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Community Resilience through Adaptive Reorganization and Mobilization of Local Assets Under Prolonged Challenges: A Multiple-Case Study of Selected Communities in Central Myanmar

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ABSTRACT: This study explores how selected rural communities in central Myanmar sustain community development under conditions of prolonged challenges. Rather than treating resilience as a return to pre-disrupted conditions, the study examines how essential community functions persist through adaptive reorganisation and the mobilisation of existing local assets. A qualitative multiple-case design was used across three purposively selected communities. Initial evidence was collected from March to May 2026 through interpreted meeting notes, follow-up interviews, observations of community-development activities, and organisational records. In August 2026, the emerging interpretation was further examined through researcher observation and appointed discussion meetings with respondents who possessed contextual knowledge of the study setting. This August phase was used for contextual verification and triangulation rather than as a new representative sample; the findings are therefore interpreted as relevant through August 2026. Across the cases, community development continued, but the organisational form through which it was carried out changed. Decision-making became more flexible, existing human, organisational, material, financial, and relational assets were combined and repurposed, and established roles became more multifunctional. Cross-case analysis identifies four interrelated factors that appeared to enable this resilience: pre-existing community capacities and accumulated experience; mobilisation and adaptive use of local assets; organisational adaptability; and relational capacity. The August verification further suggested that previous experience and shared practical knowledge informed subsequent adaptation. The study conceptualises the resulting pattern as functional persistence through adaptive reorganisation. It does not assess political actors or responsibility for crisis-related events, and identifying institutional, financial, and operational details are withheld to reduce disclosure risk.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2021, rural communities in parts of Myanmar have experienced prolonged socioeconomic challenges, population displacement, mobility constraints, institutional uncertainty, and recurrent insecurity. These conditions have affected everyday livelihoods and the organization of community-development activities. This study does not evaluate political or security actors or attribute responsibility for particular events. Instead, it addresses a narrower community-development question: how do communities continue to identify needs, make decisions, mobilize resources, organize work, and maintain locally important functions when ordinary development arrangements become difficult to sustain?

Community resilience is often discussed as the capacity to withstand, adapt to, or recover from shocks (Norris et al. 2008; Magis

2010; Berkes and Ross 2013). In prolonged challenges in the region, however, resilience may not involve returning to a previous organizational condition. The structures through which communities normally act may themselves become difficult to maintain. Large meetings may become impractical, mobility may be constrained, roles may need to change, and the physical form or timing of community activities may require adjustment. Under such conditions, continuity may depend on organizational change rather than organizational preservation.

This study examines three purposively selected communities in central Myanmar. The cases do not represent central Myanmar as a whole. They are used analytically to explore processes through which community development continued under prolonged challenges. The central proposition developed from the evidence is that communities may preserve the function of collective development by changing the structures through which that function is performed. The study terms this functional persistence through adaptive reorganization.

The study also gives particular attention to the mobilization and adaptive use of existing community assets. These assets include skills, local knowledge, organizational experience, established community groups, voluntary labour, material resources, financial practices, social relationships, and connections extending beyond the immediate locality. Social capital is retained as a supporting analytical concept because relationships help activate and coordinate assets; however, social cohesion is not treated as a primary outcome or explanatory variable.

Community involvement is examined in similarly process-oriented terms. Rather than assuming that participation is either present or absent, the study asks how community members remain involved in identifying priorities, planning, advising, organizing, implementing, and maintaining accountability when the form of collective decision-making changes. This distinction is important because formal participation may narrow while less visible forms of involvement continue through representatives, household consultation, advisory roles, documentation, mediation, and informal communication.

The study therefore contributes to community-resilience and community-development scholarship by specifying a mechanism of resilience under prolonged challenges: adaptive reorganization combined with the mobilization and repurposing of existing assets. It also identifies the limits of that mechanism. Resilience in this paper does not mean self-sufficiency, invulnerability, political endorsement, or successful recovery. It refers to a bounded and observable capacity to sustain essential community functions despite changing constraints.

1.1 Research questions

1. RQ1. How do selected rural communities adapt and reorganize community-development processes under conditions of prolonged challenges?
2. RQ2. What existing community assets and capacities are mobilized and adaptively used to sustain community-development activities?
3. RQ3. How are community members and locally recognized actors involved in decision-making, planning, implementation, and accountability as organizational arrangements change?
4. RQ4. How do locally embedded relationships and wider connections support or constrain the mobilization of community assets?
5. RQ5. What factors appear to enable community resilience across the cases, and how do accumulated experience and shared practical knowledge contribute to subsequent adaptation?
6. RQ6. What similarities, differences, and limits of adaptive capacity are visible across the three cases?

