



**The Significance and Impacts of
a Youth-led Empowerment Program and
Youth-led Community Development Interventions
in Myanmar**

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Abstract

In Myanmar, youth are traditionally perceived as a less significant segment of the society. Hence, youth development issues and problems around youth have attracted little attention from community members. Youth empowerment is a human resource development tool and a process designed to help the development of young individuals, by enabling them to solve their own problems and contribute to the development of their community.

This qualitative study examines youth empowerment initiatives of one youth-led organization and its alumni by employing Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and conducting semi-structured interviews. This study focuses on how a youth-led organization has empowered youth to become socially engaged for social transformation and get involved in the country's development sector.

Results show that empowerment is an ongoing process and reveal a new dimension of youth empowerment in the Myanmar context. This study found that the nature of youth-led development organizations for youth and social change movements differed. Youth-led empowerment actions offer learning opportunities and create spaces for young people to participate in community movements. Moreover, Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB) is an alternative to the conventional empowerment approaches, which offers Buddhist principles for individual development of young people and stimulates youth to get involved in collective social change movements to tackle structural injustices.

Keywords: youth, empowerment, youth-led initiatives, SEB, social change movement

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents for their loving kindness and unfailing support, and for introducing me to the essence of empowerment. I also dedicate this work to the young people of Myanmar who have devoted their lives for the sake of others.

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List of Acronyms

AAA	Annual Alumni Assembly
ACG	Alumni Core Group
AEC	Adolescent Empowerment Cycle
AI	Appreciative Inquiry
ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BSP	The Burma Socialist Programme Party
BYEP	Buddhist Youth Empowerment Program
BYLT	Buddhist Youth Leadership Training
BYMSD	Buddhist Youth Meeting for Spiritual Development
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EE	Empowerment Education model
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
FBO	Faith-based Organization
IEC	Information, Education, and Communication
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IP	Interview Participant
KMF	Kalyana Mitta Development Foundation
LNGO	Local Non-Governmental Organization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MYLP	Myanmar Young Leader Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PCM	Project Cycle Management
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEB	Socially Engaged Buddhism
SEEBYN	Socially Engaged Ethnic Buddhist Youth Network
SGEES	School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences
TOT	Training of Transformation

TP	Transactional Partnering model
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Science and Cultural Organization
UNSDN	United Nations Social Development Network
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party
VUW-HEC	Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
YD&E	Youth Development and Empowerment program model
YLD	Youth Leadership Development

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Young people are critical to a society. They have great potential to contribute to personal development, for the sake of others, for their country, and for the natural environment. On the other hand, it is obvious that many young people are often more interested in other activities, which may not be valuable to their lives or to society. Moreover, it is argued that young people are often seen as one of the victims of social problems of the community, a weak education system, political instability, and poverty (Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2013).

Substantial numbers of youth in Myanmar (Burma) are growing up in marginalized communities, facing various problems, and missing out on opportunities, reflecting the context of the country's political and economic isolation and instability, and sustained racial and ethnic armed conflicts (South & Lall, 2016). Young people from such conditions and communities tend to have a lower quality education, contribute to higher levels of communal stress, and are much more likely to bring burden to future generations (Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2013). This research is concerned with how young people in Myanmar who live with such circumstances make changes for their own future and for their communities, as well as how the society helps them.

“A focus on developmental systems has brought renewed attention to the assertion that youth are both products and agents of the settings in which they engage, and that these reciprocal processes provide a basis for their own development and for others” (Zeldin, 2004, p. 75).

This quote reflects the significance of the young generation and youth is not only important for individual development but also play a vital role in bettering society. It also highlights that the development paradigm and concepts have shifted towards human resource development by empowering personal growth and community rather than only providing humanitarian aid. However, Myanmar has challenges in each human development sector due to a long history in political transition, a rapid democratization process, ethnic conflicts, and poverty.

“Many Local NGOs and CBOs promote grassroots social mobilization and political participation, especially within ethnic nationality communities” (South, 2008, p. 44).

The statement underlines a steady increase in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) interventions, which mobilized civil society in the field of political and social movements around the world. Local Non-Governmental Organizations (LNGO) and CBOs are mainly concerned with the country’s economic growth, the process of democratization, and promoting human rights rather than investing in empowering future leaders or the potential of the young generation (South, 2008).

