micro-finance institutions deal with financial issues within the community such as savings and lending (Kaloo, 2015). These types of CBOs are commonly found in impoverished communities. Village development committees play the role of collective governance within communities with rules set in place for themselves and the community. This CBO can be found working alongside the community's government (Ellsworth et al., 1997). User Associations are similar to common interest groups since the members of this CBO determine the resources that are provided to the community. Faith-based organizations are CBOs with a religious focus (Beaumont, 2008). These CBOs deal with the most controversy and have the most disadvantages associated with them (Universal Class, n.d.).

CBOs offer many advantages to community development processes. The first notable advantage is tax-exemption status. Since CBOs have the legal definition of a nonprofit organization, they share nonprofit legal status by being exempt from taxes (Bennett, 1967). Due to this tax exemption, any money they gain through projects, fundraisers, donations, etc. is able

to be kept in full. These tax exemptions also allow CBOs to benefit from advertising discounts, reduced mail rates, and public service announcements (Bennett, 1967). The next notable advantage is direct benefits which means that they are diligent in providing their services to the targeted individuals. This ensures the CBO is efficient in addressing and finding solutions to the issues presented by the community members (Bach & Weinzimmer, 2011). The next advantage is perpetuity which ensures that if the individual who created or ran the CBO is no longer present, the CBO will still be able to function and carry on serving the community (Schoenberg, 2017). As long as the CBO has a need it is serving within the community it will exist (Mosley & Grogan, 2013). The final notable advantage to discuss is liability protection. Due to the nature of CBOs, they are not affected if a member or members' actions lead to fines or lawsuits (Decman et al., 2021). CBOs are able to use their liability insurance to combat any legal issues that directly attack the CBO.

CBOs have disadvantages to be aware of that are similar to what a nonprofit organization would experience due to their structure. The first disadvantage to be aware of is financial restrictions since their income is largely based on fundraising and donations. The success of the CBO's projects relies heavily on the success of fundraisers and the level of donations that are received (Kaloo, 2015). The next disadvantage to be aware of is the workforce. Since CBOs are primarily made up of volunteers there can be the issue of not enough people being staffed for projects which can lead to efficiency issues (Opare, 2007). The final notable disadvantage is social pressure. This stems from any sort of resistance that may be present within the community (Decman et al., 2021). This resistance stems from members of the community having negative attitudes and emotions toward the CBO.

## **Training**

Training is something that is present in everyday life and can range from simple to complex. Along with everyday life, training is a crucial part of organizational success since "Training supports individual learning (that is, a gain in knowledge and skills) specialized instruction and practice" (Sleezer et al., 2014, p. 22). Long-term success and synergy of organizations critically rely on the training and development of individuals within the organization (Bartel, 1994, p. 413). Employees need to be able to understand their respective roles in the organization in order to find success as well as be able to help others find success (Bartel, 1994, p. 412). Training and development programs are incredibly popular as they help keep the organization competitive in a constantly changing environment (Bartel, 1994, p. 411). If organizations are not constantly finding ways to improve they will struggle to be competitive. Training and development are something that should begin for employees as soon as they start in an organization and should continue throughout their time (Elnaga & Imran, 2013, p 139). Employee training can be simple on-the-fly points taught to them by their peers who already have the skills and knowledge, or they can be larger changes that require a program to be implemented (Nda & Fard, 2013, p. 92).

Training at the start of an employee's life cycle in an organization is an opportunity to establish the individual's role and the expectations that surround that role. Training a novice employee is an easier task than implementing a training program for change (Elnaga & Imran, 2013, p. 140). This is due to the fact that the areas of deficit must be discovered before the training program is created. Also, pushback and resistance to the training program are more likely due to the negative connotations and discomfort that surround change (Bartel, 1994). The training programs that take place in organizations focus on closing the gap between the level of

knowledge and skills that are required of the individual to have to be successful and the level of knowledge and skills that they possess prior to the training program (Elnaga & Imran, 213).

Training often serves to identify a gap and to specify appropriate strategies to close that gap a knowledge and skills assessment is used. A knowledge and skills assessment "provides the information that is necessary for designing and implementing effective training programs" (Sleezer et al., 2014 p. 91). In most cases this knowledge and skills assessment takes a month to complete, however, depending on the situation in rare circumstances it can take a year or more to complete.

When implementing a training program, it is creating some form of change. This change can be drastic such as training employees how to use a completely new organizational system, or it could be minor such as a training program to improve a small performance aspect (Sleezer et al., 2014). Whatever the reason for the training program it is important that the leader addresses and leads the training program in an effective manner. One type of commonly used training method is group training. Group training is an efficient way to get the information across since multiple people are being trained at the same time (Nda, 2013). It is a popular choice for organizations with limited resources such as "time, money, and personnel" (Lloveras et al., 2021, p. 291). Group training provide the opportunity for the learners to benefit from observational learning as well as social contingencies (Lloveras et al., 2021). Group training encourages peers to learn from one another. Individuals may ask questions that others had not thought of or were too scared to ask. The trouble with group training is when the group becomes too large, and learners begin to lose engagement. Organizations should strive to keep group sizes small enough for personal engagement to take place between learners and instructors.

## **Leadership and Human Resource Development**

Leadership and human resource development (LHRD) is a rapidly growing field. While there are many ways to define HRD, one commonly used definition by McLean and McLean (2001), which applies in this study is:

any process or activity that, either initially or over the long term, has the potential to develop adults' work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity and satisfaction, whether for personal or group/team gain, or for the benefit of an organization, community, nation, or ultimately, the whole of humanity. (p. 322)

Human capital is a key asset to any organization, and the study of LHRD gives individuals the knowledge and skills required to develop this asset (Day, 2011). Organizations worldwide are constantly tasked to keep pace with the rapidly changing ecological, economic, social, and technological systems. These organizations recognize that they must launch leadership development programs to create successful leaders with the key traits of innovation, proactivity, creativity, ability to perform, and solve challenges (Vardiman et al., 2006). Leadership development, which is under the focus of human resource development, is utilized by organizations navigating challenges and finding long-term success (Amagoh, 2009). Leadership development is imperative for long-term success and can be defined as "any initiative that makes people better leaders within the business, nonprofit organization, community, or personal life" (Schiavone, 2018, para. 1).

