

# Crisis and Continuity: Evaluating Teacher and Community Strategies for Sustaining Education in War-Torn Areas of Myanmar

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## Abstract

This study evaluates the strategies used by teachers and communities to sustain education in conflict-affected areas of Kayah (Karenni) State and Pekon Township in Myanmar. Utilizing resilience theory and program evaluation, the research explores the motivations and challenges faced by teachers, the role of community support, and the impact of capacity-building activities. Key findings reveal that teachers are driven by empathy and a sense of duty, facing significant obstacles such as insecurity and resource scarcity. Community support is crucial, with high levels of parental cooperation and trust within the community facilitating educational resilience. Capacity-building initiatives significantly enhance teaching effectiveness, while student engagement remains resilient despite the conflict. The study highlights the critical need for local and international educational organizations to recognize community-led educational efforts, provide basic educational resources, and establish intermediary programs for higher education access. The paper contributes to the understanding of educational resilience in conflict zones, offering practical recommendations for sustaining education amidst adversity.

**Keywords:** educational resilience, conflict-affected areas, community support, teacher motivation, program evaluation

## 1. Introduction

Education is crucial for personal and societal growth, but in conflict-affected areas like Kayah (Karenni) State in Myanmar, it faces major disruptions. The February 2021 military coup worsened the situation, turning the region into a battlefield and severely impacting education. Despite this, around 500 community-led schools were established by teachers involved in the civil disobedience movement and continue to educate children despite frequent attacks (Radio Free Asia, 2021; SEA Junction, 2022; Fortify Rights, 2022).

Teachers who joined the civil disobedience movement after the coup set up schools in areas controlled by resistance forces, providing education to children displaced by the conflict. These schools operate under challenging conditions, often teaching outdoors or in temporary shelters due to the destruction of school buildings (Radio Free Asia, 2021). The resilience of these educators and the support from local communities highlight the determination to maintain education amidst adversity.

This study focuses on Kayah (Karenni) State and Pekon Township in southern Shan State, both heavily affected by conflict. Many people from that region see Pekon Township as part of Karenni State due to its predominantly Karenni population and historical ties. In these conflict zones, local revolutionary forces and the Military Council are engaged in ongoing armed conflicts.

This research explores the reasons why teachers and volunteers choose to participate, adapt, and persist in such challenging situations to support children's education. It aims to understand the resilience and adaptation strategies of teachers and the role of community support in sustaining education during conflict. Through surveys, this study seeks to provide insights into the factors that help maintain education in these war-torn areas. By integrating Resilience Theory and Program Evaluation Theory, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge on educational resilience and offers practical recommendations for sustaining education in conflict zones.

## 2. Background

The global education landscape has been severely disrupted by wars, violent conflicts, and other humanitarian

crises. According to a 2023 UNESCO report, 250 million children worldwide are deprived of schooling, with the issue being particularly severe in conflict-affected regions (UNESCO, 2023).

Syria exemplifies the impact of conflict on education. Due to ongoing violence, approximately 2.4 million children are out of school, facing severe psychological trauma and an uncertain future (UNICEF, 2022). Similar educational crises are seen in many conflict zones worldwide. In 2023, the Norwegian Refugee Council reported that over 244 million children and adolescents are affected by conflicts. This figure is corroborated by Antoninis and Montoya (2022), who also report that over 244 million children and youth are out of school globally due to various crises. In Afghanistan, decades of conflict have disrupted education, with children facing threats of violence, recruitment by armed groups, and exploitation through child labor (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 2023).

Armed conflicts cause severe psychological and social trauma, especially for children and adolescents. In 2023, the United Nations reported that millions of people are directly impacted by conflicts, resulting in family separation, displacement, and serious injuries. These situations hinder education and disrupt lives, highlighting the need for resilient education systems that provide stability even in unstable conditions.

UNESCO's 2023 report noted that around 28 million children worldwide are unable to attend school due to armed conflicts and associated violence, leading to poverty, inequality, and economic stagnation (UNESCO, 2023). Sustaining education in conflict areas is crucial to reduce risks of abuse, forced labor, and exploitation. Interrupted education often leads to fewer job opportunities and perpetuates poverty cycles (Hennessy et al., 2022). Sustaining education provides normalcy and stability, fostering a safe environment for learning and growth. It also supports peacebuilding, resilience, and prepares youths to contribute positively to society.

In Myanmar, the February 2021 military coup worsened existing civil-war problems, significantly impacting the education sector. Even before the coup, Myanmar's education system faced issues like inadequate infrastructure, underfunding, and limited access to quality education, especially in rural and conflict-affected areas. Post-coup, widespread protests and civil wars led to school closures and a significant decline in student enrollment. In 2024, the matriculation exam registration rate dropped by 87%, threatening the country's future workforce and socio-economic development (RFA Burmese, 2024).