In fact, the youth issue and youth empowerment stand invisible in the society and are accepted as the least significant development issue in Myanmar. Moreover, to date, not much comprehensive research and studies on youth and youth empowerment have been carried out in Myanmar. It is important to explore how Myanmar’s society has accepted the role of youth and what social and community engagements the youth are participating in. Therefore, conducting this research is important for the younger generation, which will be a partial fulfillment for youth empowerment by youth perspectives and their experiences on social change movement. In the same vein, no research has been found regarding youth empowerment in relation to Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB) in Myanmar. The research findings are expected to contribute to particular recommendations surrounding the future of youth empowerment in Myanmar.

1.1.1 Aspects of youth and empowerment

Youth: There is no clear universal definition of youth due to the contexts of each country, socio-cultural differences, and organizational settings (Mauto, 2013). Therefore, the definition of ‘youth’ in any country normally differs from that of other countries (UNESCO, 2004). However, it is widely accepted that youth is the period between childhood and adult age. The United Nations defines youth as a person aged between 15-24 years and young people as people aged between 10-19 years (Mauto, 2013; UNDP, 2014).

In Myanmar, society generally regards youth as those aged between 15 to 18 years and there is no straightforward definition of ‘young people’ and ‘youth’.

Similarly, the 1993 Child Law of Myanmar defines people under age 18 as a child (Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, 2014). However, Myanmar adopts the United Nations' definitions of child and youth for statistical purposes, which defines a child as a person aged 0-14 and youth as a person aged 15-24 (Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, 2014). This study adopts this United Nations' definition of youth that recognizes a person aged of 15 to 24 years old. Based on Myanmar's social practices, the terms 'young people' and 'youth' are interchangeably used throughout the study.

Empowerment: Empowerment refers to the degree of self-determination and autonomy in individuals and in communities to do something better, which is related to work or making decisions (Soler Maso, Trilla Bernet, Jiménez-Morales, & Úcar Martínez, 2017). One of the attempts to empowerment is to promote individual confidence to learn by oneself, learning by practicing, and internalize skills that can be applied to other parts of challenges in daily life (Rappaport, Davidson, Wilson, Mitchell, & Kenneth, 1975). Empowerment is also accepted as a process of increasing individual and group capacity in order to gain one's confidence and become educated to make choices into desired actions and outcomes, especially in controlling or creating own life and claiming rights (UNSDN, 2012).

Empowerment is often accepted as an action that assists the process of self-empowerment and to professional support of people, which helps people to overcome their sense of powerlessness and enables them to realize the individual potential to manage own life and community resources (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). It could be in many forms such as providing training, psychosocial support, and try to overcome the social and political difficulties together with the community (Soler Maso et al., 2017).

Applying these concepts to a personal and organizational level of empowerment is one of the obvious aspects of this research. Furthermore, this empowerment concept and framework will be used in this study in order to explore in-depth different situations of youth and youth empowerment of Myanmar. I believe this research is essential to reflect the role of youth in Myanmar and to underline the significant capabilities of young Buddhists in the field of development studies in Myanmar contexts.

For the purposes of this study, youth from Myanmar will be targeted as research participants. They are young Buddhists who previously engaged in social and community development activities. More specifically, they are alumni of a youth empowerment program by one youth-led development organization from Myanmar, known as the Kalyana Mitta Development Foundation (KMF). There are reasons why the study focuses on young Buddhists, even though there are many young people who belong to different religions and faiths in Myanmar. Firstly, Buddhism in Myanmar is the faith practiced by the great majority of the country's population accounting for 87.9 percent of total population (50,279,900) (Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, 2016). Secondly, there are few youth empowerment programs for young Buddhists in the country compared to the empowerment programs for Christian youth of Myanmar. Finally, it is obvious that exploring appropriate empowerment strategies and tools for young Buddhists of Myanmar enables the young generation to find alternatives to modernization and globalization, to acquire an alternative education, and to tackle the negative impacts of the country's transitions.

In a broad view, my study will look at the connections between youth empowerment by a youth-led development organization and youth community engagement within the country's currently changing political and development situations. Likewise, the study will investigate how the alternative community development perspective and youth empowerment are practiced among groups of young Buddhists in line with religious philosophy and teaching, known as Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB)¹. In particular, I focus on a study of the interventions of KMF. A number of reasons have comprised why the study gives emphasis to the KMF youth empowerment program. Firstly, KMF is run by youth to empower the young generation to get involved in social change initiatives and community development projects. Secondly, KMF's youth empowerment program is embedded in SEB concepts and is rooted in Myanmar's social practices and cultural setting. Furthermore, the study aims to understand the role of young Buddhists, their social engagement for community development, and the process of empowerment in Myanmar. In particular, this research will explore Alumni Core Group (ACG) initiatives in social change projects and community development.

