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Key Strategies to Enhance Capacity Building:
A Case Study of KMSS Social Protection Unit, Myanmar

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Abstract

This study explores capacity building in the Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS) Social Protection Unit in Myanmar, focusing on challenges posed by political uncertainty after the military coup. It examines how training, stakeholder engagement, and resource allocation drive effective Project Cycle Management (PCM) in this faith-based organization. Through qualitative case study methods, eight senior KMSS officials were interviewed remotely, with data analyzed via thematic analysis and cross-coding for training, stakeholder engagement, and resource allocation. Findings reveal challenges including high staff turnover, communication barriers, and field security risks, alongside successes like targeted training, stakeholder collaboration, and adaptive strategies amid instability. Training significantly enhanced staff performance, while stakeholder engagement strengthened coordination and organizational capacity. To apply this training effectively, KMSS leverages its Dynamic Capability to strategically mobilize resources, supporting newly developed skills. These findings align with the integrated framework of Andragogy Theory, Dynamic Capabilities Theory, and Stakeholder Theory, which collectively underscore the interplay of learning, adaptation, and collaboration in building resilience. The study recommends a structured Organizational Development plan, including enhanced MEAL systems, regular training, mentorship, improved cooperation, systematic resource strategies, and conflict-sensitive approaches.

Keywords: Organization Development, Capacity Building, Training, Stakeholder Engagement, Resource Allocation, Conflict-Responsive Methods

Introduction

Capacity building is the improvement of an individual's or organization's ability to produce, perform, and deploy. In humanitarian contexts, this process involves strengthening organizational structures, improving staff competencies, and fostering sustainable service delivery by systematically developing human, technical, and institutional resources. For KMSS,

operating in Myanmar's challenging post-coup environment, capacity building is critical for enhancing PCM effectiveness. It provides an overview of the focal system, examines the organizational context, and defines the problem statement, research objectives, and guiding questions. This study explores its significance for organizational growth and effectiveness by highlighting key strategies that contribute to strengthening skills, knowledge, and institutional development.

Context and Organizational Background

In Myanmar, the 2021 military coup has intensified conflict and poverty, displacing millions and disrupting education and aid. KMSS, known as Caritas Myanmar, provides critical support in child protection, anti-trafficking, and migration assistance amid heightened risks to vulnerable groups. The organization adapts by supporting alternative education and planning a budget increase of over $6 million for programs addressing gender-based violence, mental health, and social cohesion.

Capacity building is vital for local organizations like KMSS to overcome competency and structural obstacles during crises, offering practical strategies for improving effectiveness. As the social arm of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar, KMSS operates nationwide from its Yangon headquarters and 16 diocesan offices, aiding approximately 350,000 people annually across social protection, education, health, livelihoods, and disaster response. Despite the escalating challenges, particularly in conflict zones, KMSS continues to adapt its capacity efforts to strengthen staff skills, operational efficiency, and overall impact.

Organizational Diagnosis

An organizational diagnosis was conducted through a one-hour virtual interview with a senior program manager of KMSS's Social Protection Unit. Utilizing a SWOT analysis framework, this process was designed to evaluate the unit's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as its external opportunities and threats, thereby identifying key factors impacting its operational effectiveness and sustainability. The insights gathered from this analysis provided a foundational understanding of the unit's strategic context, informing the research theme to leverage strengths, address weaknesses, capitalize on opportunities, and mitigate potential threats. The findings from this diagnostic are presented in the SWOT matrix below.

Strengths

The unit is guided by strong ethical principles from Catholic Social Teaching, ensuring programs uphold human dignity. An experienced team enables effective skill-sharing and mentorship, while 16 nationwide offices ensure localized reach into remote and conflict-affected areas. Staff exhibit high motivation and adaptability, refining approaches based on field experience.

Weaknesses

Insufficient staff training hinders program quality and professional development. Weak communication between field and management levels causes delays, especially in dynamic situations. Ineffective data use undermines decision-making and learning, while resource constraints—including funds, staff, and logistics—limit training expansion and sustainable capacity building.

Opportunities

Partnerships with international agencies, NGOs, and UN bodies can provide technical support, funding, and access to external training. Engagement in regional and global networks facilitates knowledge exchange and adoption of best practices, enhancing program flexibility and impact.

Threats

Ongoing conflict and political instability restrict access to training and operational areas. Staff face security risks and government-imposed movement restrictions. Short-term project funding limits investment in long-term development, while rising caseloads in protection and displacement overwhelm existing capacity and resources.

Statement of the Problem

The KMSS Social Protection Unit has important challenges in building its capacity, which affects how well programs work and how staff grow. There are few training opportunities, making it hard for the staff to improve their skills. Poor communication and lack of coordination cause delays and inefficiency. Limited resources such as money, staff, and equipment also make it difficult to expand training programs. This limits KMSS's ability to strengthen its team and provide better services.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the current organizational capacity-building challenges in KMSS's PCM.
2. To identify effective capacity-building strategies for improving implementation of PCM.
3. To evaluate the role of training, stakeholder engagement, and resource allocation in strengthening PCM-related capacity.
4. To provide recommendations for sustainable capacity-building interventions in KMSS's Social Protection Department.