Kayah (Karenni) State, the smallest state in Myanmar, has seen intensified conflicts since the coup, causing many residents to be forcibly displaced. According to the Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG, 2023), there are about 250,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). Before the coup, the state had 73,772 students and 3,840 teachers in 454 schools, showing a strong commitment to education (Ministry of Information, 2019).

The escalated conflict severely disrupted the education system, with targeted attacks on schools limiting access to education. Despite these challenges, educational stakeholders and communities in Kayah State have shown remarkable resilience. Schools have been set up across IDP camps and villages. About 200 schools have been established in different IDP camps, and another 226 schools have been set up in Demawso and Hpruso Townships, with about 87 more schools in Pekon Township (The Irrawaddy, 2023; Kantarawaddy Times, 2021). These efforts by grassroots organizations are crucial for sustaining education under adverse conditions. The Board of Education alone set up over 80 community schools for more than 12,000 students in Pekon Township (No, 2023).

The transition from stable education to makeshift schooling in Kayah (Karenni) State shows the resilience of its communities. The emergence of schools in IDP camps and other conflict-affected townships demonstrates a strong commitment to sustaining education despite hardships. This provides valuable insights into how educational resilience can be developed and sustained in conflict-affected regions.

### **3. Literature Review**

Conflicts have a profound impact on education, leading to the destruction of educational infrastructure, disruptions in teaching, and significant psychological stress on students. Violence associated with conflicts often results in school closures, depriving children of their right to education (Aver, 2020). Conflicts also cause the reallocation of scarce resources, prioritizing survival over education, which exacerbates educational disruptions (Akresh, 2016).

In conflict-affected countries, the breakdown of schools and interrupted teaching have detrimental effects on children's educational outcomes. Displacement due to conflict negatively impacts education and causes psychological stress for children, affecting their overall well-being and learning environment (Herut, Dube, & Dewey, 2022). Conflicts not only destroy physical infrastructure but also harm the overall learning environment, restricting both the supply of and demand for education in conflict-affected regions (Justino, 2016).

Community engagement is essential for educational continuity during conflicts. Local communities play a crucial role in sustaining educational systems by mobilizing resources, creating makeshift schools, and emphasizing the importance of education. Civil society initiatives help maintain culturally relevant education during conflict, leading to greater local ownership and support for education (Fischer, 2006). Community networks assist displaced students affected by conflicts, highlighting the role of community support in maintaining education (Aver, 2020). Building on this, recent findings demonstrate that school-community-family partnerships play a crucial role in sustaining education by mobilizing local resources and providing psychosocial support (No, 2024).

Teachers in conflict zones must adapt their instructional strategies to keep students engaged and support their emotional well-being. Teacher adaptation is a key factor in sustaining education, suggesting that flexible curriculum planning, localized teaching approaches, and trauma-informed practices can help teachers respond effectively to disruptions (Sherif, Brooks, & Mendenhall, 2020). Similar strategies among teachers in Kashmir show how they modify their teaching methods to ensure students continue learning despite ongoing violence (Koul & Bansal, 2023).

In areas where traditional formal schools are unavailable or unsafe, alternative learning approaches are essential. Informal schooling, radio-based education, and mobile learning centers are effective ways to sustain education when formal schooling is disrupted (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). Mobile learning and educational technology support personalized education, which is particularly useful for children with interrupted schooling due to displacement (Tauson & Stannard, 2018).

Institutions, including authorities and NGOs, play a vital role in building resilient educational frameworks. Integrating peacebuilding strategies into educational policies encourages societal cohesion and stability, supporting educational resilience (Smith & Vaux, 2003). Social protection programs, such as financial aid, school feeding, and health services, are crucial in conflict zones to ensure children can continue schooling without economic pressure (Holmes, 2011).

Socio-economic factors significantly affect students' educational resilience. Children from low-income families face more barriers to education, such as limited access to safe learning environments and resources. Improving educational resilience requires addressing economic disparities by providing scholarships, food programs, and safe housing for displaced families (Justino, 2016). Reducing financial burdens through social services can help overcome barriers to continuing education (Herut et al., 2022).

Program evaluation is essential for understanding the effectiveness and impact of educational initiatives, particularly in conflict-affected areas. Program evaluation methodologies help in assessing the implementation and outcomes of educational programs, providing valuable insights for improvement and decision-making (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). In conflict-affected areas, evaluating educational programs is crucial to ensure that they are meeting the needs of students and effectively contributing to their learning and well-being.

Formative evaluations are used to improve program design and implementation by providing ongoing feedback, while summative evaluations assess the overall impact and effectiveness of a program after its completion (Patton, 2008). Mixed-methods approaches, combining quantitative and qualitative data, are particularly useful in conflict settings as they provide a comprehensive understanding of program outcomes and contextual factors (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

While existing research offers valuable insights into educational challenges in conflict zones, there is limited focus on the specific strategies that teachers employ to maintain resilience, the interaction between individual and community resilience, and the unique context of Myanmar's conflict-affected regions. This study addresses these gaps by exploring how teachers in Myanmar adapt their teaching practices, the interplay between teacher and community resilience, and the role of community support in sustaining education amidst conflict.