1.2 Conceptual overview

Figure 1 provides the study's organizing logic. Protracted challenges addressed in this paper is treated as a contextual condition rather than as a political variable. The analytical focus begins with challenges to ordinary community-development arrangements and follows adaptive reorganization and asset mobilization toward functional persistence. Cross-case analysis then considers the community capacities, organizational adaptability, relational resources, and accumulated practical experience that appear to enable this process. These are qualitative explanatory factors rather than statistically tested independent variables.

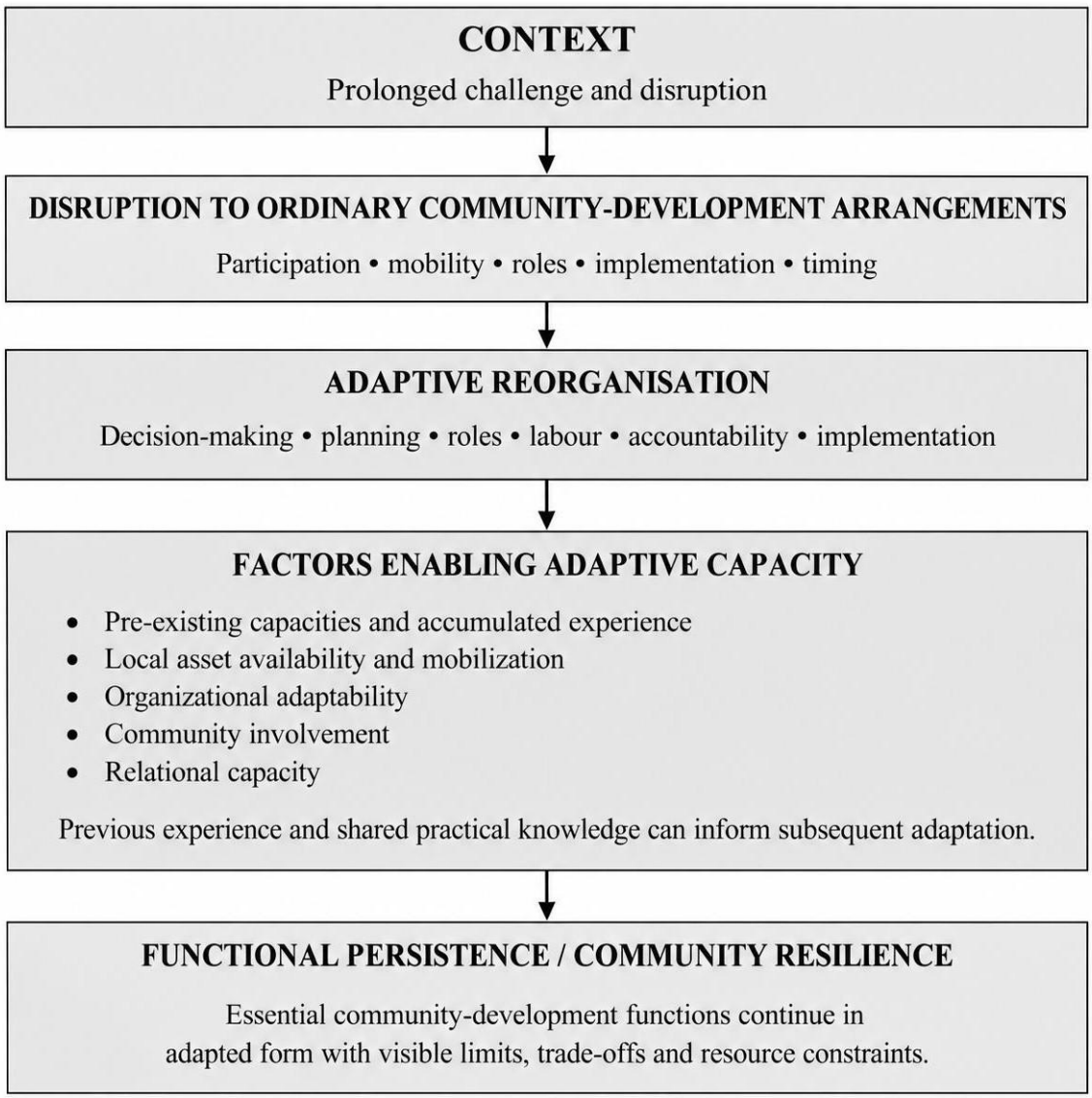


Figure 1. Pathway from prolonged challenge to community resilience

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Community resilience under prolonged challenges

Community resilience has been conceptualized as a set of adaptive capacities through which communities respond to disturbance (Norris et al. 2008), as the development and engagement of community resources under change and uncertainty (Magis 2010), and as a combination of agency, self-organization, learning, and collective resource mobilization (Berkes and Ross 2013). Recent scholarship continues to emphasize multidimensional community capacities and the role of participation, networks, and locally embedded resources in resilience (Güngör and Elburz 2024). These approaches are useful here because they direct attention away from resilience as a personality trait and toward observable community processes.