Research Questions

1. What are the key organizational capacity-building challenges in PCM at KMSS?
2. What capacity-building strategies can enhance PCM effectiveness?
3. How do training, stakeholder engagement, and resource allocation contribute to PCM-related capacity building?
4. What recommendations can support sustainable capacity-building interventions for KMSS's Social Protection Department?

Scope and Limitations

Capacity-building strategies within the Social Protection Unit of KMSS, a faith-based organization in Myanmar, constitute the principal focus. A qualitative methodology directs the inquiry, drawing insights from key informant interviews with eight senior protection staff to examine challenges associated with training, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement. Practical recommendations arise to fortify unit-level initiatives, with results delimited to the prevailing operational context during a two-month interval.

Multiple limitations pertain to the inquiry. Online interviews, required owing to geographical constraints, may curtail non-verbal indicators and participant interaction, thus impinging upon the profundity of qualitative data. The restricted sample of eight senior staff

furnishes specialized viewpoints applicable to analogous faith-based institutions yet curtails wider generalizability to alternative KMSS divisions or entities. The abbreviated two-month duration precludes avenues for subsequent inquiries or supplementary data corroboration.

Significance of the Study

For KMSS Social Protection Unit: This study sheds light on capacity-building hurdles and gives practical recommendations to boost how the organization runs. These ideas can guide leaders in discussions about better strategies to improve services for those in need.

For Senior Leadership: The work lays out advice on spotting and fixing main issues in capacity building, like training staff, managing resources, and working with partners. It helps top employees make smart choices regarding possible fixes but putting them into action isn't part of this research.

For the Researcher: This project lets the researcher dive deeper into how a faith-based aid group builds skills in tough, limited settings. It also provides a deep, contextualized case study that contributes to wider academic and practical knowledge in the field of capacity building within faith-based humanitarian organizations operating in conflict settings. While the findings are specific to KMSS, they offer valuable insights for other local organizations in Myanmar that face similar challenges, making the study both contextually relevant and adaptable to comparable environments.

Literature Review

Capacity building is a central pillar of the international community's "localization agenda," which aims to shift power, resources, and leadership to local actors in humanitarian response. For local organizations operating in volatile, conflict-affected regions like Myanmar, this imperative carries a dual challenge. They are expected to meet international standards of accountability and impact, often through structured frameworks like Project Cycle Management (PCM), while simultaneously grappling with pervasive insecurity, political instability, and unpredictable funding (Slim & Bonwick, 2021). For Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) like KMSS, this environment is further complicated by their deep-rooted community ties, which can be both a strategic asset for access and a potential liability in sectarian conflicts. This study examines capacity building within this complex framework, focusing on the interplay of key internal variables that determine an organization's resilience and effectiveness.

Theoretical Framework: An Integrated Lens for Capacity Building

This study is guided by an integrated theoretical framework comprising Andragogy Theory, Dynamic Capabilities Theory, and Stakeholder Theory. Individually, each theory illuminates a critical facet of capacity building; together, they provide a comprehensive lens for analyzing how training, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement interact to strengthen organizational capabilities in a high-risk environment.

Andragogy Theory provides the foundational principles for understanding how adults learn effectively. Developed by Malcolm Knowles, the theory posits that adult learning is most effective when it is problem-centered, experiential, and immediately relevant to the learner's context (Knowles et al., 2015). This directly informs the *training* variable. For example, studies in development contexts have shown that andragogy-based training significantly improves project management skills in local NGOs (Smith & Jones, 2020). Applying these principles leads to more effective problem-solving and workforce flexibility, which are essential for

organizational resilience (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). This is particularly critical in conflict settings, where the ability to rapidly adapt and apply learned principles to fluid realities can determine program survival.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece, 2018) shifts the focus from static resources to an organization's ability to intentionally adapt, integrate, and reconfigure its resources to address rapidly changing environments. This theory is essential for understanding the *resource allocation* variable, framing it not as a simple administrative task but as a strategic capability. This involves *sensing* capacity gaps, *seizing* opportunities through intelligent investment, and *transforming* organizational structures to sustain impact. Research indicates that NGOs with strong dynamic capabilities are better equipped to navigate funding uncertainties and political shocks (Brown, 2019). For local NGOs, this often means developing the capability to navigate the specific constraints imposed by short-term donor funding and onerous reporting requirements, a recurring challenge identified in studies of humanitarian effectiveness.

Stakeholder Theory (Freeman et al., 2020) argues that long-term organizational success is dependent on effectively managing relationships with all parties who have a stake in the organization's operations. This theory directly shapes the *stakeholder engagement* variable. It suggests that KMSS's capacity is not built in isolation but is co-created through trusting relationships with communities, donors, staff, and local partners. Effective engagement ensures that capacity-building efforts are informed by on-ground realities, enhance organizational legitimacy, and mitigate risks (Greenwood, 2021). In humanitarian action, studies confirm that inclusive stakeholder collaboration is a cornerstone of sustainable and accountable interventions (Devereux, 2022).