Leadership development is less about what the leader does but instead is a process stimulating relationships between members of an organization (Amagoh, 2009). Relationships between leaders and other members of the organization are crucial. This is due to the fact that the relationship that is built determines how much influence the leader has (Alas et al., 2007).

Human resource development has many definitions that all have similar overarching ideas of effective employee learning that increases their performance in the workplace (Chalofsky, 1992). This field of study is relatively new when compared to other disciplines yet it has grown quickly in popularity as organizations continue to see the benefits of its implementation (Black & Earnest, 2009). Effective implementation of leadership development can be clearly seen on a performance level as well as a personal level. It is a lasting solution that becomes embedded into the culture of the organization (Amagoh, 2009). The role of leadership takes on many forms within organizations and due to this has many different definitions in this field of study, yet all the definitions echo a similar message. According to *Contemplation in Leadership and Leadership Development*, "effective leadership entails facilitating others to maximize their potential whilst simultaneously ensuring that collective purposes are achieved" (Illes & Jennings, 2017, p. 8). Leadership is complex yet it is not hard to agree that leaders who create a cohesive and coherent environment have a management system that is efficient and effective (Okechukwu, 2017). The skill of leadership development is not as straightforward as one may think which is why there has been a rapid rise in programs that study LHRD (Day et al, 2014).

There are many different ways for leaders to function in an organization. One form of leadership may be more successful than another based on the environment, the personalities of the leader and the followers, and the goal that is trying to be accomplished. Leadership and human resource development provides the skills and information needed for learners to understand the different styles and when to use them once they become leaders in their respective fields.

## **Leader Resilience**

In today's world leaders are constantly facing and overcoming challenges such as regular changes within organizations, dealing with pressure, increased workloads, and unique environmental demands (Lin & Liao, 2020). Leaders must be always evolving and improving to succeed. "Leaders with a high level of resilience are able to respond in positive ways to crisis their organizations may encounter" (Eliot, 2020, p. 404). Yet even though leaders must always be finding ways to achieve individual growth, they cannot simply think of themselves and their success. As a leader, you have the responsibility to your followers, employees, etc. to lead them and provide them with new ways to improve and succeed as a whole (Blagg & Young, 2001). Being a leader requires you to look outside of yourself to notice the needs of others and what would be the best course of action for those around you who are your responsibility (Eliot, 2020).

Resilience is a critically important trait for leaders to have. This is due to the fact that "leaders, as organizational agents, are in a crucial position to shape how challenging events are made sense of, interpreted and understood by subordinates" (Lin & Liao, 2020, p. 898). No matter what situation a leader is in they are constantly being looked up to by their followers. Leaders who portray resiliency will "increase the level of resilience of those around them" (Eliot, 2020, p. 404). Leaders need to be able to zoom out and look at the big picture which leads to the importance of "risk awareness, cooperation, agility, and improvisation" (Decman et al., 2021, p. 13). Maturing into a leadership position should give individuals the understanding that things will not always go smoothly and being prepared for different scenarios is imperative (Lin & Liao, 2020, p. 898). The constant need to be proactive will appropriately prepare a leader for any challenges that may arise (Decman et al., 2021).

In times of chaos, leaders cannot afford to feel sorry for themselves and dwell on the past but rather learn from what went wrong and implement different strategies to keep improving (Lin & Liao, 2020). A crucial aspect of leaders dealing with unfavorable environments is for leaders to focus on adapting to their environment (Decman et al., 2021). This is known as "transformative change" and is essential for leaders to keep their organization on track to obtaining its short-term goals with the long-term mission in mind (Head, 2020, p. 174). When struggles are presented to leaders the most successful leaders are able to zoom out and look at the big picture to create smaller goals that are manageable to reach the end goal (Decman et al., 2021). By creating smaller more manageable goals they will inspire a positive hard-working environment.

Research points to the importance of “instructional communication in crisis or chaos situations” (Decman et al., 2021, pg. 3). There is a significant connection relating instructional communication with the capability of organizations being able to regain and establish order (Stam et al., 2016). Leaders must be able to convey information to their followers in a manner that will be received and understood by employees even in times of chaos. Employees constantly look to the leader to see what their reactions and emotions are towards certain events (Eliot, 2020). They gauge how their leader is feeling and base their feelings on what they see from the leader. If the leader is expressing erratic, and stressed actions and emotions the followers will panic (Eliot, 2020). Therefore, leaders must stay calm and explain to the people what the situation is and the actions steps that are being looked at to fix the issue.

During times of chaos, the relationships that leaders have built and continue to build are crucial. “The importance of leaders in crisis situations to communicate mindfully to encourage positive emotional connections among members of the organization” was found to play a major



role in the success of leaders during chaos (Decman et al., 2021, p. 9). Leaders need to take the time to connect with their followers while things are going smoothly to build trust and positive emotions (Lin & Liao, 2020). This is important so that when challenges do arise there is a relational foundation that can be utilized to work through the challenges. If leaders do not take the time to foster these relationships before challenges, it will be more difficult for followers to fully commit to trusting that the leader will create an action plan that will be in the best interests of the employees (Lin & Liao, 2020).

### **Summary**

This chapter reviews the literature on terms that are important aspects of this study. It provides the context required to better understand the data that has been collected and analyzed. The topics of community-based organizations, leadership and human resource development, training, and leader resilience are the foundational topics of the study. This is why it is crucial to ensure that they are understood fully, so that the message of this study is fully conveyed. Community-based organizations, training, and leadership and human resource development are the tangibles that need to be understood for the processes and organization. While leader resilience is an idea that has been proven to be imperative for all leaders to possess to find success.

### CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using a qualitative study. More specifically an exploratory qualitative study with basic interpretive design (Merriam, 2002) was implemented to gather the data required to successfully answer the research questions. Qualitative studies focus on “process, meaning, and understanding” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 294). This type of research method was ideal for this study as it allowed us to get a holistic view of the environment of our participants. The processes of a qualitative research method allowed Dr. Crocco and me to ask our participants open-ended questions that encouraged dynamic conversation. Participants were able to elaborate and expand on the questions that were asked which led us to discover topics and ideas that we had never anticipated prior to the start of our research. Furthermore, the face-to-face interview process created a more authentic conversation as tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language were able to be determined. The qualitative research method allowed for Dr. Crocco and me, as the interviewers, to be the “primary instrument of data collection and analysis” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pl. 295). The data analysis methodology that we used was thematic analysis which allowed us to identify and define the themes that were present in our research that related to the research questions. The research questions are:

RQ1: What is the role of community-based organizations in training and leadership development in rural Myanmar?

RQ2: What challenges do leaders of education and training centers in Myanmar face in facilitating leadership development and training?

RQ3: What strategies (mindsets, policies, and practices) have leaders used to achieve the mission of their organizations amidst conflict?

Purposeful sampling was used to put together our group of participants. We created inclusion and exclusion criteria to select the most appropriate individuals as participants. To be selected as a participant in this study individuals must meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria that Dr. Crocco and I created. The inclusion criteria were as follows: the individuals must be 18 years of age or older, and the individuals must be working as leaders or managers of community-based training and/or education organizations in Myanmar.

To collect data for the study we used research interviews. Research interviews are methods of qualitative research performed to increase knowledge on a specific topic and are typically conducted as a two or more-person interview (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 314). There are multiple different types of research interviews that are determined by the level of structure they have. The different types of research interviews are structured interviews, unstructured interviews, and semi-structured interviews. In this research study, interviews were conducted with a semi-structured process which is a blend of structured and unstructured interview processes (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Semi-structured interviews are methods of collecting data that involve interviewers asking participants questions that fall inside a predetermined thematic framework (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Yet, the created questions do not have to be asked in the order or exact verbiage they were written in (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This entails that as the interviewers, Dr. Crocco and I created a set of questions that expanded on the three research questions targeted in the study. Since the interview was semi-structured it gave us and the participants the freedom to explore further and expand outside the specific questions that were asked. Semi-structured interviews are beneficial as they allow freedom of human conversation to take place during the interview. In our study, the semi-structured interview process was a success and created a safe and comfortable environment

where our participants felt comfortable being transparent in their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Semi-structured interviews are ideal if the interviewer has prior interview experience, and/or the research being conducted is exploratory (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This is due to the fact that spontaneous conversations and questions can be difficult without experience and the answers that are given often guide future research and bring up topics and ideas that were never expected. The interview questions were:

1. First, I'd like to begin by having you introduce yourself and share a little about how you became a leader of this organization.
2. Can you tell me about a day in the life of your work?
3. What is the mission/vision of your organization? (Feel free to speak generally and avoid identifying information.) What motivates you to do this work?
4. If you had to make a list, what are some of the key challenges you face in achieving the organization's mission in the last year? [Some potential follow-up questions might include the following:
  - a. Regarding partnerships, in particular with higher education institutions
  - b. How has your organization used the internet in the past? What challenges, if any, have you experienced with internet use, especially in the last year?
  - c. How has COVID impacted your organization?
  - d. How did you keep your students motivated to want to prioritize their education/training amidst competing priorities?
  - e. What have you noticed most negatively affects student learning?
5. What adjustments have you had to make in the last year?
6. What supports and resources have been most helpful? What is most missing?

7. Have you worked in a similar role or taught outside of Myanmar? If so, how would you compare your experiences?
8. We also want to talk about how you've been able to succeed in your work. How do you define success?
9. What do you think has contributed most to your success as a leader?
  - a. What mindset is required for you to be successful?
  - b. Policies?
  - c. Practices?
10. There are other countries that have experienced similar struggles. What advice would you give to leaders of similar organizations in other contexts based on your experience?

The six semi-structured interviews took place during the data collection phase. Dr. Crocco and I conducted the interviews over Zoom with participants who matched the inclusion criteria of the interview process that was created. The interviews took place in a password-protected Zoom room which increased the confidentiality and security of the respective participants. The interviews were also recorded to increase the authenticity of the meeting. Dr. Crocco and I were able to go back and review the meetings so that we did not have to write everything down during the interview. This also aided in the accuracy of the information since we were able to review the interviews multiple times during the analysis phase. The Zoom recording was also transcribed which increased the ease of analyzing similar trends of verbiage between the interviews.

There were no follow-up interviews with the participants as we found all the data that we gathered to be sufficient and clear in the analysis process. The participants were able to review

the zoom interview recording and transcriptions so that they could make sure they were comfortable with the answers that they shared during the initial interview.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis approach we employed was content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a “method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). It is a six-phase process that involves:

1. Familiarizing yourself with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes.
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87).

In this study, as part of familiarizing myself with the data, I read the transcripts after the interviews. Since we used Zoom to record the interviews, the transcripts were automatically generated; however, given the accents of the participants, some transcripts needed to be corrected based on the audio. As I read the transcripts, I marked any important areas of confusion to go back to and correct with the audio. I also took notes about "ideas and potential patterns" in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). I compiled these ideas into a three-page document as I began the subsequent steps.

In the generation of initial codes, I read through the transcripts again and identified passages of the transcripts that related to the research questions. Then, a second researcher who was familiar with the Myanmar context and I coded the data using descriptive codes informed by

the data familiarization process. The two of us coded together as a way of promoting intercoder reliability.