The transition from a stable educational system prior to the coup to displacement and makeshift schooling in Kayah (Karenni) State and Pekon Township shows the resilience of these communities. The emergence of schools in IDP camps and other conflict-affected townships demonstrates a strong commitment to sustaining education despite hardships. These efforts provide a valuable example of how educational resilience can be developed and sustained in conflict-affected regions, offering insights for other regions facing similar situations.

#### **4. Conceptual Framework**

This study uses a conceptual framework that combines Resilience Theory and Program Evaluation Theory to evaluate the strategies used by teachers and communities to sustain education in conflict-affected areas of Myanmar. This framework explores how these strategies work at different levels and contribute to the resilience of the education system during ongoing conflict.

### 4.1 Resilience Theory

Resilience Theory helps us understand how individuals and communities adapt to difficult situations. At the individual level, resilience involves teachers and students continuing their work and studies despite the challenges of conflict (Masten & Obradović, 2006). This includes personal motivation, coping strategies, and the support teachers provide to their students. At the community level, resilience is shown through the collective actions of families, educators, and local leaders who create safe and supportive learning environments (Norris et al., 2008).

In this study, teacher resilience is measured through their motivations, coping strategies, and professional development activities. Community resilience is assessed through the involvement and support of parents, local leaders, and community resources.

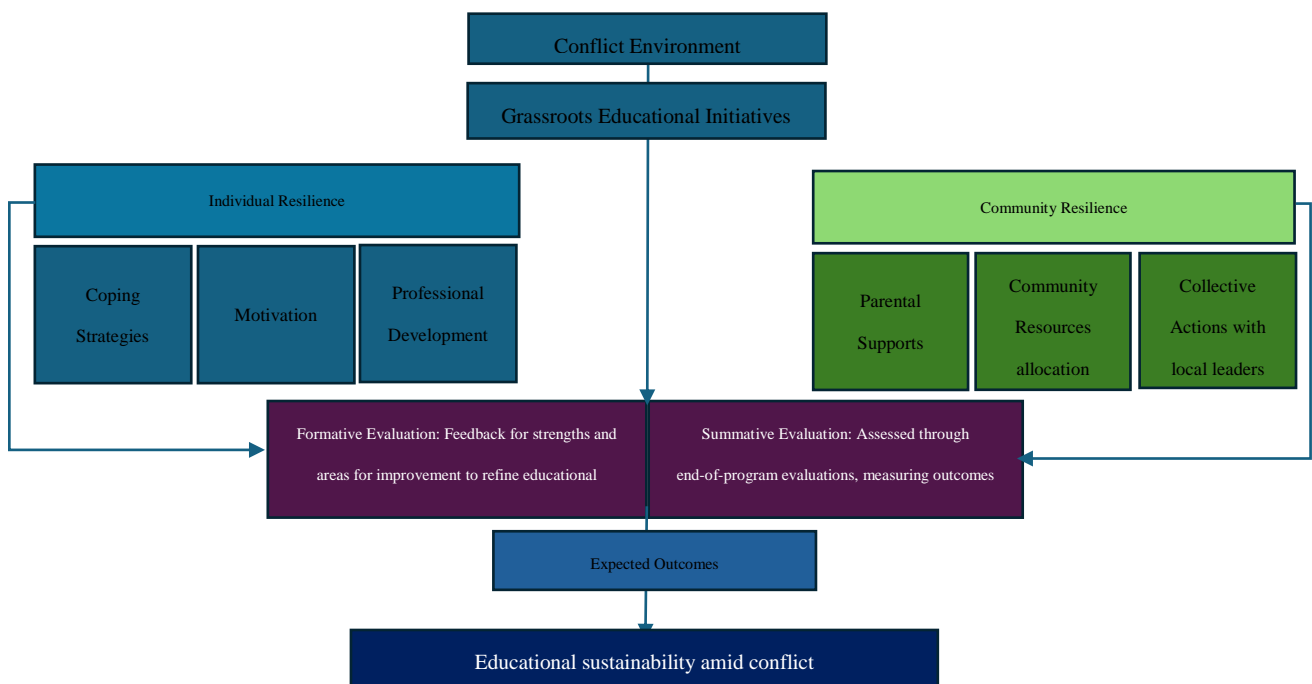
### 4.2 Program Evaluation Theory

Program Evaluation Theory provides a systematic approach to assess the effectiveness of educational strategies. Formative evaluation offers ongoing feedback during the implementation of educational programs, identifying strengths and areas for improvement (Patton, 2008). Summative evaluation assesses the overall impact and effectiveness of the programs after implementation, examining whether they have achieved their intended outcomes (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004).