Resilience nevertheless carries conceptual risks. If every community that continues to function is simply labelled resilient, the concept becomes circular (Olsson et al. 2015). It can also romanticize endurance or shift attention away from structural constraints (MacKinnon and Derickson 2013). The present study therefore uses resilience cautiously. A community is not described as resilient merely because an activity continued. The analysis identifies what changed, what resources were mobilized, which functions persisted, and where adaptation remained insufficient.

Much resilience research originates in disaster and post-disaster settings in which shocks are episodic. Prolonged crisis differs because uncertainty is recurrent and organizational arrangements may need repeated adjustment. The relevant question is therefore not only whether communities recover, but how they continue to organize essential functions when challenges become part of the operating environment.

2.2 Community involvement and community-driven development

Community-driven development (CDD) emphasizes local ownership, participation, and collective decision-making (Mansuri and Rao 2004, 2013). Critical scholarship, however, shows that participation varies in depth and may range from consultation to meaningful control (Cornwall 2008), while participatory arrangements can also reproduce local inequalities or external agendas (Cooke and Kothari 2001). Recent work further shows that bottom-up participation can strengthen community resilience while remaining dependent on enabling governance and organizational conditions (Kirby et al. 2025).

For this study, CDD is used as a reference point rather than as a claim that the observed communities followed a formal CDD model. The preferred analytical term is community involvement. This allows the analysis to capture a wider range of roles through which community members influence development: identifying needs, advising, planning, documenting, mediating, organizing labour, contributing resources, implementing activities, and maintaining accountability. It also avoids treating large public meetings as the only meaningful form of participation.

Under prolonged challenges, the breadth and visibility of participation may change. A shift toward smaller representative arrangements may reduce direct participation while still preserving channels of community involvement. Whether such changes are inclusive, legitimate, or experienced positively cannot be assumed and must be bounded by the available evidence.

2.3 Asset-based community development and adaptive asset use

Asset-based community development (ABCD) begins with capacities already present within communities, including skills, associations, institutions, knowledge, relationships, and material resources (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993; Mathie and Cunningham 2003). Recent empirical work likewise links local resources, asset mobilization, and citizen participation with development outcomes, while emphasizing that asset-based action remains dependent on context and supporting resources (Chen et al. 2024; South et al. 2024). This orientation is especially relevant where routine systems are unreliable or access is constrained.

The present study extends the asset perspective by emphasizing adaptive usability. An asset is valuable not only because of its normal productive function, but because it can be recombined, repurposed, or reassigned under changed conditions. A person may assume multiple roles; a standing committee may take on a new function; an established accountability practice may be simplified or delayed; and local relationships may become channels for information, labour, or resource mobilization.

This approach avoids describing communities as self-sufficient. Local assets can sustain some functions while remaining inadequate for larger or longer-term needs. Resilience and resource sufficiency are therefore analytically distinct.

2.4 Social capital as a supporting mechanism

Social capital theory distinguishes bonding ties within close groups, bridging ties across comparable groups, and linking ties across differences in institutional power (Woolcock 1998; Woolcock and Narayan 2000). Research on shocks shows that relationships can support mutual aid and collective recovery (Aldrich 2012), while recent community-based crisis research similarly identifies social capital as a mechanism for mobilizing collective resources (Björngren Cuadra and Rämgård 2025).

In this paper, social capital is not treated as the principal outcome and social cohesion is not assumed. Relational resources are examined insofar as they help communities activate assets, communicate, coordinate, access knowledge, and connect to resources. The study remains open to the possibility that relationships can also exclude, constrain, or unevenly distribute influence.

2.5 Factors enabling community resilience and adaptive capacity

The study's additional interest in factors that enable resilience can be addressed within the existing community-resilience framework without introducing a separate programme-planning theory. Resilience scholarship treats adaptive capacity as dependent on interacting resources and capacities rather than on a single determinant. Norris et al. (2008) conceptualize community resilience through linked adaptive capacities, while Magis (2010) emphasizes the development and engagement of

community resources in responding to change. Berkes and Ross (2013) similarly highlight the interaction of community strengths, agency, learning, leadership, networks, and place-based capacities.

For this study, the enabling factors are organized around four empirically relevant dimensions. First, pre-existing community capacities include practical experience, local knowledge, skills, and familiarity with collective problem-solving. Second, local asset availability and mobilization concern whether human, organizational, material, financial, and relational resources can be activated and recombined; this dimension is consistent with asset-based community development (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993; Mathie and Cunningham 2003). Third, organizational adaptability concerns the capacity to modify roles, decision arrangements, labour, and implementation practices while maintaining essential functions. Fourth, relational capacity concerns the trust, cooperation, and wider connections through which resources and information become usable, drawing on social-capital scholarship (Woolcock and Narayan 2000; Aldrich 2012).