¹ SEB is discussed in more detail in chapter (2) Section (2.4.1).

1.2 Research objectives and questions

With regard to the KMF's organizational value and development concept, and Myanmar's currently changing political and development situations, the central aim of this research is to examine the KMF's youth empowerment program, an intervention towards targeted young people in Myanmar. The research also investigates the role of KMF alumni or young Buddhists, ACGs and their social change movement, and their experiences. In addition, the study aims to explore the in-depth application of Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB) for individual empowerment and collective social transformation activities.

In order to respond to the aim of the research, a core research question was developed: "How does the KMF's program intervention aim to empower its alumni to become socially engaged for social transformation and get involved in development sectors in Myanmar?" In order to support the central research question, four secondary questions were developed as follows:

- 1) How has the KMF program strengthened the individual development of targeted young people?
- 2) How has the KMF program strengthened the organizational development of Alumni Core Groups to become Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)?
- 3) How do research participants perceive the Alumni Core Groups' social cohesion and community development work in their areas?
- 4) How does the concept and practice of "Socially Engaged Buddhism" (SEB) stimulate social engagement of KMF alumni in a variety of development activities for their communities?

1.3 Research approach and methodology

As this research is related to personal transformation, organizational growth, and the positive contribution of religious practices, the empowerment approach from an alternative development perspective was employed. This is a qualitative study as the research dealt with people's perceptions, experiences, feelings, and the way they make sense of their social engagements and community works. Furthermore, the research used Appreciate Inquiry (AI) to seek stakeholders' self-determined change in individual and organizational levels, which is focused not only on the experience of a group of people but also to the individual sense of positivity on their work and how

do they care in each aspect in daily activities. Semi-structured interviews with targeted participants was the main method of collecting research data and of procuring perspectives of the participants, which provided an understanding of the process of empowerment programs in both personal and organizational levels as well as their outcomes. The alternative development perspectives, a transformational methodology, and a simple data collection method offered the right direction to carry out this research and assisted to collect rich information regarding youth-led empowerment program and individuals' transformation of youth in complex Myanmar's social context.

1.4 Research rationale and its linkages between different sectors

With the radical criticisms of the Western development concepts, holistic development theorists and community development workers have explored alternatives to conventional development approaches that can improve the socio-economic development of a nation (Haynes, 2008). This research attempts to study the conventional development practices and to search for alternative solutions to previous practices. Specifically, this research makes an effort to explore appropriate solutions for youth empowerment in Myanmar's contexts. It examines which discourse and factors were constituted in youth empowerment and attempts to identify the difference in youth empowerment process in Myanmar contexts.

A new development framework known as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been developed for addressing social and economic development issues, and to promote sustainable development (UNDP, 2016). Moreover, the international aid modality and development programs have shifted to focusing on human resource development, such as human rights, education, and grassroots empowerment (South, 2008). Similarly, the nature of the local development organizations and their services has changed in accordance with the country's political situations and local circumstances (Gemmil & Bamidele-lzu, 2012). Based on these changes, this study investigates the connections between the nature of a youth-led development organization, its empowerment programs, and youth empowerment process associated with the individual's inner growth and collective social change activities.

It is claimed that the role of religion and religious practices have become a notable alternative development tool to a conventional development worldview in the forms of peace-building, conflict resolutions, and for personal growth and

empowerment (Haynes, 2008). This research shows links and the benefits of religious principles to youth empowerment and society. More specifically, this study shows the significance of SEB and the underlying factors, which shaped the ethos of a youth-led organization, groups of young Buddhists and their social cohesion, and the individual empowerment of young people in Myanmar.

1.5 Thesis overview

Chapter One is mainly focused on outlining the nature and scope of this research. In this chapter, I explain the reasons why I chose one youth-led empowerment program, its program alumni, and the linkages with many factors for youth empowerment. I then outline the objectives of this research project and research questions as well as presenting the rationale for this thesis.