I then began searching for themes by identifying areas where codes naturally grouped under themes and reviewed them in a way that led to the creation of a thematic map. The themes were then defined and named and “vivid, compelling extract examples” were selected to exemplify each theme (Bruan & Clarke, 2006, p. 87).

## **CHAPTER 4. RESULTS**

This chapter reports on the findings of the qualitative analysis. After reviewing the data five key themes emerged: (1) Training for the Future with a subtheme of Motivating Students, (2) Lack of Resources, (3) Relying on Others with a subtheme of Building Relationships, (4) Mindset of Perseverance with subthemes of Proactivity and Servant Leadership, and (5) the role of the CBO.

### **Description of the Participants and Their Organizations**

The six participants in this study represented a variety of different CBOs with different purposes and desired outcomes for their communities. While all of them involved some kind of training and education related to leadership, they differed in a variety of ways. For example, Participant 1 works a social welfare and development center. He also has experience running a program that focused on ecological farming. Participant 2 has experience running a school for children and youth to increase their education as well as teach them sports. Participant 3 worked for a religious education center which taught academic subjects while have its main focus of study be religion. The students from this organization go on to be religious leaders in their communities. Participant 4 created his own academy that provides accommodation, education, opportunities, and training courses to students. He manages this academy while also teaching classes. Participant 5 is the founder of his community-based learning center. Finally, participant 6 deals with studying and educating others on ecology, and bringing awareness to community environmental issues. All of these leaders focus on training and development of leadership capabilities of their trainees/students. Granted, this happens in different ways depending on the nature of the organization.

### **Themes and Subthemes**



## **Theme 1: Training for the Future**

The first theme that emerged from the interview data was how the leaders described the role of the CBO in terms of training for the future. The idea of training for the future emerged in several different ways, e.g., contributing to their community (community level) and career development (individual level). With regard to training for the future as it relates to service to their community, students are learning skills from these educational and training programs that allow them to implement “positive change” in their respective communities (Participant 5). These CBOs “are the best place for [the students] to experience and practice” leadership skills for their future (Participant 3). This is due to the fact that the training programs provide education on tangible skills related to a variety of topics (e.g., food production, religious training, sustainability) that can be immediately implemented within the community. Participant 6 stated that “we provide skills that they need to meet community needs, so we provide skills and education for the youth.” This quote captures the overlap between training for the future at the community level and training for the future at the individual level.

Additionally, CBOs in this study provide different types of career preparation depending on the overall vision of the particular organization. Participant 2 stated, “My vision is that I would like to see them simply be ready for their future career in any situation.” In particular, Participant 3 is a part of a CBO that “trains the students to become good ministers for the ministry” and Participant 1 is a part of a CBO providing training in “skills about food production.” Participant 1 also discussed how the students of his training program learn how to make their own fertilizer that is bio-neutral. In many of these rural communities, being able to farm successfully is imperative to the overall well-being of the individuals and longevity of the community. The students are taught the importance of ecological considerations in farming and

the importance of sustainability. Participant 1 emphasized the importance of teaching their students how to farm without using chemical fertilizers and pesticides since they are expensive, hard to access, and harmful to the environment. Instead, students are educated on how to use the material in their village to make a more sustainable solution. Generally, in the six CBOs studied here, it was more common for them to be providing general knowledge and leadership training. According to Participant 4, his CBO accomplishes this through "providing accommodation, education, opportunities and training courses" to students in the surrounding communities. In all cases, the role of the CBOs related to training people for the future at the individual level relating to their own careers as well as at the community level.

***Subtheme: Motivating Students***

This subtheme related to how the leaders motivated their students, which is integral to training for the future. Leaders have implemented different teaching methods to motivate students while also preparing them for the future. A method that Participant 5 implemented, was to integrate training material based on "local wisdom and local context" into the curriculum. This ensured that the students have an excellent understanding of the community they are likely going to be working in.

The leaders described using a blend of teaching and hands-on learning and training techniques. This blend allowed the students to gather the information before implementing it in a controlled setting so that they would be confident in their abilities when applying their skills in their community. Participant 1 talked about how they "introduce the procedure, and then asked them to write on their own." This gave the students a chance to show what they could do which built confidence and motivation. The hands-on training and learning activities are largely project-based so that the students are prepared for real-life situations. The leaders of CBOs in

Myanmar have a strong desire to train their students for the future. They use different techniques to accomplish this goal with a focus on the importance of motivating their students. However, leaders are presented with different challenges that they need to overcome to find success.

## **Theme 2: Lack of Resources**

The second major theme that emerged in the analysis was the idea that leaders of education and training CBOs in Myanmar were often prevented from achieving their organization's mission due to the lack of resources. The data showed a lack of resources including limited funding, limited internet access, limited access to higher education, and difficulty accessing the CBOs. CBOs in nature do not bring in substantial revenue, and the organizations in Myanmar are no different. The lack of funding is a consistent challenge that the leaders must face. In several cases, the leaders of the organizations had to use their personal money to keep the centers running. According to Participant 2, almost all of their savings were put towards the success of the program. Participant 2 went on to say that they know that “sometimes student cannot pay” due to their family’s financial situation and that she felt it is her duty to help her students in those situations. Many of the students who attend the training programs of these CBOs are needed by their families to bring in money, help around the house, or support other community initiatives. In many instances, a student would remember the leader covering their tuition and repay the CBO leader years later after having saved up from their work.

Many of the students who make up these centers come from rural areas with low financial stability. Each student is dealing with different financial situations in their home life which, according to Participant 3, makes teaching "very hard" since "the students are in different phases" of their life. Participant 1 also brings to light that in many cases these personal financial

situations are reasons as to why the students are unable to attend higher education institutions. The higher education institutions are difficult to access and expensive. For individuals who are needed to be close to home to help their families, it is challenging to make higher ed institutions work for them. Most of the Myanmar population lives in rural areas. Participant 4 emphasizes that the youth of rural communities experience a "lack of opportunity" to attend higher ed education centers. He finds it unfair how "the rich kids can go to the expensive training" when most of the population receives no relief.