Accumulated experience is treated cautiously as part of adaptive capacity rather than as a separate theoretical lens. Resilience research recognizes learning and memory as potentially important to adaptation, but experience should not be assumed automatically to produce resilience. In the present study, previous experience becomes analytically relevant only where the evidence indicates that practical knowledge was retained, shared, or incorporated into later decisions and practices. This interpretation keeps the theoretical focus on community resilience while allowing the August 2026 verification evidence to explain how earlier experience may inform subsequent adaptation.

2.6 Community development in the Myanmar context and research gap

Myanmar's recent period of prolonged challenges provides a demanding setting in which to examine community-development continuity. Population displacement, mobility constraints, economic uncertainty, and interruptions to routine institutions can alter how communities organize collective activities. The present study does not investigate political legitimacy, governance transition, or the conduct of particular actors; these matters fall outside its research questions.

A narrower gap concerns the everyday organization of community development under prolonged challenges. Less is known about how communities continue to select priorities, coordinate people, use existing assets, and implement locally important activities when ordinary arrangements are difficult to maintain. This study addresses that gap through a qualitative multiple-case analysis of three selected communities in central Myanmar.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

The study uses a qualitative multiple-case design (Yin 2018) to examine community-level processes of adaptation, reorganization, asset mobilization, and involvement. The comparative logic is analytic rather than statistical (Flyvbjerg 2006; Yin 2018). The cases are used to identify recurring mechanisms and meaningful variation; they are not intended to estimate prevalence or represent all communities in central Myanmar.

The unit of analysis is the community-development process: how needs are identified, decisions are organized, roles are distributed, resources are mobilized, activities are implemented, and accountability is maintained under prolonged challenges.

3.2 Setting, case selection and confidentiality

Three rural communities in central Myanmar were purposively selected because they were accessible for safe qualitative engagement and because there was documented evidence of continuing community-development activity during the study period. Selecting cases in which continuation was observable is a deliberate design choice. The study can therefore explain how continuation occurred in these cases; it cannot estimate how frequently community-development activity stops elsewhere.

To minimize disclosure risk, the communities are not named and are referred to only as Case A, Case B, and Case C. Exact locations, household counts, dates of sensitive incidents, organizational affiliations, names or categories of politically sensitive local bodies, and operational security arrangements are withheld or generalized. The paper also avoids reporting combinations of project characteristics and incident details that could permit deductive identification.

The wider institutional and security environment is treated only as contextual. The study makes no findings concerning the legitimacy, performance, or responsibility of political, administrative, or security actors.

3.3 Research access and data provenance

Field access developed through ongoing community-development engagement. Because the circumstances through which access was obtained could reveal organizations, communities, or relationships that are not necessary to answer the research questions, identifying institutional and financial details are withheld. The analysis does not evaluate any supporting organization or financing arrangement.

This access context may nevertheless have influenced what participants chose to emphasize, particularly when describing orderly decision-making or community capacity. Rather than claiming that the data were generated in a context free from such influence, the study treats possible self-presentation effects as a methodological limitation. Analytic claims are therefore based on convergence across meeting records, follow-up interviews, observations, organizational information, and later key-informant verification rather than on any single account.

3.4 Data collection and subsequent verification

Initial field evidence was collected between March and May 2026 through sequential qualitative engagement across the three cases. The corpus included two rounds of group discussions or meetings, targeted follow-up interviews, observations of ongoing or completed community-development activities, and records describing community organizational arrangements. Formats were adapted to local access and safety conditions.

Participants were primarily people with knowledge of community coordination and development processes. This provided comparatively strong evidence about organization, planning, implementation, and accountability, but weaker direct evidence about the experiences of ordinary households, youth, displaced residents, and women outside visible coordinating roles.

A further verification phase was conducted in August 2026. Rather than relying only on the March–May records, the researcher observed discussion workshops and participated in appointed discussion meetings with respondents who had sufficient contextual knowledge to assess the plausibility and relevance of the emerging interpretation. These August discussions were used to verify, challenge, qualify, and contextualize the earlier findings. They were not treated as a new statistically representative sample, and they are not described as conventional member checking because not all respondents were the same individuals who generated the original case records. The appropriate methodological description is contextual verification and triangulation by knowledgeable respondents.

The August verification extended the temporal relevance of the interpretation beyond the initial March–May field period. Accordingly, the findings in this paper reflect evidence and contextual verification available through August 2026. This does not constitute a longitudinal design: the August phase primarily tested whether the identified mechanisms and interpretations remained contextually credible rather than re-measuring each case. Sensitive information arising in the verification discussions, including identifiable institutional arrangements and operational details, was excluded because it was not necessary to answer the community-development research questions.

3.5 Character of the data

The primary records consist mainly of interpreted notes and translated or summarized accounts rather than complete verbatim transcripts. Participant meaning is therefore mediated through note-taking and, in some instances, translation (Fujii 2010; Temple and Young 2004). The revised manuscript consequently avoids presenting reconstructed wording as direct quotation.

Items that could not be independently supported were excluded from core findings or explicitly treated as respondent interpretation. This is particularly important for statements concerning motives, causal responsibility, or wider regional generalization.