Synthesis, Linkage, and Research Gap

The power of this framework lies in the interconnection of these theories. *Andragogy Theory* ensures that the human capital developed through *training* is relevant and effective. The practical application of this training is then contingent upon the organization's *Dynamic Capability* to strategically reallocate resources and create an environment where new skills can be applied. Simultaneously, the capabilities of sensing needs and seizing opportunities are fundamentally dependent upon deep *Stakeholder Engagement* for the critical, contextual insights that inform strategic decisions.

While the individual importance of training, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement is recognized in the literature, there is a scarcity of research that examines their *interdependent* role in building PCM capacity. This gap is especially prominent in faith-based humanitarian organizations operating in active conflict zones, where these elements are critically tested. This study addresses this gap by applying an integrated framework to investigate how these three elements synergistically influence capacity within KMSS, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of organizational resilience in crisis contexts.

Discussion of Variables
Capacity Building (Dependent Variable)

Capacity building is the multidimensional process of enhancing an organization's ability to achieve its mission by developing skills, systems, and structures (World Bank, 2020). Viewed through our theoretical synthesis, it is the *outcome* of effectively aligning adult learning principles (Andragogy), adaptive resource management (Dynamic Capabilities), and inclusive relationships (Stakeholder Theory).

Training (Independe nt Variable)

Training is a planned effort to facilitate the acquisition of skills and knowledge to improve performance (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Through the lens of Andragogy, this study will evaluate KMSS's training not merely by its occurrence, but by its adherence to principles of experiential learning, relevance, and learner-centered design.

Resource Allocation (Independent Variable)

Resource allocation is the strategic deployment of assets (human, financial, technical) to achieve organizational priorities. Viewed through *Dynamic Capabilities Theory*, this study examines how KMSS's allocation strategies demonstrate the capacity to *sense* needs, *seize* opportunities, and *transform* resources to build resilience.

Stakeholder Engagement (Independent Variable)

Stakeholder engagement involves collaborative relationships with groups and individuals who can affect or are affected by the organization's objectives (Freeman et al., 2020). Analyzed through Stakeholder Theory, this research will investigate how KMSS's engagement practices build trust, manage risk, and co-create value, thereby directly contributing to its institutional capacity.

Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework is directly adapted from the integrated theoretical lens of *Andragogy Theory*, *Dynamic Capabilities Theory*, and *Stakeholder Theory*, and is not a newly developed framework. It suggests that effective capacity building is not the result of isolated interventions but emerges from the dynamic interplay of three theoretically grounded processes. The framework visualizes how these processes, derived from established theories, interact to enhance organizational capacity, particularly in complex environments like post-coup Myanmar.

Training is understood through Andragogy principles (Knowles et al., 2015), focusing on quality rather than just frequency. Effective capacity building depends on training that is problem-centered and experiential, addressing real-world job challenges, and relevant and self-directed, using staff experience to enhance adaptability and maintain long-term competency.

Resource Allocation is seen as a strategic capability rather than just an administrative task (Teece, 2018). It involves using human, financial, and technical resources to identify gaps and needs, invest in key skills or infrastructure, and adapt resources to stay effective and resilient during challenges such as political instability.

Stakeholder Engagement, informed by Stakeholder Theory (Freeman et al., 2020), emphasizes that capacity is co-created rather than developed in isolation. Effective engagement throughout the project lifecycle builds trust and legitimacy with donors, beneficiaries, and partners, and manages risks while co-creating value by incorporating diverse feedback, ensuring initiatives are contextually relevant, inclusive, and supportive of organizational resilience (Freeman & Phillips, 2019).

The framework emphasizes the interplay of its components. Training develops human capital, which can only be effective when resources are strategically allocated. Likewise, the organization's ability to sense needs and seize opportunities depends on strong stakeholder engagement. Thus, the framework highlights how synergy among training, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement drives effective capacity building.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework Developed by Researcher
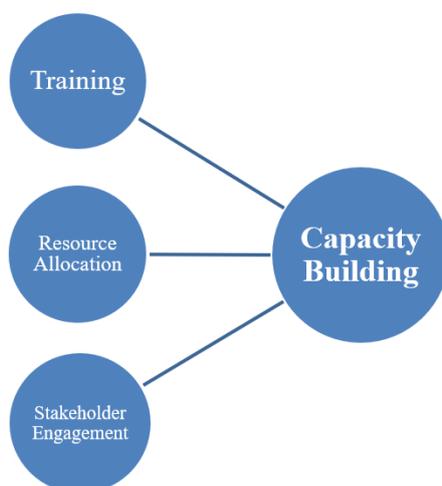
Research Methodology

The methodology employed a qualitative approach to investigate factors influencing effective capacity building within KMSS's Social Protection Unit in Myanmar. Emphasis was placed on the roles of training, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement in enhancing organizational effectiveness, staff development, and program implementation amid ongoing conflict and resource constraints.