This study uses a survey-based approach to program evaluation, combining quantitative data with open-ended questions to gather qualitative insights. This comprehensive approach helps to understand both the outcomes of educational initiatives and the contextual factors influencing their success (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

### 4.3 Operationalization of Concepts

- **Teacher Resilience:** Measured through self-report surveys on coping strategies, motivations for teaching, and participation in professional development activities.
- **Community Support:** Assessed through surveys measuring parental involvement, financial support, and trust levels within the community.
- **Student Resilience:** Evaluated through academic engagement and positive outcomes such as emotional well-being, social interaction among students, improvement in literacy, etc., from teachers' perspectives.
- **Program Effectiveness:** Assessed through formative and summative evaluations, using both quantitative data and qualitative insights from open-ended survey questions to provide a comprehensive understanding of program outcomes and contextual factors.



By integrating Resilience Theory and Program Evaluation Theory, this conceptual framework offers a detailed view of how teachers and communities in Myanmar's conflict-affected areas sustain education. It highlights the importance of adaptive strategies at the individual, community, and systemic levels and emphasizes the role of systematic evaluation in understanding and improving these strategies. This comprehensive approach provides valuable insights into the resilience and effectiveness of educational initiatives in war-torn areas, ensuring the continuity of education despite the challenges posed by conflict.

## **5. Methodology**

### *5.1 Survey Design*

The survey aimed to gather detailed information on how teachers sustain education in conflict-affected areas of Myanmar. It measured various factors, including demographics, educational context, teachers' motivations and challenges, and the support from schools and communities. Key variables included place of origin, township, gender, age, education level, ethnicity, living condition, school level, role of teaching (CDM or volunteer), teaching experience (both before and after the coup), and job before the coup. Additionally, the survey explored teachers' motivations, the challenges they face, their primary goals for students, students' engagement and various forms of school and community support.

### *5.2 Participants*

The participants in this survey comprised 260 teachers involved in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and volunteer teachers working in conflict-affected areas of Kayah (Karenni) State and Pekon Township. These teachers are serving in 49 different IDP or village schools, including 15 high schools, 17 middle schools, and 17 primary schools. They were selected to provide a representative sample of educators actively engaged in sustaining education in these challenging environments. The participants varied in age, gender, education level, and ethnicity, including CDM teachers who left government positions post-coup and volunteer teachers driven by a strong commitment to support their communities. Their diverse backgrounds and experiences provided valuable insights into the resilience and adaptation strategies employed in these regions.

### *5.3 Data Collection and Analysis*

Data collection was conducted using a structured survey distributed to the selected teachers. The survey included both closed-ended questions for quantitative analysis and open-ended questions to gather qualitative insights. Quantitative data were analyzed using Stata. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, several measures were implemented. The survey was pre-tested with a small group of teachers to refine the questions and improve clarity. Enumerators who administered the surveys were trained to ensure consistent and unbiased data collection. Participants were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses, encouraging honest and accurate reporting.

### *5.4 Ethical Considerations*

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Massachusetts Lowell under protocol 23-133-THA-EXM, effective February 5, 2024. The study adhered to ethical standards and guidelines, as reviewed and approved by the IRB.

## **6. Findings**

### *6.1 Motivation and Challenges*

The quantitative data analysis on the motivations of teachers in conflict-affected areas reveals that empathy is a significant driving factor, with 73.56% of teachers indicating it as their primary reason for teaching, compared to only 20.31% who cited gaining experience. This suggests that many teachers are driven by a deep sense of compassion and a desire to support their communities despite challenging conditions. Understanding these motivations can help in designing support programs that cater to the emotional and psychological needs of teachers, ensuring their continued commitment to education in conflict zones.

Teachers continue to teach amid armed conflict due to a strong sense of duty and resilience, as revealed by open-ended survey questions. Many express that it is their duty to nurture children and create a better future for those in distress, ensuring continuous education during difficult times. They are determined to face and overcome challenges, driven by thoughts of the students' future and long-term benefits. Support from colleagues and the community strengthens their resolve, highlighting the importance of a supportive network in maintaining their dedication.

When asked about their primary goals for students through survey open-ended question, teachers emphasize a holistic approach to education amidst adversity. They prioritize students' safety, secure learning environments,

and academic proficiency in literacy and numeracy, alongside psychological well-being. Teachers also focus on promoting critical thinking, tolerance, empathy, problem-solving skills, and emotional intelligence. These goals highlight the importance of preparing students to navigate challenges both within and beyond the classroom, demonstrating a commitment to nurturing well-rounded individuals capable of positively contributing to their communities.