Due to Myanmar's rural infrastructure, several of these organizations are found in remote locations that are hard to access unless you reside in that specific part of the community. Participant 1's organization "was really far from their village and transportation is really challenging". In some cases, he had students walking five days to get to the organization as the main road was not accessible. This highlights the drive of the students to learn and provide themselves with the best possible opportunity for their future. Also, since the community-based organizations are found in rural locations it is hard for students and teachers to access the books that they need. Participant 3 states "it's also hard for them to come to the main city and buy books."

The lack of internet is one of the more prominent issues the leaders of the CBOs have to work around. 50% of participants discussed the deficiency of quality internet being a consistent inhibitor to student learning. Due to the lack of internet, it is challenging to exchange information. According to Participant 2, when they want to get information from other organizations or communicate with students' they "have to go directly to the person." This limits learning efficiency as more time has to pass for information to travel. Also, according to Participant 3, "the internet bill is very expensive" which makes it challenging for students to

complete their work. In many cases, the students will not have enough time to complete their work based on how much internet they can afford. Technology is the foundation of today's society. Everything is digitally based, especially after the emergence of COVID-19.

Also, since these organizations are community-based, they rely mainly on volunteers which, according to Participant 2, has led to a lack of "human resources." Participants discussed how they had to take on multiple roles within the organization to keep it going. This includes leading the organization, teaching students, and handling finances. The leaders within the programs have to use different tactics to combat these challenges which will be discussed in the next theme.

### **Theme 3: Relying on Others**

The leaders of the community-based organizations in this study face a great deal of challenges. A major theme that arose on how to combat these issues was to rely on others. The leaders recognize that to successfully carry out the mission and vision of the organization they have to lean on the resources and experience of others. This happened in many ways, one of which was relying on external stakeholders. The community that the school is located in is a major stakeholder of the CBO. According to Participant 6 "one of the top discretions is to deal with the community." Being aware of the "community expectation" is something that participant 6 holds in high regard. The students are expected to leave the school with the knowledge needed to thrive within their community. If the community does not feel like the school is accomplishing this goal, it may no longer provide support to the CBO. Participant 4 brought up another stakeholder of local authority and the education department. The local authorities want to make sure that the centers are staying in line while also wanting to make sure they stay safe. If the

students are being kept busy learning and improving in the centers the local authorities do not have to worry about them.

***Subtheme: Building Relationships***

A subtheme of building relationships is shown by Participant 5 who emphasizes the importance of “networking with other organizations who are working on education” as a way to get feedback on the positives and negatives of the school. The organizations will be able to learn from each other through this collaboration process. For the leaders of other organizations to feel comfortable with being completely honest in their feedback it is crucial to building a professional relationship of trust. This will allow the relationship between these two organizations to flourish so that they can continue to support each other in the future. Participant 5 also discussed how building relationships and networks with stakeholders will make it easier to obtain resources. Having a network of support allows for collaboration that will lead to mutual benefit between the parties. According to the participants these benefits range from financial aid, quality information, and insights on how to improve or skills to implement to be more successful. Participant 5 talks about how intentional he is about "meeting with the civil society organization and nationwide education organization." By leaning on the support of these stakeholders the leaders are able to maintain an adequate level of support within the community.

The participants made it clear that the leaders of the centers are constantly looking for ways to support their students to provide them with the most success. Due to the lack of human resources and the rural location of the centers, it is challenging for the leaders to help their students find opportunities after they complete the learning program. Participant 4 has found that building relationships with "alumni and colleagues" helped with providing students with opportunities. Leaders of these organizations lean heavily on the support of outside networks to

find success since they continue to grow and adapt to society. Participant 6's organization has seen her network of support grow to "300 alumni within ten years. This network is one that is always growing and evolving over the years, and it provides constant support to the CBOs. Participant 6 even states, "they love the organization and they like to improve the organization."

Relationships with others are a key component that was found to be important to 100% of the participants that were interviewed. According to Participant 4, the networks that are created by the leaders provide "support from international and local" levels. To obtain a solid network of support, the leaders have to be intentional in building relationships with students. Once the students graduate these relationships will lead to a growing network as they will want to give back to the programs that played such a huge role in their success.

The Participants discussed the importance of sharing their knowledge with their students. Participant 3 discussed how it is the CBO's duty to share "knowledge with the future generation." One major technique that is shared with the students is encouraging them to build relationships with one another through the use of group projects. Participant 1 even added a level of healthy competition to his group projects. He would give awards based on "which group is the best group". This gave an incentive to the groups to have to find ways to collaborate to find the most success. By putting the students in situations where they have to build relationships and rely on one another to be successful, they are building skills that will help them thrive in the future.

#### **Theme 4: A Mindset of Perseverance**

The fourth theme presents the findings of leaders having a mindset of perseverance to overcome any challenges that they may face. This involves the subthemes of leaders using proactivity and religious values as methods of navigating through unfortunate circumstances. The leaders of the community-based organizations in Myanmar face many challenges. It is

imperative that they find joy in little victories, and have strong character traits of grit, to persevere through these challenges. For example, Participant 1 stated that “as long as we keep the operation going and we maintain our student's number, that is success.” He is finding success in the fact that the organization is running smoothly and none of the students are dropping out.

There are many challenges that are out of the leader's control. By focusing on that which is controllable, the leaders have found that they live much more fulfilled lives. According to Participant 1, that which is controllable is simply "every day if we have no big problems, and achieve our daily goals and objectives." This frame of mind carries over to their students, such as when the leaders have a mindset of perseverance the students will most likely follow their lead and mimic some of the strategies and traits that are being used. Also, the leaders will be able to provide the best possible teaching methods when they are in a positive head space.