Research Design

A qualitative case study design facilitated an in-depth examination of capacity-building strategies within KMSS's Social Protection Unit. This approach enabled detailed exploration of real-world phenomena in a specific organizational context.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred from February 16 to 22, 2025, via secure online video platforms, given logistical constraints and conditions in Myanmar. Initial insights were derived from a SWOT analysis with the KMSS Protection senior manager, informing the problem statement and conceptual framework. Subsequent in-depth interviews involved eight participants, guided by a semi-structured questionnaire comprising 13 questions across four themes: training, resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, and external influences on capacity building. Interviews lasted 45 to 60 minutes, were recorded with consent, and transcribed for thematic analysis.

Participants

This study engaged the complete population of senior staff within KMSS's Social Protection Unit. The unit comprises a total of eight staff members who hold leadership and operational roles with direct responsibility for PCM. All eight individuals participated in the study, meaning the research captured perspectives from the entire target population rather than a sample. Participants were selected based on predefined criteria, including their direct involvement in PCM activities and their expertise in the core variables under study (training, resource allocation, or stakeholder engagement). By including the entire unit, the study ensured a comprehensive and holistic understanding of capacity-building dynamics from all relevant experts, a significant strength for the case study design.

Qualitative Research Instrument

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews conducted with the Social Protection manager of Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS). An interview guide was developed in alignment with the study's conceptual framework, focusing on four core variables: capacity building in PCM, training, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement. Interview questions were designed to elicit detailed perceptions, experiences, and recommendations regarding organizational capacity building within the unit. This semi-structured format facilitated conversational flexibility while ensuring consistent coverage of research themes relevant to the study's objectives. The final interview guide is presented below.

Capacity Building

1. How well-equipped do you feel in applying PCM principles to each stage of a project (planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation)?

2. How has your department's ability to manage projects effectively (in terms of strategy, execution, and adaptability) evolved over the past year?

3. What challenges do you face in integrating PCM principles into your daily project management activities?

4. What specific recommendations do you have for applying PCM principles in your work?

Training

1. Can you share the best experience of how any form of training improved your PCM skills?

2. What types of training do you think are most relevant for effectively performing PCM tasks?

3. What recommendations do you have to enhance the effectiveness of training for improving PCM skills?

Resource Allocation

      1. How do the available resources support your PCM activities sufficiently to meet project demands?

      2. What additional resources would enhance your department's PCM capacity?

      3. What strategies or changes would you recommend to optimize resource allocation and improve your department's PCM capacity?

Stakeholder Engagement

      1. How effectively are stakeholders (KMSS's Senior Protection Staff) involved in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects?

      2. What mechanisms are in place to ensure stakeholder feedback is incorporated into PCM activities?

      3. What improvements or recommendations would you suggest to enhance stakeholder engagement and the integration of their feedback throughout project planning and implementation?

Data Analysis

      The qualitative data underwent a rigorous thematic analysis, following the iterative phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process was designed to ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings through a structured approach to coding and theme development. To establish a robust inter-coder agreement, a multi-stage procedure was implemented. First, the primary researcher developed a preliminary codebook based on the study's conceptual framework and an initial review of the transcripts. Subsequently, two additional coders, who were familiar with the research objectives but independent of the data collection, were engaged. Each coder independently applied the codebook to the same two transcripts, representing a significant portion of the dataset.

      The coders then convened for a series of reconciliation meetings. During these sessions, coding outcomes were compared segment-by-segment. Discrepancies were discussed critically until a consensus was reached for each instance. This dialogue was instrumental in refining the codebook, clarifying definitions, and ensuring a shared understanding of the application criteria for each code.

      Once a high level of consistency was achieved, the refined codebook was used by the primary researcher to code the remainder of the transcripts. Periodic peer-debriefing sessions were held to review coding decisions on ambiguous or complex data segments, thereby maintaining analytical rigor throughout the process. The final themes were generated by collating the consensus-based codes and identifying overarching patterns that directly addressed the research questions. This systematic and collaborative approach minimized individual bias and ensured that the resulting themes were a verifiable and consistent representation of the collected data.