To answer the open-ended survey question, the data on challenges to sustaining education in conflict settings reveals several significant obstacles. Teachers frequently cite insecurity and the constant threat of violence as primary challenges. Additionally, there is a shortage of teachers, economic hardships, and poverty affecting both educators and students. Displacement disrupts learning environments, while insufficient educational resources, such as writing materials and books, are critical issues. The trauma and stress experienced by children also impact their ability to learn. Lastly, low community involvement highlights the need for greater local support to sustain educational activities. These challenges underscore the complex difficulties faced by teachers in conflict-affected areas.

### 6.2 School and Community Support

Community support for teachers and schools in conflict settings varies significantly. While 33.33% of respondents receive financial support, the majority (66.67%) report no financial aid. Security measures are present in about half of the schools (49.04%), and support for school buildings is relatively high (64.75%). However, a critical concern is the lack of school supplies, with all respondents (100%) indicating no support in this category. These findings highlight the vital role of community support in certain areas while also identifying significant gaps that need to be addressed to ensure sustainable education in these challenging environments.

Table 1. Parents' Cooperation

Parents' Cooperation	Frequency	Percent
No Cooperation	13	5.12%
Less Cooperation	15	5.91%
Good Cooperation	189	74.41%
Very Good Cooperation	37	14.57%
Total	254	100.00%

The data from Table 1 on parental cooperation indicates strong community involvement, with 74.41% of teachers reporting good cooperation from parents and 14.57% demonstrating very good cooperation. Only a small portion (5.12%) reported no cooperation, and 5.91% indicated less cooperation. This high level of parental support reflects a strong commitment to education within the community, which is essential for sustaining educational activities in conflict settings.

Table 2. Relationship Quality between teachers and local residents

Relationship Quality	Frequency	Percent
Poor Relationship	34	13.55%
Fair Relationship	79	31.47%
Good Relationship	138	54.98%
Total	251	100.00%

In Table 2, a majority of teachers (54.98%) report having a good relationship with local residents, which is essential for addressing challenges such as insecurity, lack of resources, and students' psychological well-being. Fair relationships are reported by 31.47% of teachers, suggesting room for improvement but also a significant foundation of support. Only 13.55% of teachers experience poor relationships, highlighting the overall positive engagement between teachers and the community, which is vital for fostering a supportive educational environment for students amid ongoing conflict.

Table 3. Support from local organization

Support from Local Organizations	Frequency	Percent
Not much support	45	18.15%
Somewhat support	162	65.32%
Support at their best	41	16.53%

Table 3 shows that 65.32% of teachers report receiving moderate support from local organizations, such as NGOs and religious groups, indicating significant involvement. However, 18.15% feel the support is insufficient, highlighting areas where additional resources and assistance are needed. On a positive note, 16.53% of teachers acknowledge receiving optimal support, demonstrating successful collaboration efforts. These findings underscore the importance of local organizations in providing necessary support to sustain education in challenging environments and suggest that increasing and optimizing this support can further enhance educational outcomes for students in these areas.

### 6.3 Capacity Building and Resources

Table 4. Teaching Capacity Method employed by teachers in conflict zones

Teaching Capacity Method	Frequency	Percent
Collaborative learning with peers	111	44.40%
Self-study	45	18.00%
Self-study & Collaborative learning	90	36.00%
Other methods (Online research, reading, teaching children, etc.)	4	1.60%
Total	250	100.00%

According to the survey, the methods teachers use to develop their teaching capacity amid conflict are shown in Table 4. The table illustrates that 44.40% of teachers rely on collaborative learning with peers, 18.00% engage in self-study, and 36.00% combine both methods. A small percentage (1.60%) use other methods such as online research, reading, and teaching children. These findings highlight the adaptability and resourcefulness of teachers in conflict settings, showing their preference for mutual support, independent efforts, and a blend of learning approaches to enhance their professional development.

Table 5. Frequency of capacity building training received by teachers

Capacity Building Times	Frequency	Percent
Once	5	1.92%
Twice	123	47.13%
Three times	78	29.89%
Four times	33	12.64%
Five times	4	1.53%

In conflict settings, capacity building for teachers shows varied levels of engagement. As shown in Table 5, nearly half of the teachers (47.13%) attended in-person on-ground training twice, and a significant portion (29.89%) participated three times, indicating strong commitment to professional development despite challenges. A smaller group participated four or more times (1.53%), reflecting ongoing dedication to enhancing their teaching skills. However, some teachers participated only once (1.92%) or did not specify their participation frequency (6.13%), highlighting uneven access to professional development opportunities in such settings.

Table 6. Self-assessment by teachers on capacity improvement after received capacity building training(s)

Capacity Improvement	Number of Teachers	Percent
Not improved	1	0.40%
Neutral	8	3.16%
Improved	244	96.44%
Total	253	100%

The capacity-building trainings provided on-ground appear to be highly effective for teachers in conflict settings. As shown in Table 6, the majority of teachers (96.44%) reported an improvement in their capacity after attending the training. A small percentage (3.16%) felt neutral about the impact, and only a negligible fraction (0.40%) reported no improvement. This indicates that the training programs are largely successful in enhancing teachers' skills and abilities despite the challenging conditions they face.