Being able to successfully persevere requires proactive planning and adaptability. This will create peace of mind that even when challenges do come up the leaders know that they are prepared to take action. Participant 4 discusses the importance of proactive planning by saying “always look for the plan B and plan Z so if something happened then we would always be in a safe position.” By preparing for every possible situation, leaders are able to better equip themselves for a successful future and are able to “change the plan” immediately if it is required (Participant 5).

### ***Subtheme 1: Proactivity***

This proactive mindset also gives the leaders more time to be present and focus on what is going on in the moment to achieve the vision and mission. Participant 5 talks about the importance of being present and worrying about "what is in front of us today". When leaders are able to put their all into the present, the more long-term success they will have in reaching their



vision and mission. In the case of Participant 4, this is a mission of his students graduating. To accomplish this, he puts his "focus on the educational activities, projects and training programs". Many of the participants discussed feeling a deep sense of obligation to give back to the community through serving in the CBOs. Participant 5 discusses that he wants to contribute to positive change in the community as he is "a part of the community" and wants to see it thrive.

Participant 2 acknowledges that everyone faces different challenges, but what makes an individual resilient is to "not accept failure" and to "keep on going". She goes on to say that "if we are alive, we can do anything we want, so we should be healthy and be happy". To avoid accepting failure individuals need to continue to look for solutions when things do not go their way. Participant 3 brought up a great point, "when the education doesn't come to you, you go to the education". At the end of the day, it is up to the individual if they want to keep fighting or just give up. For example, Participant 1's school was without power since they did not receive support from the government. Instead of giving up, he was resilient and built-in "ten solar panels" to provide power to his organization. Another example from Participant 3 was when she and her students could not access a book for her curriculum due to the rural location of the school. To combat this issue, she searched for digital learning materials and found a PDF of the book for her students to download.

### ***Subtheme 2: Servant Leadership***

All of the participants embody what it means to be a servant leader. A major driving factor to keep going in the face of adversity is serving the youth. Participant 3 states that "when you look at what the needs for the students are, it motivates you again. This is not about me anymore; this is about the future generation." Participant 3 was dedicated to giving her students a chance to succeed because "no one knows what our gift is, what we have and what we could

do.” Her attentiveness to her students is rooted in her faith. Her students motivate her in the way they “want to work for God without expecting anything in return.” Being a servant leader is about understanding what the people around you need to succeed. Participant 6 states that “when you understand people, and when you love people its everything.” This understanding and care of people pushes individuals to perseverer through any challenges because they do not want to let anyone down.

The leaders of these community-based organizations are faced with many challenges. Using perseverance, they are able to find ways to overcome these challenges. The subthemes of proactivity and servant leadership proved to be a common subtheme of perseverance that was discussed by the participants in the interviews.

### **Theme 5: The Role of the CBO**

In answering the first research question, this final theme addresses how the participants discussed the role of the CBO in training and leadership development in the Myanmar context. Based on the interview data, a common theme emerged in regards to the role of the CBO. This theme largely revolved around training the students in general leadership skills and other different skill sets that will ultimately prepare them for their future. A quote from Participant 4 that represents the broad role of CBOs is “providing accommodation, education, opportunities and training courses.” Also, according to Participant 2, he “would like to see that the students in the community are ready for their career.” Additionally, Participant 4 brought up that CBOs offer training and education to communities with individuals who do not have access to higher education.

Even though the ultimate role of CBOs in this context revolves around training students for the future, the specific goals of them can change based on what the community needs. To

ensure that the students are prepared for their careers the participants pointed out several ways that this goal was accomplished. For example, Participant 2 highlights the importance of representing himself as a “good person” to build connections with people with resources. He is leading by example to show his students how to carry themselves in the real world after they graduate from the program. Part of what CBOs offer students is how they should carry themselves in the real world once they graduate. One way Participant 3 does this is by not offering her students food or money when she sees that they do not have anything. Participant 3 works at a religious organization where “the mission from the school is to train the students to be good ministers for the ministry.” She knows that her students will have to be able to work when hungry when they participate in religious fasts.

Since CBOs and the communities mutually rely on one another, the education and skills the students are learning are able to directly benefit the community. According to Participant 4, CBO’s “equip students with scales and capacity, so that when they go back to the community, they are ready to start developing projects.” These projects are based on the needs of the community and will benefit the respective community.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter summarizes the study, a discussion of the findings, and recommendations for future research. As mentioned above, the research questions guiding this study were as follows:

RQ1: What is the role of community-based organizations in training and leadership development in rural Myanmar?

RQ2: What challenges do leaders of education and training centers in Myanmar face in facilitating leadership development and training?

RQ3: What strategies (mindsets, policies, and practices) have leaders used to achieve the mission of their organizations amidst conflict?

Thus, this discussion seeks to answer these questions more directly and reflect on how this study fits with existing literature.

### Discussion

The findings from this study are discussed in the following sections: the motivation of the leader to provide leadership and human resource development (LHRD) at the community level; the use of group training in the CBO context; and the need to build resilience and adapt to crises.

In communities, just like in organizations, people are the most important asset. This study showed that in communities, especially with young people who cannot benefit from traditional higher education, that there are few opportunities for them to develop their skills. Thus, a key role of CBOs in the Myanmar context is to provide this type of training and development for community members. This fits with research such as Day (2011) who talked about the importance of developing leaders as an act of human capital development. In some ways, the community functions like an organization itself. In a traditional organizational context, such as a

business, the leader is motivated to invest in LHRD initiatives because it provides a return on investment. However, in the community context, there is a humanitarian motive of the leaders of these CBOs. As our data shows, they were not motivated simply because they would get some obvious monetary return. In actuality, they were motivated to give back to their communities of which they themselves were members. This demonstrates their function in the community as servant leaders. According to Northouse (2015), servant leadership involves characteristics such as listening, awareness, “stewardship” and “commitment to the growth of people” (p. 228). The six leaders in this study all demonstrated aspects of servant leadership as they demonstrated these characteristics. In particular, they all showed a commitment to the growth and development of members of their community. This then contributed to another element of servant leadership, which is “building community” (Northouse, 2015, p. 229). In this sense, leaders of CBOs are naturally fitted to operate as servant leaders given that servant leadership theory is interconnected with community building.