Chapter Two presents the existing literature related to empowerment, youth, youth and development, and youth and empowerment. I then explain the role of religions in development and introduce the concepts of Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB), which is one of the essential parts of the research. This chapter also explores a brief development paradigm shift and the trend of NGOs and their empowerment programs. Furthermore, youth-led development organizations, their empowerment initiatives, and social engagements are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Three outlines the epistemology and methodology of the research. It explains the detailed process of how the research is carried out, research locations and timeline, and the process of recruiting targeted participants. Moreover, it describes the data collection methods, analysis, and data management. The essential parts of the research such as power and positionality, considerations of human ethics issues, and health and safety are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter Four provides the context of Myanmar. It gives an overview of the country's situations and development paradigm. It underlines the specific issues and the situation of youth in society, youth and education, youth and empowerment, and their social engagement in their communities. Furthermore, the emergence of NGOs and aid agencies in Myanmar, the nature of LINGO and their limitations are discussed. This chapter explains the background of KMF and its youth empowerment programs and the progress of its initiatives.

Chapter Five mainly highlights research findings of fieldwork. This chapter provides answers to the main research questions and sub-questions of the study.

I discuss extensively the research findings in relation to the existing literature in Chapter Six. Chapter Six covers to present most of the sector of this study, such as empowerment, youth and development, youth empowerment and empowerment models, SEB and empowerment models, and development agencies and their empowerment initiatives.

Chapter Seven sets out the contribution of this study to existing research and offers a number of recommendations for youth empowerment. Similarly, I explain the research limitations and areas for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the fundamental concepts and information for the analysis and discussion in the subsequent chapters. It mainly reviews the theoretical concepts, the significance, and the meaning of empowerment and youth with a wider perception of religion and development, as well as the role of development agencies for youth empowerment.

This chapter begins by exploring the existing literature on what empowerment is, what empowerment means to youth, and the roles of religion and service providers in the development process. The aim of the chapter is to provide an appropriate scope of empowerment and youth for the rest of the study. It examines the links between youth and empowerment models, youth development and empowerment models, Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB), and the interventions of the service providers known as development agencies. It shows that youth empowerment has come in many forms and is an obvious factor for the personal growth, organizational, and community level development.

2.2 Empowerment

Empowerment is a currently popular principle and a flexible concept within the field of social and community development works (Parpart, 2014; Soler Maso et al., 2017). The concept of empowerment has gradually become much more extensively used in the field of social sciences and scientific professional environments (Úcar Martínez, Jiménez-Morales, Soler Masó, & Trilla Bernet, 2017). Similarly, empowerment has been mainstreamed by the international aid and development agencies as a concept and framework that enables the undertaking of development initiatives to strengthen people's knowledge and skills (Hennink, Kiiti, Pillinger, & Jayakaran, 2012; Parpart, 2014). However, it has come with a lack of a clear definition and underlying theoretical concepts, which may undermine the efforts of community development interventions and societal development initiatives (Hennink et al., 2012). It is not because of its wide-ranging scope and meaning, but because the concept of empowerment has been interpreted and cultivated from a variety of sources such as different values, beliefs, ideas, philosophies, and thoughts

from every corner of the world (Soler Maso et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the concept of ‘empowerment’ has been used in many aspects of human development and for different purposes ranging from individual to community over the past few decades (Úcar Martínez et al., 2017).

In 2006, a report of the World Health Organization (WHO) stated that “As ‘empowerment’ increasingly enters mainstream discourse, those using the term need to clarify definitions, dimensions and outcomes of the range of interventions called empowering” (Wallerstein, 2006, p. 4).

To date, the definitions of empowerment have been put forth and used in a specific area but a number of scholars have also tried to develop multidimensional constructs on empowerment (Hennink et al., 2012; MacKenzie, 2009; Peterson, 2014). Empowerment is generally regarded as the individual ability to do what one desires or to increase one’s capacity to define and analyze one’s problems as well as responding in a right manner or ability to act (Labonte, 1989). Additionally, empowerment is not only being able to choose and act based on one’s individual preferences but an ability to influence the range of alternative actions to those choices (Soler Maso et al., 2017).

Psychological empowerment refers to an individual’s perceptions of personal control, the ability to understand the sociopolitical environment critically, and an individual proactive approach to life (Kronenberg, 2007). In fact, researchers and practitioners of community psychology and other disciplines accept that empowerment is a strengths-based and non-expert driven approach that focuses on the ability to define people’s difficult life circumstances or community conditions and to actively get involved to help solve the problems that people are facing (Peterson, 2014). From the development perspective, most international development organizations suggest that empowerment can be a public health strategy and a development tool if it is conceptualized and used effectively to improve community health outcomes and poverty reduction (Hennink et al., 2012). Subsequently, the definition and meaning of empowerment are still vague in the diverse area of discourses since there is no consensus among practitioners and areas of application (Hennink et al., 2012; MacKenzie, 2009; Peterson, 2014; Soler Maso et al., 2017).