3.6 Analysis

Analysis proceeded in three linked stages. First, a descriptive case account was constructed for each community from the March–May meeting notes, interviews, observations, and organizational information. Second, cross-case pattern matching was conducted around continuity of essential community-development functions, adaptive reorganization, mobilization and repurposing of existing assets, forms of community involvement, and constraints on adaptive capacity (Miles et al. 2014). Third, the emerging interpretation was revisited against the August 2026 workshop observations and appointed discussion meetings. August evidence was coded as confirming, expanding, qualifying, contradicting, or introducing a new interpretation.

Community resilience served as the primary interpretive lens. ABCD informed the analysis of local assets; CDD informed interpretation of participation and involvement; and social capital provided a supporting vocabulary for relational resources. The analysis also compared the cases for factors that appeared to enable adaptive reorganization and functional persistence. These were grouped inductively and in dialogue with resilience literature as pre-existing community capacities and accumulated experience, local asset mobilization, organizational adaptability, community involvement, and relational capacity. These categories were treated as qualitative explanatory dimensions rather than statistically tested independent variables. Where August verification evidence connected previous experience with later decisions or practices, this was interpreted as practical learning within adaptive capacity rather than as a separate theory test.

3.7 Ethics and duty of care

Research involving communities experiencing prolonged challenges requires heightened attention to participant protection. The study therefore applies data minimization as a publication principle. Community names, individual identities, precise locations, politically sensitive affiliations, funding identities, access pathways, and operational security details are not reported. Where a factual detail is analytically unnecessary but could increase deductive disclosure risk, it is omitted or generalized.

Participants were informed that the engagement could inform research and consent was obtained verbally through the available field arrangements. The research team retained anonymized notes. The study did not undergo formal institutional ethical review; this absence is acknowledged as a limitation. The protective measures described here reduce disclosure risk but do not substitute for formal review.

4. FINDINGS

The findings integrate the initial March–May 2026 case evidence with contextual verification undertaken in August 2026. They are therefore interpreted as relevant through August 2026, while remaining bounded by the qualitative design. The findings are presented at a level of abstraction designed to preserve analytical mechanisms while minimizing disclosure risk; identifying operational and organizational details are intentionally omitted.

4.1 Community development continued through adaptation rather than preservation

Across all three cases, communities continued to undertake locally identified development activities during prolonged challenges. The activities differed in content and stage of completion, but each case showed evidence that needs were identified, decisions were made, resources were mobilized, and implementation continued despite interruptions and uncertainty.

Continuity did not mean that ordinary procedures remained unchanged. Activities were delayed, rescheduled, simplified, reorganized, or carried out through smaller working arrangements when previous forms became difficult to maintain. The most consistent cross-case pattern was therefore not institutional stability but functional continuity through organizational change.

This distinction is central to the study. What persisted was the community-development function—identifying needs, planning responses, mobilizing resources, implementing activities, and maintaining some form of accountability—while the structures carrying those functions were adapted.

4.2 Community involvement shifted toward more flexible and representative decision-making

Participants across the cases described broader collective procedures as an established reference point for major community decisions. Under prolonged challenges, however, the breadth and form of direct participation became more variable. Smaller groups of locally recognized people increasingly handled planning and coordination when broader gatherings or routine procedures were difficult to maintain.

This should not be interpreted simply as the disappearance of community participation. Information and influence could continue through household communication, representatives, informal consultation, sectoral roles, and post-decision communication. The evidence therefore supports the term adaptive reconfiguration of community involvement rather than a binary distinction between participation and non-participation.

The August verification discussions strengthened and qualified this interpretation. They suggest that adaptive capacity may draw partly on accumulated local experience and that formal organizational visibility does not fully capture community involvement. They also reinforce the distinction between resilience and self-sufficiency: communities can be organizationally adaptive while remaining materially constrained. Across the cases, the factors most consistently associated with continued community-

development functions were pre-existing capacities and experience, mobilizable local assets, organizational adaptability, community involvement, and relational capacity. Previous experience and shared practical knowledge appear to contribute by enlarging the repertoire available for subsequent adaptation.

Across the cases, adaptation in decision-making involved a trade-off: smaller arrangements could maintain continuity and practical feasibility, while reducing the breadth of direct deliberation. Because the data are weighted toward coordinating actors, the study cannot determine how all community members experienced these changes.

4.3 Existing community assets were mobilized, combined and repurposed

The communities drew extensively on assets that existed before the observed period of challenges. These included practical skills, local knowledge, established organizational routines, community-based groups, bookkeeping and accountability practices, labour, locally available materials, household contributions, and relationships that could be activated when needs arose.

These assets were not merely used in their previous form. They were recombined and repurposed. Existing groups assumed additional functions, people took on responsibilities outside their usual roles, and established practices were adjusted to fit changing circumstances. The August verification discussions reinforce this finding by describing individuals who became multifunctional when particular services or skills were scarce. One synthesized account, for example, described an educator also providing basic health-related assistance because local alternatives were limited.