Figure 2

Infographic Profile of Informants in the KMSS Capacity Building Study
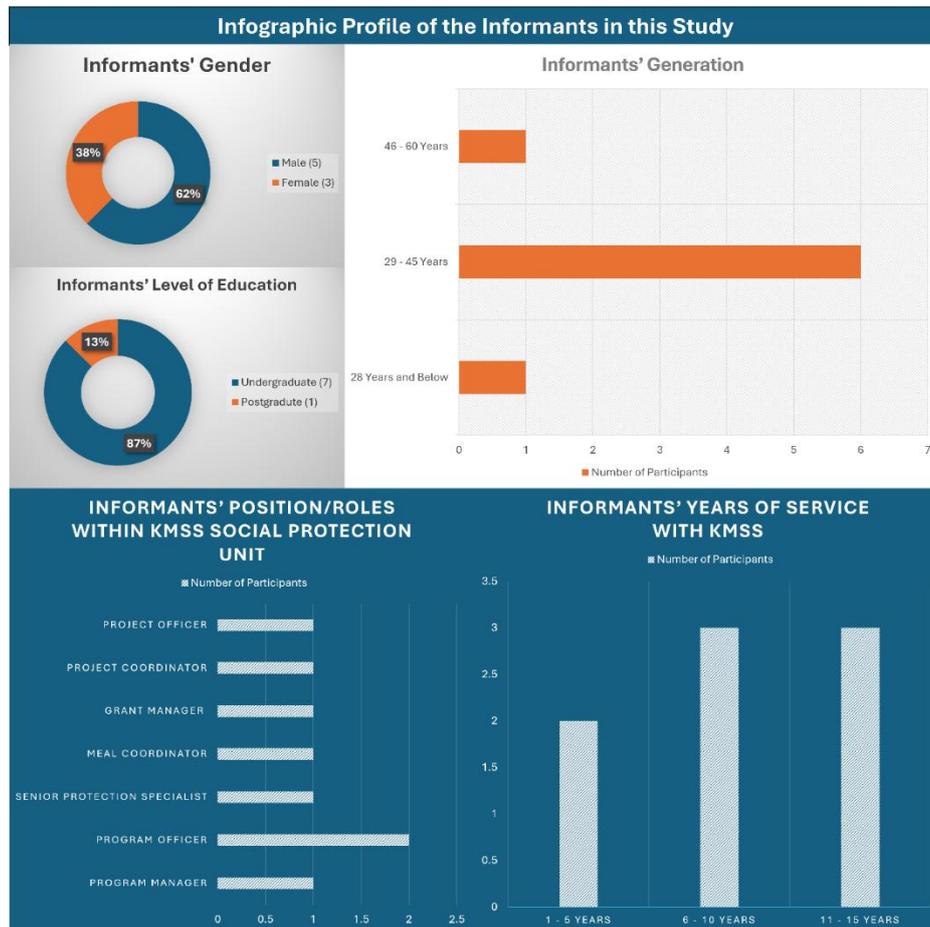
Infographic Profile of the Informants

Figure 2 presents a visual summary of the demographic and professional characteristics of the eight senior staff participants in this study. The descriptive statistics are as follows:

- **Gender:** Among the eight participants, 62% were male and 38% female.
- **Age/Generation:** The majority of informants (75%) are aged 29-45 years, with smaller representations from younger (28 years and below) and older (46-60 years) age groups.
- **Education Level:** Most participants (87%) hold undergraduate degrees, while 13% have postgraduate qualifications.
- **Position/Role within KMSS:** Informants occupy various roles including program officers, project coordinators, grant managers, and specialists, with program officers representing the largest subgroup.

- **Years of Service:** Participants' tenure ranges from 1 to 15 years, with most having between 6-15 years of service.

The demographic profile provides crucial context for interpreting the study's findings. The predominance of mid-career professionals (aged 29-45) with significant tenure (6-15 years) underscores the unit's valuable field experience, which aligns with the identified SWOT strength of 'an experienced team.' However, this very combination of experience and being mid-career also makes staff highly susceptible to being recruited by better-funded international NGOs, directly explaining the critical challenge of high staff turnover. Furthermore, the high level of formal education (87% with undergraduate degrees) indicates that training gaps are likely not a deficit in foundational knowledge, but rather a need for more advanced, applied, and context-specific professional development in PCM—a point echoed in the results where staff requested more experiential learning opportunities.

Results

This section presents the findings from the thematic analysis of interviews with eight senior staff members of the KMSS Social Protection Unit. The results are organized by the core research variables: capacity building challenges, training, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement.

1. Capacity Building Challenges in Project Cycle Management

Participants identified multiple constraints affecting Project Cycle Management (PCM) implementation. Security concerns were frequently mentioned, with one field officer stating, *"There are days we simply cannot travel to the project site, which disrupts all our monitoring plans."* Staff turnover was another recurring theme, with a manager noting, *"We invest in training, mentoring, and coaching, but skilled staff often move to other organizations for higher pay."* Communication difficulties due to unreliable internet and electricity were reported, along with limited financial resources and inflexible donor funding. Several participants mentioned that this funding structure forces reliance on secondary data rather than primary field data.

2. Training Experiences and Preferences

Participants reported both positive experiences and gaps in training approaches. One program officer described effective training: *"The FLAME training provided a step-by-step understanding of PCM, which I now apply in my projects."* However, many staff expressed a desire for more practical approaches. A project coordinator suggested, *"We need less theory and more practice, like running a pilot project from start to finish."* Specific training requests included advanced instruction in monitoring and evaluation data management, stakeholder engagement, safety, and mental health support. Several participants mentioned the train-the-trainer model had been effective for knowledge sharing within the organization.

3. Resource Availability and Constraints

Interview data revealed both adequate and insufficient resources for PCM activities. A recurring theme was staff shortages, particularly in specialized areas like Child Protection in

Emergencies and an understaffed MEAL unit. Budget limitations for field travel and per diems were frequently mentioned. One staff member explained, *"The budget for field monitoring is very limited, so we cannot visit project sites as often as needed."* Participants reported using adaptive strategies like remote monitoring to overcome access barriers. Recommendations included strengthening proposal writing skills and ensuring better workload balance among staff.