The theories of empowerment comprised of the processes and outcomes of empowerment actions (Christens & Peterson, 2012; Parpart, 2014; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Besides, both empowerment processes and outcomes occur in various forms (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). However, they can be found in three levels (1) individual, (2) organizational, and (3) community levels (Hennink et al., 2012; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Rappaport, 1984). The conceptual definition of empowerment and empirical development initiatives have provided the conceptual framework of empowerment, which is comprised of six mechanisms: (1) knowledge, (2) agency, (3) opportunity, (4) capacity-building, (5) resources, and (6) sustainability (Hennink et al., 2012). Being empowered or the stage of empowerment in each of the three aforementioned levels might vary and depends on a wide range of mechanisms comprised by the empowerment processes and outcomes (Úcar Martínez et al., 2017).

2.2.1 Individual empowerment

The most fundamental area of empowerment presents empowerment as a process of individual transformation that enables individuals to make independent decisions (Hennink et al., 2012). Moreover, it assists individuals to take actions on their decisions to make changes in their lives or to improve their quality of life (Christens & Dolan, 2010).

The primary mechanism identified by international development organizations for individual empowerment is ‘agency’ that contains self-confidence and self-efficacy to develop a vision and achieve personal goals (Hennink et al., 2012; Kronenberg, 2007; Wilson, 1996). Another component of agency is decision-making, which is defined as an individual’s ability to make informed decisions that are respected and recognized by family or community (Hennink et al., 2012). The experience and impact of a youth environmental action from the USA highlights self-confidence, self-efficacy, and the enabling of decision-making as basic factors for individual development progress (Schusler & Krasny, 2008). Similarly, another element of agency is effecting change – individual belief in an ability to take action to bring a better condition of life based on one’s own goals (Hennink et al., 2012). Schusler and Krasny (2008) argue that most young people attain environmental action skills related to planning, public speaking, fund-raising, and community organizing while they take action to effect change.

Knowledge and opportunity are also important empowerment mechanisms because agency alone does not entirely provide individual empowerment (Schusler & Krasny, 2008). Formal education, non-formal education such as training, other resources, and access to information are factors that provide an individual knowledge for a specific purpose (Hennink et al., 2012). The existence of an enabling environment for change is defined as an opportunity, which helps individuals to develop knowledge and skills (Hennink et al., 2012). Kronenberg (2007) states that the arts-based youth development programs fuel empowerment for targeted young people by providing a variety of art training, and creating spaces for youth to participate and share their knowledge and skills via community activities. A number of development organizations support other mechanisms of knowledge and opportunity that help individuals to expand their agency (Hennink et al., 2012). The empowering processes for an individual might involve participation in an organization or a community (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). In fact, empowered individuals have not only the skills to communicate effectively and create a shared vision in the group, but the willingness and ability to create and perform new tasks (Wilson, 1996). Therefore, individual empowerment is essential for personal transformation and also plays a vital role in achieving organizational goals and sustaining community development (Kronenberg, 2007).

2.2.2 Organizational empowerment

Studies and research underline the significance and the links between individual and organizational empowerment since empowered individuals are a fundamental factor in organizational development. Three levels of organizational empowerment are identified: the intra-organizational, inter-organizational, and extra-organizational levels (Janssen, Snoeren, Van Regenmortel, & Abma, 2015).

The culture of collective decision-making and shared leadership within an organization is the most significant example of intra-organizational level empowerment (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). It is stated that the success of an organization in achieving their goals and missions is based on the multifaceted relationship of organizational features, levels of individual empowerment within the organization, and the characteristics of the community (Janssen et al., 2015). The characteristics of intra-organizational empowerment include the organizational structure, functioning of team members, intervention strategies, management, and

organizational development (Janssen et al., 2015). Inter-organizational empowerment refers to the linkages and networks between organizations. Extra-organizational empowerment refers to organizational actions to shape policy for which they have taken part (Janssen et al., 2015).