This pattern is better described as mobilization and adaptive use of existing assets than as 'redeployment'. It reflects a flexible process in which the usefulness of an asset depends on its capacity to be recombined with other local resources under changed conditions.

4.4 Adaptive capacity drew partly on accumulated local experience

The August verification discussions broadened the temporal interpretation of resilience. Some respondents located present adaptive capacity within a longer history of economic difficulty, limited infrastructure, and recurrent hardship in the central dry-zone context. In these accounts, coping with uncertainty did not begin with the current crisis.

This finding requires careful interpretation. The study does not claim that hardship inherently produces resilience, nor does it treat resilience as an essential cultural trait of people from central Myanmar. A more defensible interpretation is that repeated experience can generate an accumulated repertoire of local knowledge, practical improvisation, social expectations, and organizational habits that may later be drawn upon under new forms of challenges.

Such accumulated experience may help explain why some everyday and community-development functions continue even when uncertainty becomes recurrent. At the same time, respondents also described current conditions in terms of survival and resource scarcity. Historical adaptability therefore should not be romanticized as unlimited capacity.

4.5 Roles became more multifunctional and context-responsive

The division of community responsibilities was not fixed. Across the evidence, established roles were adjusted according to available skills, mobility, practical need, and local judgments about feasibility. People who previously performed a narrower function could assume additional tasks, while some responsibilities were redistributed among those able to perform them.

Gender is one area in which the initial observations and August verification discussions require a more nuanced interpretation. The earlier field record showed women concentrated in particular practical and organizational functions and less visible in some formal coordinating positions. The August verification discussions, however, emphasized women's advisory, planning, documentation, educational, health, mediating, and household-level influence. Taken together, the evidence supports a finding of differentiated and context-dependent involvement rather than either simple exclusion or empowerment.

The study therefore avoids normative claims about gendered role change. It identifies adaptive role redistribution while recognizing that the available evidence is insufficient to establish how women themselves evaluate these arrangements across different communities.

4.6 Relational resources extended the usable asset base

Community assets were not limited to material resources located within each settlement. Relationships within communities and connections extending beyond them helped circulate information, mobilize labour, access skills, and obtain contributions.

August verification evidence also emphasized continuing relationships with people originating from the region but living elsewhere, suggesting that community attachment can extend the practical resource network beyond the immediate locality.

Social capital is therefore best interpreted here as an enabling mechanism of asset mobilization. Relationships can make existing resources usable by connecting people, information, knowledge, and assistance. The evidence does not justify treating social cohesion as a uniform community characteristic, and the study does not assume that all relationships are inclusive or equally beneficial.

4.7 Resilience was bounded by material scarcity and feasibility

The continuation of community-development activity did not imply self-sufficiency. Both the original observations and later interviews indicated limits in finance, materials, specialist capacity, mobility, and the scale of activities that could be undertaken locally. Some desired activities could be delayed, reduced, substituted, or reconsidered because available resources and operating conditions were insufficient.

This distinction between adaptive capacity and resource sufficiency is important. Communities may demonstrate strong capacity to organize and mobilize what they have while still being unable to meet larger development needs. Community resilience in these cases is therefore bounded: it can sustain selected functions and projects, but it cannot be assumed to provide long-term recovery or comprehensive development.

4.8 The material form of development was adapted to changing conditions

The evidence also indicates that adaptation affected not only organizational processes but the form of community-development choices themselves. Communities considered practicality, visibility, concentration, maintenance requirements, mobility, and multiple uses when deciding what forms of activity were feasible under uncertain conditions.

To protect communities, the revised manuscript does not reproduce project-specific combinations of location, infrastructure type, incident history, or security practice. At the analytical level, however, the pattern is clear: community-development choices incorporated local knowledge about changing conditions, and the preferred form of an activity could change even when the underlying need remained.

4.9 Factors enabling community resilience

Cross-case comparison suggests that resilience was supported by a configuration of interrelated factors rather than by any single community characteristic. The first was pre-existing community capacity. Practical skills, accumulated experience, local knowledge, and familiarity with collective problem-solving gave communities an existing repertoire from which to respond when ordinary arrangements became difficult to maintain.

The second factor was the availability and mobilization of local assets. Human, organizational, material, financial, and relational resources mattered because they could be activated, combined, or repurposed. The cases therefore support an ABCD-consistent distinction between possessing assets and being able to mobilize them for collective purposes.

The third factor was organizational adaptability. Communities altered decision arrangements, redistributed responsibilities, extended existing roles, and adjusted implementation practices. This flexibility helped preserve development functions even when the organizational form of those functions changed. Community involvement remained important, although its form and breadth varied according to circumstances.