#### 6.4 Student Engagement and Outcomes

Table 7. Student Engagement

Engagement Level	Number of Students	Percent
Low	31	12.45%
Moderate	113	45.38%
High	105	42.17%
Total	249	100%

According to teachers' survey responses, the data on student engagement amid conflict, as shown in Table 7, presents a mixed picture. About 12.45% of students experience low engagement, severely impacted by the conflict. The largest group, 45.38%, shows moderate engagement, indicating involvement in learning despite significant obstacles like limited resources and psychological stress. Meanwhile, 42.17% of students maintain high engagement, showcasing resilience and the effectiveness of support systems and teaching strategies. Overall, while there is considerable resilience, targeted interventions are necessary to support students who are only moderately or minimally engaged.

Table 8. Student Outcome

Student Outcome	Frequency	Percent
<b>Some negative signs</b>	17	7.00%
<b>No significant change</b>	47	19.34%
<b>Positive outcome</b>	179	73.66%
<b>Total</b>	243	100.00%

In terms of student outcomes, according to survey responses from 260 teachers, the data from Table 8 shows mostly positive trends in conflict areas. About 73.66% of students have positive outcomes, reflecting effective teaching and resilience. However, 19.34% show no significant change, indicating a need for more support. A small group, 7%, shows negative signs, highlighting the difficulties students face. These results emphasize the need for targeted interventions to support struggling students and maintain positive progress for others.

In response to an open-ended question about positive student outcomes, teachers noted improved social interactions, with students forming better relationships and cooperating more effectively. Reduced anxiety and increased respect for elders were frequently mentioned, creating a more inclusive and respectful school environment. Teachers highlighted that students now use polite language and cooperation instead of violence. Significant improvements in literacy were observed, with students reading more during leisure time beyond textbooks, participating in weekly competitions, and showing collective efforts for cleaning school



environments. These changes illustrate students' resilience and adaptability, enhancing their social skills, academic performance, and appreciation for education despite challenging circumstances.

Table 9. Range of Students

Range of Students	Frequency	Percent
<b>Below 50</b>	41	16.33%
<b>50-80</b>	36	14.34%
<b>81-100</b>	25	9.96%
<b>101-150</b>	55	21.91%
<b>151-200</b>	21	8.37%
<b>Above 200</b>	73	29.08%

The range of students in community-initiated schools indicates a significant impact on the education sector in conflict-affected areas. As shown in Table 9, many schools accommodate a substantial number of students, with 29.08% having over 200 students and 21.91% accommodating between 101 and 150 students. The presence of 16.33% of schools with fewer than 50 students suggests that even smaller communities are making efforts to ensure educational access. These community-initiated schools play a critical role in sustaining education and providing a stable learning environment for children despite challenging circumstances.

Table 10. Teacher satisfaction

Satisfaction Level	Frequency	Percent
Very Dissatisfied	8	3.21%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	28	11.24%
Neutral	10	4.02%
Satisfied	203	81.53%
Total	249	100.00%

In Table 10, teacher satisfaction in conflict-affected areas is notably high, with 81.53% of teachers reporting satisfaction with their roles. This demonstrates a strong commitment and positive attitude despite challenging circumstances. Only a small fraction of teachers expressed dissatisfaction, with 3.21% very dissatisfied, 11.24% somewhat dissatisfied, and 4.02% neutral. This high level of satisfaction likely contributes to the resilience and sustainability of education in these difficult environments, as satisfied teachers are more likely to remain committed to their roles.

#### 6.5 Evaluation of Program Effectiveness

In answering open-ended questions, teachers highlighted several key benefits for students returning to school in conflict settings. Improved social skills and better collaboration with peers were frequently noted. Many students, according to the survey answers, showed increased self-confidence and enhanced emotional security, feeling more physically secure in their school environments. There was a renewed interest in education and enthusiasm for learning, alongside the development of practical life skills. These improvements foster a supportive environment that enhances academic performance, social interactions, emotional stability, and practical knowledge.

In addition, students returning to school in conflict settings bring several benefits for families, according to teachers' survey responses. These benefits include stronger community ties through increased collaboration with teachers and village communities, leading to a better understanding of the importance of education. Comments such as "*parents collaborate more with village/teachers for children's education*" and "*increased understanding of the importance of education within the family*" highlight this positive shift. Additionally, keeping children in local schools reduces education costs compared to sending them to distant areas, easing financial burdens and improving the psychological confidence of family members. The collective effort in

supporting children's education strengthens family ties and enhances the overall well-being of the community.