4. Stakeholder Engagement Practices

Staff reported established coordination mechanisms including weekly sharing sessions, monthly coordination days, and quarterly meetings between national and diocesan offices. One participant described these as *"regular forums for feedback and cross-learning."* However, several diocesan staff reported limited influence in decision-making, with one noting, *"The national office often comes with a plan that is already 90% finalized, so our input is minimal."* Participants suggested raising awareness of feedback systems, appointing coordination focal persons, and strengthening diocesan capacity through initiatives like internship programs.

Results and Discussion

The findings reveal that KMSS's Social Protection Unit operates within a complex environment where capacity building efforts are both supported and constrained by multiple factors. The security and access challenges described by participants reflect the operational reality of humanitarian work in conflict-affected Myanmar, directly impacting the organization's ability to implement PCM principles effectively, particularly in monitoring and evaluation phases.

The training findings demonstrate the practical application of **Andragogy Theory** in this context. Staff responses indicating preference for practical, relevant training align with Knowles' principles of adult learning, which emphasize problem-centered and experiential approaches. The positive reception of the FLAME training and train-the-trainer model suggests that when andragogical principles are applied, training effectively enhances PCM capacity. However, the consistent request for more hands-on learning opportunities indicates that current training approaches may not fully leverage these principles.

The resource allocation challenges reveal tensions in the organization's **Dynamic Capabilities**. While KMSS demonstrates capacity to 'sense' resource gaps and 'seize' adaptive strategies like remote monitoring, persistent shortages in technical staff and MEAL capacity indicate limitations in the 'transform' capability. The high staff turnover reported by participants represents both a resource constraint and a threat to organizational memory, creating a cycle where capacity building investments are lost, then must be repeatedly made.

Stakeholder engagement mechanisms reflect core principles of **Stakeholder Theory**, particularly in the established coordination forums that facilitate information sharing. However, the centralized decision-making structure identified by diocesan staff suggests potential gaps in fully leveraging stakeholder input. This tension between centralized efficiency and

decentralized inclusion represents an opportunity to strengthen how KMSS operationalizes stakeholder theory principles across its organizational hierarchy.

The interplay between these three domains—training effectiveness dependent on andragogical principles, resource allocation reflecting dynamic capabilities, and engagement practices embodying stakeholder theory—demonstrates the integrated nature of capacity building. Strengths in one area (such as effective training models) can be undermined by constraints in another (such as staff turnover due to resource limitations), highlighting the need for a systems approach to organizational development.

Overall, while KMSS demonstrates resilience and adaptive capacity in its PCM practices, the findings suggest that more systematic integration of these theoretical principles could enhance organizational effectiveness. The recommended Organizational Development Plan addresses these interconnections by proposing mutually reinforcing interventions across training, resource management, and stakeholder engagement systems.

Presentation of Research Objectives

Research Objective 1: To examine the current organizational capacity-building challenges in KMSS's Project Cycle Management (PCM).

In conflict-affected areas, security constraints and restricted access impede staff mobility and field operations, exacerbating skill gaps due to high staff turnover and necessitating repeated training cycles that disrupt consistent PCM processes. Communication and infrastructure deficiencies between the national office and diocesan branches hinder timely information exchange and decision-making. Donor-imposed restrictions limit funding flexibility, while inflation and operational costs—such as elevated fuel expenses for generators amid unreliable power—strain budgets in war-torn environments. These factors compel organizations to pursue supplementary funding, increasing administrative burdens and complicating the uniform application of PCM principles across project stages.

Research Objective 2: To identify effective capacity-building strategies for improving PCM implementation.

Early and active stakeholder involvement, incorporating input from communities and field staff during planning, aligns projects with local needs. Adaptive project management enables responsive adjustments to dynamic conditions, circumventing rigid protocols. Ongoing practical training and skill development sustain competency growth, complemented by advocacy for donor flexibility to better match funding and reporting with on-ground realities. Enhanced data management through improved monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) systems fosters accountability and knowledge retention. Innovative approaches, including "tripwire" mechanisms for response adjustments without formal reallocations, broader geographical scoping in proposals for flexibility, internal workshops, on-site simulations, and digital resources, effectively address security and access barriers in conflict zones, thereby bolstering PCM efficacy.

Research Objective 3: To evaluate the role of training, stakeholder engagement, and resource allocation in strengthening PCM-related capacity.

Targeted PCM training enhances staff competencies, with the train-the-trainer model facilitating knowledge dissemination and creating a multiplier effect, as evidenced by reports of trained personnel independently instructing others. Stakeholder engagement strengthens capacity through inclusive involvement of senior staff and diocesan offices across PCM phases, supported by mechanisms such as weekly reflections, monthly "KMSS Day" meetings, quarterly inter-office gatherings, and internships at the national office for skill-building and procedural integration. However, excessive centralization occasionally restricts local contributions, indicating potential benefits from more decentralized structures. Resource allocation acts as both facilitator and barrier: adequate funds support essential activities, yet shortages in funding, technical staff (e.g., a single MEAL coordinator), and field budgets limit efforts; adaptive measures like role rotations to expand skills and prevent burnout, alongside improved proposal writing to build donor trust, underscore the need for increased investments in financial, human, and technical resources to sustain PCM capacity.