The fourth factor was relational capacity. Trust, cooperation, established relationships, and wider connections helped make other assets usable by facilitating coordination, information exchange, labour mobilization, and access to assistance. The August 2026 verification additionally indicated that respondents often connected current practices with earlier experience. This suggests that retained and shared practical knowledge may strengthen later adaptation, although the study does not treat learning as an independently tested causal variable.

Taken together, these findings suggest that adaptive reorganization is enabled by the interaction of pre-existing capacities, mobilizable assets, organizational adaptability, community involvement, and relational resources. Because this is a qualitative multiple-case study, these should be understood as empirically identified enabling factors and candidate propositions for future testing rather than as statistically established independent variables.

5. DISCUSSION

4.10 Functional persistence through adaptive reorganization

The central contribution of the study is the specification of community resilience as functional persistence through adaptive reorganization. Across the cases, communities did not sustain development by preserving previous organizational arrangements intact. They sustained it by modifying the arrangements through which core functions were performed.

This interpretation avoids equating resilience with simple survival. The evidence identifies concrete domains of reorganization: decision-making, participation, role distribution, labour and implementation arrangements, timing, accountability, and the form of community-development activities. Resilience is therefore located in the capacity to reorganize these structures while preserving enough of the underlying function for collective development to continue.

The term adaptive is important. Reorganization was not necessarily planned in advance or uniformly successful. It was a practical response to changing constraints. Some arrangements became narrower, some roles expanded, and some desired activities remained beyond local capacity. The resulting resilience was therefore partial and bounded rather than complete.

4.11 From participation to adaptive community involvement

The findings suggest that participation under prolonged challenges should be analyzed by function as well as by form. CDD scholarship rightly emphasizes broad participation and local ownership, but the cases show that direct collective procedures may become difficult to maintain. A smaller decision-making arrangement does not automatically mean that community influence disappears; nor does representation automatically guarantee meaningful inclusion.

The concept of community involvement provides a useful middle position. It directs attention to the multiple ways people influence development — consultation, planning, advising, organizing, contributing, implementing, documenting, mediating, and monitoring—while still allowing researchers to ask who is absent, whose voice is indirect, and what is lost when participation becomes less broad.

The August verification discussions strengthen this interpretation by revealing forms of women's influence that were not fully visible in the initial organizational records. This illustrates a methodological lesson as well: formal organizational charts may understate informal or relational influence.

4.12 Adaptive asset mobilization and role extension

ABCD helps explain why the communities could continue to act despite resource constraints. The observed capacity was rooted in assets already present: knowledge, skills, organizational routines, relationships, labour practices, and community experience. The study adds that the value of these assets lies partly in their adaptability.

Adaptive role extension is one expression of this mechanism. When a person, group, or practice can perform additional functions under changed conditions, the community's effective asset base becomes more flexible. This does not create unlimited capacity, but it may prevent a particular community function from disappearing when specialized resources are unavailable.

The same logic applies to organizational routines. Decision-making, implementation, and accountability can persist in altered forms. Thus, the resilience mechanism is not merely possession of assets but the ability to recombine them.

4.13 Accumulated adaptive experience without romanticizing hardship

The August verification discussions suggest that current adaptive practices may be partly rooted in longer histories of living with scarcity and uncertainty. This finding is culturally relevant, but it requires careful language. Describing a population as naturally resilient risks essentializing culture and normalizing deprivation.

A more defensible concept is accumulated adaptive experience: practical knowledge and organizational habits formed through repeated encounters with constraint. Such experience can become an intangible community asset, but it does not remove vulnerability or reduce the need for material resources. Indeed, the same interviews that emphasized adaptability also emphasized severe resource limitations.

4.14 Social capital as infrastructure for mobilization, not as the main outcome

The revised framework deliberately reduces the theoretical weight placed on bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. The

original evidence supports the importance of trust and relationships, but the more parsimonious interpretation is that social capital enables asset mobilization and coordination rather than constituting a separate form of 'distributed resilience'.

This repositioning preserves the useful insight that different relationships provide different kinds of access while keeping the manuscript centered on its original contribution: communities reorganize and mobilize existing assets to sustain development functions. It also avoids assuming social cohesion where the data are insufficient to assess internal agreement or inclusion.

4.15 What enables adaptive reorganization and functional persistence?

The factor analysis extends the paper from describing how communities reorganize to considering what appears to make such reorganization possible. The evidence points to a mutually reinforcing configuration of pre-existing capacities, mobilizable assets, organizational adaptability, community involvement, and relational capacity. This interpretation is consistent with community-resilience scholarship that treats adaptive capacity as distributed across multiple interacting community resources rather than located in a single variable (Norris et al. 2008; Magis 2010; Berkes and Ross 2013).

Relational capacity cuts across these processes. Trust and cooperation support coordination, while wider relationships can extend the resources available to a community. Social capital is therefore most useful here as a supporting explanation of how other assets become mobilizable rather than as the primary outcome of the study.