Table 11. Trust within community

Trust Level	Frequency	Percent
<b>0-24% trust</b>	6	2.36%
<b>25-49% trust</b>	23	9.06%
<b>50-74% trust</b>	112	44.09%
<b>75-99% trust</b>	76	29.92%

The data from Table 11 reveals how trust within the community impacts education in conflict-affected settings. According to the data, 44.09% of respondents reported a moderate level of trust (50-74%), and 38.19% indicated high to very high levels of trust (75-100%). This widespread trust has a direct positive impact on the establishment and operation of community-led schools. Communities with higher trust levels are more likely to collaborate in opening and supporting schools, even amidst conflict. This trust enables parents, teachers, and local leaders to work together effectively, ensuring that educational initiatives are well-resourced and that the schools provide a stable and secure environment for students. Such collaboration is crucial in conflict settings, where external support might be limited, and community-led efforts become essential for sustaining education. Therefore, the high levels of trust within the community significantly contribute to the resilience and success of educational programs in these challenging environments.

#### *6.6 Attitude Towards Lack of Recognition by Military Government*

When asked about their attitude towards the lack of recognition by the military government, teachers' responses indicate a complex emotional landscape. A significant majority (69.96%) reported that the lack of recognition does not impact their efforts towards community-led educational initiatives. However, 12.76% feel a little sad, and 17.28% feel significantly sad about this lack of official recognition. Despite these feelings, the predominant sentiment reflects resilience and determination to continue providing education. This resilience underscores the community's commitment to education and the crucial role of trust and cooperation in sustaining educational efforts despite challenging circumstances.

When asked about their needs for external support for their community-led education initiatives via open-ended question, teachers highlighted several key areas where local and international educational organizations could assist. They emphasized the need for these organizations to *"recognize our graduation certificates"* and *"encourage other organizations to recognize our educational certificates,"* validating students' achievements and helping them pursue further education or careers. They also called for the establishment of *"better learning centers"* and provision of basic educational needs, such as writing tools and learning aids. Support for educational resources like solar-powered phones and tablets with educational content was also highlighted. Additionally, there is a demand for *"intermediary education programs for entry into accredited universities"* and *"special scholarships for children in conflict-affected areas."* Implementing these measures can greatly improve educational outcomes and opportunities for children in these challenging settings.

## **7. Discussion**

The findings of this study highlight the complex and multifaceted challenges faced by teachers and communities in sustaining education in conflict-affected areas of Myanmar.

### *7.1 Motivation and Challenges*

The motivations of teachers in conflict settings, predominantly driven by empathy and a deep sense of duty, are consistent with the broader literature on teacher resilience in crisis situations (Sherif, Brooks, & Mendenhall, 2020). Teachers in this study demonstrated a strong commitment to providing education despite significant personal and professional challenges. Their primary goals, including ensuring student safety and promoting academic and psychological well-being, underscore a holistic approach to education that prioritizes both cognitive and emotional development, which is in line with Tauson & Stannard (2018). The significant obstacles identified, such as insecurity, lack of resources, and economic hardships, mirror global trends in conflict-affected education (Akresh, 2016; Herut et al., 2022). These findings necessitate innovative solutions and robust support systems to mitigate their impact on both teachers and students, echoing the call for comprehensive support systems in similar contexts (Akresh, 2016).

### *7.2 School and Community Support*

Community support reveals a mixed picture, with substantial backing for school buildings and security but a critical lack of school supplies. This finding aligns with Fischer's (2006) emphasis on the role of civil society and community networks in maintaining educational systems during conflicts. High levels of parental cooperation further underscore the importance of community engagement in sustaining education, which is consistent with Justino's (2016) findings. Trust within the community, indicated by high levels of trust among respondents, is crucial for the successful operation of community-led schools, facilitating collaboration and resource mobilization essential for educational resilience (Norris et al., 2008).

### *7.3 Capacity Building and Resources*

Capacity-building activities for teachers were highly effective, with the majority reporting improved teaching capacity. This outcome supports the findings of Patton (2008), who emphasized the importance of continuous professional development for educators. The reliance on collaborative learning among peers highlights the collective resilience and resourcefulness of teachers in conflict settings, aligning with observations on teacher strategies in crisis environments (Sherif, Brooks, & Mendenhall, 2020). The varied levels of engagement in capacity-building activities reflect a strong commitment to professional development despite challenging circumstances, underscoring the need for ongoing support and training opportunities.

### *7.4 Student Engagement and Outcomes*

The varying levels of student engagement, with many maintaining high engagement despite the conflict, reflect the resilience of students and the effectiveness of community and school support systems. Positive student outcomes, including improved social skills and emotional security, highlight the transformative potential of sustained education in conflict settings. This is consistent with the findings of Holmes (2011) and Smith & Vaux (2003), who emphasize the broad impact of education on emotional and social well-being. Reported improvements in literacy and social interactions further highlight the broader benefits of education beyond academic achievement, aligning with the comprehensive goals set by teachers (Tauson & Stannard, 2018).