Research Objective 4: To provide recommendations for sustainable capacity-building interventions in KMSS's Social Protection Department.

Sustainable capacity development requires integrated efforts to address internal weaknesses, including enhanced resource mobilization, continuous staff development through training and mentoring, refined human resource management, and promotion of inclusive, decentralized decision-making to maintain and scale PCM capabilities amid Myanmar's challenging context. Improved information sharing and feedback mechanisms cultivate a learning-oriented culture, integrating experiential learning and collective knowledge contributions to align capacity-building with practical needs. Adaptability to local dynamics, such as conflict disruptions, demands flexible strategies that reflect ground realities, thereby enhancing organizational resilience and long-term social protection outcomes.

Organizational Development Plan

In direct fulfillment of Research Objective 4 — "What recommendations can support sustainable capacity-building interventions for KMSS's Social Protection Department?" — this study culminates in the following structured Organizational Development (OD) Plan. The plan was developed in direct response to the capacity gaps identified in the research, which highlighted persistent challenges in monitoring and evaluation, staff skills, coordination mechanisms, resource mobilization, and conflict-sensitive programming. To address these issues, the OD Plan consolidates targeted interventions into a coherent strategy aimed at strengthening institutional capacity and ensuring sustainable program delivery.

The plan is structured around five mutually reinforcing areas of action: enhancing MEAL systems, expanding staff training and mentorship, improving internal coordination, developing a resource mobilization and allocation strategy, and embedding conflict-sensitive practices into all operations. Each component was designed to respond to specific organizational weaknesses, drawing on best practices in capacity building and tailored to

KMSS's operating context. Clear timelines, designated responsibilities, and measurable objectives provide a practical roadmap for implementation.

The overall purpose of the OD Plan is to elevate organizational maturity, resilience, and effectiveness by ensuring that progress in one domain reinforces improvements in others. Thus, this plan operationalizes the research findings into a concrete set of actionable recommendations, enabling KMSS to create a virtuous cycle of institutional strengthening for more adaptive, accountable, and impactful social protection programming in conflict-affected settings.

The OD activities, detailed below, encompass five key areas to enhance KMSS's capacity in PCM.

The first activity strengthens the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) system by recruiting additional staff and developing standardized tools and feedback mechanisms over 6–12 months, led by the MEAL Coordinator and others, to improve data handling, decision-making, and accountability.

The second activity builds staff capacity through expanded training programs, quarterly sessions on core skills, structured mentorship, and annual refreshers over 6–18 months (then ongoing), managed by HR and program leads, to foster technical expertise, leadership, and a learning culture via train-the-trainers methods.

The third activity improves internal coordination by appointing focal persons, holding regular calls and meetings, and launching a sharing platform within 3–6 months (then ongoing), overseen by national and diocesan directors, to promote unified operations, information flow, and inclusive decision-making.

The fourth activity focuses on resource mobilization by creating a strategy, training in grant writing, convening donor roundtables, and reviewing workloads over 12–24 months (strategy in first 6 months, then ongoing), led by senior leadership and managers, to secure stable funding, optimize human resources, and enable cross-office sharing.

The fifth activity integrates conflict-sensitive practices through staff training, guideline development, and expert partnerships over 6–12 months (then ongoing), directed by protection and security leads, to embed adaptive, safe approaches across programs and enhance resilience in volatile settings.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Capacity building within KMSS's Social Protection Unit emerges as a multidimensional process requiring the synergistic alignment of training, stakeholder engagement, and resource allocation. Evidence indicates that training alone is insufficient without complementary resource allocation and effective coordination, while the integration of all three factors has produced notable improvements in PCM performance. This dynamic provides a practical confirmation and extension of *Dynamic Capabilities Theory*. The findings demonstrate that the organization's capacity to 'sense' needs (through stakeholder engagement), 'seize' solutions (through targeted training), and 'transform' (through strategic

resource allocation) is not just an abstract capability but a concrete process that is central to building resilience in a volatile environment.

Incremental progress has been achieved through initiatives such as leadership training and coordination platforms, yet persistent gaps in MEAL systems and inter-office coordination remain. These persistent weaknesses highlight a theoretical implication: sustainable capacity building requires that these dynamic capabilities be systematically institutionalized, not just practiced intermittently. The coordination challenges between national and diocesan levels, for instance, point to a gap in fully leveraging *Stakeholder Theory* for decentralized adaptation, suggesting that the theory's principles need to be applied more deliberately across organizational hierarchies to unlock their full potential.

Findings also underscore the necessity of conflict-sensitive and adaptive approaches in fragile contexts, which aligns with the core premise of *Dynamic Capabilities*. Flexible funding, staff security measures, and adaptive management systems are crucial for maintaining operational continuity and community trust amid volatility.