The August verification adds a temporal dimension. Respondents' references to earlier experience suggest that practical knowledge can be retained and brought into later decisions. This is compatible with broader resilience literature on learning and adaptive capacity, but the present evidence does not require a separate social-learning framework. A more parsimonious interpretation is that accumulated and shared practical knowledge forms part of the pre-existing adaptive capacity that communities can mobilize when conditions change.

4.16 Boundary conditions and what resilience does not mean

The findings identify several boundaries. First, the cases were selected because continuing development activity was observable; communities in which activity had stopped are not represented. Second, adaptive organization did not eliminate material scarcity. Third, reduced breadth of participation may create inclusion concerns that the leadership-weighted data cannot resolve. Fourth, the August 2026 verification phase extended contextual relevance but did not convert the design into a longitudinal study or provide repeated measurement of each case. Fifth, the identified enabling factors are qualitative explanatory dimensions rather than statistically tested independent variables.

Accordingly, resilience in this study does not mean political support for any actor, approval of the surrounding conditions, cultural invulnerability, self-sufficiency, or successful recovery. It is a narrower analytical description of how selected community functions continued through adaptation.

5 CONCLUSION

This multiple-case study examined how selected communities in central Myanmar sustained community-development functions under prolonged crisis, drawing on initial evidence from March–May 2026 and contextual verification through discussion workshops and appointed meetings in August 2026. The interpretation is therefore relevant through August 2026. Continuity was achieved not by preserving previous organizational arrangements unchanged, but by adapting them. Decision-making became more flexible, roles became more multifunctional, existing assets were combined and repurposed, and locally embedded relationships helped make those assets usable.

The study therefore conceptualizes community resilience as functional persistence through adaptive reorganization. The mechanism can be summarized as follows: prolonged situations challenge ordinary community-development arrangements; communities respond by reorganizing decision-making, roles, implementation, and accountability; existing human, organizational, material, financial, and relational assets are mobilized and adaptively used; community involvement continues through both formal and less visible channels; and selected essential community functions persist in modified form.

The August verification discussions strengthened and qualified this interpretation. They suggest that adaptive capacity may draw partly on accumulated local experience and that formal organizational visibility does not fully capture women's involvement. They also reinforce the distinction between resilience and self-sufficiency: communities can be organizationally adaptive while remaining materially constrained.

The study is intentionally limited to community-development processes. It does not assess the conduct, legitimacy, effectiveness, or responsibility of political, administrative, or security actors. Such questions require different data and analytical frameworks. The contribution here is to community-development scholarship: under prolonged crisis, the persistence of community function may depend on the capacity to reorganize structures and mobilize existing assets rather than on preserving pre-crisis organizational form.

Further research should examine the perspectives of ordinary households, women outside visible coordinating roles, youth, and displaced residents; compare communities where development activity has continued with those where it has not; and test the proposed enabling factors using longitudinal or mixed-method designs. Such research could operationalize pre-existing capacities, asset mobilization, organizational adaptability, community involvement, relational capacity, and accumulated practical learning as measurable constructs and assess their relative association with community-resilience outcomes over time.

DECLARATIONS

Ethics statement

The study did not undergo formal institutional ethical review. Participant protection was addressed through anonymization, data minimization, mediated access, and the withholding of information that could enable deductive identification. Community names, precise locations, individual identities, politically sensitive affiliations, access pathways, financial-source details, and operational security information are not reported. Participants were informed that the engagement could inform research and verbal consent was obtained through the available field arrangements. Only anonymized research notes were retained for analysis.

Data availability statement

The underlying research records are not publicly available because they contain information that could increase deductive disclosure risk for participating communities. Anonymized analytic materials may be considered on reasonable request where disclosure can be made without compromising participant or community protection.

declaration of ai-assisted tools

Generative AI and AI-assisted tools were used in limited supporting roles during the preparation of this manuscript. Interview and field conversations were conducted in Burmese, and the research notes used for analysis were manually prepared in English by the researchers. Google Gemini was used only as a supplementary aid to review and check patterns that had already been identified by the researchers in these notes. It was not used to independently generate analytical categories, interpret the data, or determine the study findings. All qualitative interpretation and analytical decisions remained the responsibility of the authors.

Following preparation of the manuscript draft, AI-assisted language editing was used to improve clarity and the appropriate use of technical terminology without changing the substantive interpretation, findings, or conclusions. NotebookLM was used as a supplementary verification tool to check whether statements in the literature review were contextually consistent with the original sources consulted by the authors; it was not used as a substitute for those sources.

For preparation of the submission version, OpenAI's ChatGPT (GPT-5.6 Sol) was used for technical language editing, limited word-count reduction, reference-style and formatting adjustments, and alignment with the journal's submission requirements.

No generative AI tool was treated as an author or as an independent source of evidence. The authors reviewed the final manuscript and take responsibility for its analysis, interpretations, citations, accuracy, and content.

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