A second finding of this study related to how leaders of CBOs use training to support their communities. Given the lack of resources that the participants talked about, the model of group training employed by the leaders of these organizations is not surprising given that group training is often used in organizations that lack resources (Nda, 2013), especially as it relates to money and personnel (Lloveras et al., 2021). In the Myanmar context, there is a lack of funding for organizations and they cannot rely on student fees. For example, one of the participants talked about her trainees not being able to pay for several years and having to rely on her personal funds. This related to how CBO leaders make learning and training real and applicable for their trainees. The best form of learning is application where individuals are able to implement what they learn and see where they need to improve in a controlled setting. This type

of blended teaching method, as emphasized by Participant 6, accomplishes the goal of keeping the students busy with learning to build engagement. When students are idle their minds tend to lose focus and think about other challenges they are facing such as family responsibilities.

Third, as the literature shows, leaders must be always evolving and improving to succeed, especially in times of crisis, which require resilience (Eliot, 2020). The leaders in this study were clearly dealing with multiple crises, which included extreme lack of resources and COVID-19. In addition, while we were not able to ask or report on the participants' experiences with the military junta, we know that all leaders of CBOs in Myanmar are, in fact, dealing with struggles related to the military coup of 2021. Clearly, the leaders are dealing with crises and have needed to evolve and improve their services to survive. This type of leader resilience came up again and again in our interviews as the leaders talked about the mindset needed to adapt and survive amidst crisis. Just as Decman et al. (2021) talked about the need for leaders to demonstrate "risk awareness, cooperation, agility, and improvisation" (p. 13), the leaders in this study showed clear ability to be proactive and adapt to the challenges they faced.

In this study, perseverance of the leader and lack of resources was emphasized by the participants. The topics of perseverance and lack of resources are different yet highly related in this study. Each participant that was interviewed expressed the struggles they faced due to the lack of resources. Yet they also discussed the strategies they used to persevere through these challenging times. As we have seen the participants had ways that they dealt with the lack of resources. In the Myanmar context all the strategies that the participants utilized relate back to perseverance. Participant 1 stated that "as long as we keep the operation going and we maintain our student's number, that is success." Participant 1 goes on to say, "every day if we have no big problems, and achieve our daily goals and objectives." This highlights the importance of staying

positive and seeing the good in every day. It is essential to learn from mistakes and be prepared for challenges rather than dwell on them. This is something that was discussed by Participant 4 who said to “always look for the plan B and plan Z so if something happened then we would always be in a safe position.”

Even though lack of resources and perseverance are not related, without such prevalent challenges of lack of resources the theme of perseverance may not have been as prominent.

### **Implications**

The overall implications of this study will be discussed in this section focusing on implications for research and practice.

#### **Implications for Future Research**

One clear implication for future research would be to explore the connection between leaders of CBOs and their servant leadership characteristics. Are all leaders of CBOs servant leaders? In what contexts do they demonstrate servant leadership? Given that one of the characteristics of servant leadership in “foresight” (Northouse, 2015, p. 228), how do leaders of CBOs who live in volatile environments such as Myanmar, convey foresight to their followers? How does foresight manifest in contexts such as this?

A second implication for future research would be to look at how leaders of CBOs use group work and other innovative teaching methods to keep their students motivated. In this study, we only conducted interviews, so we did not get to observe the leaders and trainers in the organizations, so we only got to hear their perspectives. In a future study, if possible, we could conduct participant observations and training observations to see how the leaders use training methods to motivate their students. This could include talking with the students themselves to

understand their motivation for participating in the trainings and their opinion about the quality of instruction and what types of activities they find valuable.

A third implication for future research is to conduct longitudinal studies of these organizations to see how they continue to adapt and innovate over the years. For example, in 10 years, it would be interesting to see how the organizations are doing, what the students go on to do in their lives with the training that they received, how (if at all) have the training methods and/or topics changed, and how the challenges they deal with have changed during that time.

### **Implications for Practice**

This study outlines implications for leadership and HRD practitioners. First, this study implies that leaders of organizations in volatile environments need to adapt to the various challenges they face. This is particularly important in rural settings where resources are limited. This also applies to organizational contexts where there is deep need and simply closing the organization is not an option. In the organizations in this study, if the leaders stopped offering the trainings, it would likely cut off the students from all post-secondary education opportunities.

Second, leaders of CBOs (and likely all organizations) would benefit from being aware of the challenges and responsibilities that trainees are facing outside the organization. This would allow them to tailor their training methods to foster engagement and promote retention. With regard to training methods, this study also shows how it is important for leaders of educational and training centers to use practice-based and application-based training methods. Students with familial responsibilities do not have the luxury of getting additional education and training for leisure. Thus, they must perceive the training as relevant for their lives, otherwise they will lose motivation and focus during the training.



Third, as leaders seek to confront the challenges of lack of resources, they need to learn from other stakeholders. Given that CBOs are necessarily embedded in communities, the leaders must learn to rely on the community and its resources. This also applies to external partners like international organizations. Not only is their personal mindset important for the organization to survive, but leaders must also be able to rely on others. To do this, leaders could go out into the community and see how different community members need help and in what areas. This could then influence the instructional methods or training course content.

## APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT MESSAGE

Note: Participant Information Sheet will be attached to the following message:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in Research Study

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

*My name is Dr. Oliver “Ozzie” Crocco, Assistant Professor at Louisiana State University (LSU), and my colleague is LSU student Anna Rockett. We are conducting a study about how leaders of community-based training and education organizations in Myanmar are facilitating their programs and fostering leadership capacities in young adults. We are writing to invite you to participate in this study by being interviewed via Zoom. Interviews would take between 45-90 minutes, and we would ask you questions about your experience in leading an organization that offers leadership development programs. For example, what challenges do you face in offering your programs and what role do your programs play in your community? We are also interested in learning what strategies you use to achieve the mission of your organization. While there are no monetary benefits to participating, your knowledge would greatly enhance scholarship in this area, and we could learn a lot from you.*

*I’m attaching the Participant Information Sheet, which has more information. If you’re interested, please reply to this email and let us know.*

*Thank you so much for your consideration!*

*Ozzie and Anna*

## APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

**Please read this information sheet carefully and decide whether or not you would like to participate in this study.**

**Project Title:** Leadership Development and Training in Community-Based Organizations in Myanmar

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this exploratory qualitative study is to understand how leaders of community-based training and education organizations in Myanmar are facilitating their programs and fostering leadership capabilities in young adults.

### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:**

Inclusion Criteria:

- Individuals 18 years or older
- Individuals working as leaders or managers of community-based training and/or education organizations in Myanmar

Exclusion Criteria:

- Individuals under the age of 18 years
- Individuals not working as leaders or managers of community-based training and/or education organizations in Myanmar

To participate in this study, you must meet the requirements of both the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

**What you will be asked to do in the study:** You will be asked to participate in an interview about your experiences as a leader of a community-based training or education organization in Myanmar over Zoom. The interviews will be recorded, but you are not required to turn on your camera. There will be no other requirements.

**Time Required:** Approximately 45-90 minutes.

**Anticipated Risks of Participation:** There are minimal risks to participants, namely in potential loss of confidentiality; however, careful steps are taken to preserve the confidentiality of participants (see below). The Zoom room will be a private and password-protected room to ensure participant security during the interview.

**Benefits/ Compensation:** There is no compensation or other direct benefit to you for participation; however, information gained from this research may benefit participants by deepening your understanding of your experience.

**Confidentiality:** Your identity will be kept confidential. All identifying information will be removed from the data set. When the study is complete and the data is analyzed, the list of participants will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report or communication with anyone beyond the research team (Oliver “Ozzie” Crocco and Anna Rockett). To further protect

all participants, any mention of the government or military will be omitted from the analysis. The consent forms will be stored in a password-protected cloud service for a maximum of 2 years. Recordings will be stored for a maximum of 2 years.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating and you may withdraw at any time during the study if you choose to participate.

**Whom to contact if you have questions:** Please contact Dr. Oliver Crocco, (225) 578-5751, [olivercrocco@lsu.edu](mailto:olivercrocco@lsu.edu) or Anna Rockett, (919) 214-1949, [arocke3@lsu.edu](mailto:arocke3@lsu.edu).

**Whom to contact about your rights in the study:** Research at Louisiana State University involving human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. For information about participants' rights please contact: Institutional Review Board Chairman Alex Cohen, (225) 578-8692, [irb@lsu.edu](mailto:irb@lsu.edu), or [www.lsu.edu/research](http://www.lsu.edu/research)

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### Introduction

As you know, our names are Anna Rockett, a student at Louisiana State University (LSU) in the United States and I'm Dr. Oliver "Ozzie" Crocco, an Assistant Professor in the School of Leadership and Human Resource Development at LSU. Thank you for participating in this study. Your answers will help us better understand your experiences as leaders of education and training centers in Myanmar. Keep in mind that all answers will be kept confidential, and all data will be presented in aggregate form, which means that we won't identify specific people, locations, or identifying details. Do any of you have any questions? Let's get started.

11. We'd like to ask you some questions about your work as an educator/trainer in general, discuss some challenges you face in your work, and consider the factors that have contributed to your success. First, I'd like to begin by having you introduce yourself and share a little about how you became a leader of this organization.
12. Can you tell me about a day in the life of your work?
13. What is the mission/vision of your organization? (Feel free to speak generally and avoid identifying information.) What motivates you to do this work?
14. If you had to make a list, what are some of the key challenges you face in achieving the organization's mission in the last year? [Some potential follow-up questions might include the follow:
  - a. Regarding partnerships, in particular with higher education institutions
  - b. How has your organization used the internet in the past? What challenges, if any, have you experienced with internet use, especially in the last year?
  - c. How has COVID impacted your organization?
  - d. How did you keep your students motivated to want to prioritize their education/training amidst competing priorities?
  - e. What have you noticed most negatively affects student learning?
15. What adjustments have you had to make in the last year?
16. What supports and resources have been most helpful? What is most missing?
17. Have you worked in a similar role or taught outside of Myanmar? If so, how would you compare your experiences?
18. We also want to talk about how you've been able to succeed in your work. How do you define success?
19. What do you think has contributed most to your success as a leader?
  - a. What mindset is required for you to be successful?
  - b. Policies?
  - c. Practices?
20. There are other countries that have experienced similar struggles. What advice would you give to leaders of similar organizations in other contexts based on your experience?

## APPENDIX D: LSU INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



**TO:** Oliver Crocco  
LSUAM | Col of HSE | Leadership and Human  
Resource Development | CC00162

**FROM:** Alex Cohen  
Chairman, Institutional Review Board

**DATE:** 20-Apr-2022

**RE:** IRBAM-22-0379

**TITLE:** Leadership Development and Training in  
Community-Based Organizations in Myanmar

**SUBMISSION TYPE:** Initial Application

**Review Type:** Full

**Risk Factor:** Minimal

**Review Date:** 08-Apr-2022

**Status:** Approved

**Approval Date:** 08-Apr-2022

**Approval Expiration Date:** 07-Apr-2023

**Re-review frequency:** (three years unless otherwise stated)

**Number of subjects approved:** 5

**LSU Proposal Number:**

**By:** Alex Cohen, Chairman

### Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects\*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.

7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.

8. **SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc.**

*\* All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/research>*

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