### *7.5 Evaluation of Program Effectiveness*

The benefits for students returning to school in conflict settings are substantial and multifaceted. Teachers frequently highlight improved social skills and better collaboration among students, which align with Holmes (2011) on the social benefits of education in conflict areas. Increased self-confidence and emotional security are also significant improvements noted by teachers, echoing Smith and Vaux (2003) on the emotional and social benefits of education. Students have shown a renewed interest in their education, as reflected in increased enthusiasm for learning, consistent with Tauson and Stannard's (2018) findings on the impact of sustained educational efforts. Practical life skills development has also been a notable benefit, helping students navigate their daily lives more effectively. The supportive environment has enhanced academic performance, social interactions, emotional stability, and practical knowledge, contributing to a holistic improvement in students' lives amidst the challenges of conflict. Additionally, the return of students to school has also positively impacted their families, improving relationships among parents and strengthening community ties. This communal benefit aligns with Justino's (2016) findings on the broader social advantages of education in conflict zones, such as reducing education costs and easing financial burdens on families.

### *7.6 Attitudes Towards Lack of Recognition by the Military Government*

Despite not being recognized by the military government, the community's resilience showcases their strong determination to continue providing education independently. Despite significant emotional impacts on some community members, the predominant sentiment of perseverance and self-reliance indicates a strong commitment to education. This resilience is crucial for the sustainability of education in challenging environments, demonstrating that community efforts can thrive even without formal acknowledgment from governing authorities, consistent with the findings of Aver (2020) on community-driven initiatives and Fischer (2006) on civil society's role in education during conflicts. Recommendations for educational organizations include recognizing graduation certificates, establishing better learning centers, providing basic educational needs, and implementing intermediary education programs to bridge the gap between community-led education and higher education institutions, as suggested by Tauson & Stannard (2018) and Justino (2016). Creating special scholarships for children in conflict-affected areas would address economic disparities and support sustained educational engagement, aligning with Holmes's (2011) recommendations on economic support for educational continuity.

## 8. Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into how teachers and communities in conflict-affected areas of Myanmar sustain education through resilience and determination. By integrating resilience theory and program evaluation, the research highlights how teachers, driven by empathy and a deep sense of duty, maintain educational continuity by focusing on both academic proficiency and psychological well-being despite significant challenges. Community support, particularly high levels of parental cooperation and trust, plays a crucial role in the success of community-led schools, although gaps in resources such as school supplies persist. Effective capacity-building activities have significantly improved teachers' skills and adaptability, enhancing their resilience. High levels of student engagement and positive outcomes further demonstrate the remarkable resilience of students. The community's commitment to sustaining education independently, despite the lack of recognition by the military government, underscores their resourcefulness and perseverance.

This study makes several important contributions. Empirically, this research provides primary data on the resilience and determination of teachers and communities in conflict-affected areas of Myanmar, addressing a significant gap in the existing literature, which has largely focused on the challenges of education in conflict zones without providing detailed accounts of successful local strategies and community-driven initiatives.

Theoretically, this study integrates resilience theory and program evaluation to offer a new framework for understanding educational resilience in crisis settings. It highlights internal factors like teachers' personal determination and professional commitment, and external factors such as community support and capacity-building activities. This framework provides practical evaluation tools, including criteria for measuring teacher resilience (adaptability, professional commitment, psychological well-being), student engagement (attendance, participation, academic performance, emotional well-being), and community support (parental cooperation, trust, resource availability). These indicators enable systematic assessment of the impact of different strategies on sustaining education and enhancing resilience.

Practically, the study offers actionable recommendations to support community-led educational initiatives in conflict-affected areas. These recommendations include recognizing graduation certificates, establishing better learning centers, providing necessary resources, and creating scholarships for children in these areas. Such measures are intended to assist policymakers, educators, and NGOs in developing targeted strategies to support education in conflict zones.

Additionally, the study presents a comprehensive model that can be applied in other conflict-affected regions. This model emphasizes the importance of improving infrastructure through the establishment of better learning centers and the provision of necessary resources. It also highlights the need for financial support for students through special scholarships to address economic disparities. Moreover, fostering high levels of parental cooperation and community trust is crucial for strengthening the support system around community-led schools.

### 8.1 Limitations and Future Study Recommendations

This study is limited by its focus on the data collected solely from teachers in a specific conflict-affected region in Myanmar, which may not be generalizable to other contexts. Although some open-ended questions were included, the scope was limited. Future research should incorporate additional qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, to gain deeper insights into the experiences and perspectives of teachers, students and community members. Expanding the study to include multiple conflict regions would allow for comparative analysis. These approaches will enrich the data, providing a fuller and more nuanced understanding of educational challenges and resilience strategies in such settings.

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