Finally, institutionalizing capacity-building through a structured OD plan is critical. A formalized approach provides a pathway for sustainable improvement. By building existing strengths while systematically addressing weaknesses, KMSS can evolve into a more learning-oriented, networked, and resilient organization. Ultimately, this study illustrates that the integration of stakeholder-centric practices (Stakeholder Theory) with an organization's adaptive agility (Dynamic Capabilities) forms the bedrock of effective capacity building in humanitarian settings, offering a replicable model for similar organizations operating under constraint.

Recommendations

The assessment of KMSS's capacity-building needs reveals that effective PCM in conflict settings requires an integrated approach. The following recommendations are consolidated into key thematic areas and framed as broader implications for practice (within KMSS and similar organizations) and policy (for the wider humanitarian sector and its donors).

Theme 1: Strengthening MEAL Systems for Adaptive Management

- **Implication for Practice:** KMSS should prioritize investing in its Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) unit by hiring additional staff, developing context-appropriate tools, and integrating conflict-sensitive indicators. This is not merely a technical fix but a prerequisite for evidence-based decision-making and organizational learning.

- **Implication for Policy:** Donors and international partners should fund core MEAL positions and capacity building, not just project-specific M&E activities. This supports the development of a *learning organization* capable of adapting to dynamic crises rather than just reporting on fixed indicators.

Theme 2: Investing in Human Resources for Institutional Resilience

- **Implication for Practice:** KMSS must formalize its investment in people through structured mentorship programs, clear career pathways, and well-being support. This

addresses high turnover and builds a sustainable internal talent pipeline, moving beyond ad-hoc training to integrated staff development.

- **Implication for Policy:** The humanitarian sector needs to champion policies that incentivize the retention of national staff. Donors should allow budget lines for staff retention bonuses, well-being initiatives, and leadership succession planning, recognizing that organizational capacity is fundamentally rooted in stable, skilled personnel.

Theme 3: Fostering Collaborative Coordination and Knowledge Management

- **Implication for Practice:** KMSS should enhance internal coordination by appointing focal points and establishing a centralized digital platform for knowledge sharing. This preserves institutional memory, improves coherence between national and diocesan offices, and prevents the repetition of past mistakes.
- **Implication for Policy:** Inter-agency clusters and networks should actively facilitate partnerships and knowledge exchange between international and local actors. This promotes a more equitable humanitarian ecosystem where local knowledge is systematically integrated into response strategies.

Theme 4: Advocating Flexible and Sustained Funding Models

- **Implication for Practice:** KMSS's leadership should proactively advocate donor flexibility regarding budgets, timelines, and reporting requirements. This is essential for adapting programs in real-time to security threats and evolving community needs.

- **Implication for Policy:** Donors must shift from short-term, project-centric funding to multi-year, flexible grants that include direct support for organizational overhead and capacity building. This policy change is critical for enabling local organizations like KMSS to transition from implementers to strategic, autonomous actors.

Suggestions for Future Research

Building on the theoretical foundations and findings of this study, future research should prioritize avenues that can deepen our understanding of capacity building in conflict settings. The following suggestions are ordered by their potential to extend the theoretical frameworks of Andragogy, Dynamic Capabilities, and Stakeholder Theory, and to generate insights with broader applicability.

1. Highest Priority: A Longitudinal Study of OD Plan Implementation and Dynamic Capabilities.

The most critical avenue is a longitudinal study tracking the implementation of KMSS's OD Plan. This would directly examine *Dynamic Capabilities Theory* by investigating how the organization *senses* evolving challenges, *seizes* opportunities through the plan, and *transforms* its structures over time. Measuring changes in staff retention, coordination efficiency, and MEAL system effectiveness would provide robust evidence on how capacity-building strategies sustain—or fail to sustain—resilience in protracted crises.

2. Intra-Country Comparative Analysis of Regional Operations.

To deepen the contextual understanding of the findings, a comparative case study of different regional or field offices within Myanmar would be valuable. Such research could examine how variations in local conflict dynamics, community needs, and resource availability influence the implementation of capacity-building strategies. This approach would extend Stakeholder Theory by exploring how micro-level stakeholders and hyper-local conditions shape organizational capacity within a single, complex national context.

3. Action Research on Co-Designing MEAL Systems with Stakeholders.

This study identified MEAL systems as a critical weakness. A future action research project could involve researchers collaborating with KMSS staff and community stakeholders to co-design and implement an improved MEAL framework. This approach would be deeply grounded in *Andragogy Theory*, treating staff as adult learners who learn best by doing, and in Stakeholder Theory, making beneficiaries co-creators of accountability mechanisms. This would generate practical tools while advancing theoretical knowledge on participatory organizational learning.

4. Investigating the "How" of Donor Flexibility and Resource Allocation.

While this study confirms that donor flexibility is crucial, future policy-oriented research should investigate *how* effective flexible funding models are negotiated and managed. A focused study on contractual relationships, trust-building mechanisms, and performance indicators used in successful partnerships between local NGOs and international donors would provide a micro-level lens on Dynamic Capabilities. It would offer concrete evidence to inform the global "localization" agenda, moving from advocacy to practical implementation.

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