Five mechanisms are emphasized for organizational empowerment: organizational agency; capacity-building; opportunity structure; resources; and sustainability (Hennink et al., 2012). The organizational agency can be seen as the capacity to prioritize and set goals, making operational decisions and taking actions to plan programs and activities (Hennink et al., 2012; Janssen et al., 2015). Organizational capacity-building is comprised of harnessing staff's skills and knowledge an organization and providing spaces for team members' initiatives (Hennink et al., 2012). As an example, the senior adults of a community development program provided positive feedback regarding the capabilities of empowered youth from the same organization, which highlights the importance of organizational capacity development (Zeldin, 2004). Opportunity structure refers to the existence of an organization's effective partnership mechanisms with other communities and organizations (Janssen et al., 2015) and human resources and financial resources are defined types of resources (Hennink et al., 2012). The positive impact of the self-empowerment program, which provided life skills activities to young minority girls from socioeconomically disadvantaged families, supports the significance of the above-mentioned mechanisms to deliver services (Lou, 1995).

Organizational sustainability refers to providing knowledge and agency of team members, by promoting organizational capacity and developing long-term organizational development plans and strategies to generate less dependence on external supports (Janssen et al., 2015). According to Zeldin (2004), developing a long-term plan that provides spaces for team members, especially youth in organizational governance roles, has a positive effect on personal development. Organizational empowerment is a process comprised of a number of mechanisms (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). It is linked to individual empowerment (Janssen et al., 2015), and is one of the main inputs that empower communities and provides the community's needs (Christens, 2012).

2.2.3 Community empowerment

Community empowerment is accepted as the process of upgrading a community's knowledge and skills to mobilize towards intended or positive changes (Hennink et al., 2012). A community is a field of social interaction, which often exists as the collective actions of the members and allows individuals to participate purposefully in the community actions (Brennan, Barnett, & Lesmeister, 2007). In fact, a community preserves local resources, maintains the local culture and knowledge, can develop self-help plans and community sustainability strategies, and performs tasks for social structures and changes (Wilson, 2006). Similarly, the community level empowering processes might contain collective actions to shape the local government structures and access community resources (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Five mechanisms that foster organizational empowerment were also described for community empowerment: agency; capacity-building; opportunity; resources; and sustainability (Hennink et al., 2012).

Community agency includes the ability of a community to set its own priorities, make decisions to take actions and capacity-building covers building the community groups, networks, and mobilizing these groups to participate in the collective actions on specific issues (Hennink et al., 2012). For example, the post-conflict empowerment initiatives of Sierra Leone delivered fewer benefits for vulnerable women because the program actors made little effort to understand community contexts regarding experiences of female soldiers and motivation of young women (MacKenzie, 2009). In addition, the program process and initiatives were neither engaged by local actors nor community members (MacKenzie, 2009). It is directly related to the opportunity mechanism, that community empowerment needs enabling of an environment that recognizes local grassroots participation, is responsive to community advocacy, and helps to build community accountability (Hennink et al., 2012).

Providing resources is also identified one mechanism of community empowerment that includes the provision of services or supplies to a community to perform social change initiatives (Hennink et al., 2012). However, development interventions, in particular, providing direct resources to the local communities sometimes bring inappropriateness for local needs because of the nature of aid programs and the agenda of donor agencies (Gready, 2010). It is also related to another community empowerment component known as sustainability, which enables

a community to be self-sufficient and to reduce reliance on external resources (Hennink et al., 2012).

The empowerment outcome is the result of a process, which is being empowered by actions, activities and structural changes (Swift & Levin, 1987). Empowered outcomes can be described as the operationalization² of empowerment, which enables examining and indicating indirectly the impact of empowering processes (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Empowered outcomes for individuals might include individuals' strong sense that they are in control of their lives and the individual's perception of their own ability to be effective in the world, which is known as perceived control (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Soler Maso et al., 2017). The development of organizational networks and the level of policy leverage are some of the organizational outcomes (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Community empowerment outcomes might include the level of a community's collaboration with different communities, coexisting and sharing power with other associations or agencies, and access to community resources (Zimmerman, 2007). It has been argued that a specific area of empowerment outcomes often can be measured or should be measured in particular ways. However, the processes and outcomes are indistinguishable and an effective measurement of empowerment remains undetermined (Parpart, 2014; Peterson, 2014).

To sum up, empowerment is an ongoing process of individual transformation to gain one's confidence and become educated to make choices leading to desired actions and outcomes, especially with regards to controlling or creating one's own life and claiming rights for individuals (UNSDN, 2012). Empowerment is perceived as the process of organizational development and social change actions (Hennink et al., 2012; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Rappaport, 1984), and empowerment outcomes can be found at all levels based on context-specific issues and identified priorities (Peterson, 2014). However, a variety of empowerment initiatives often receive less attention for a number of reasons including cultural differences, local circumstances, social settings, etc. (Peterson, 2014).

It has been argued that "much existing literature that contributes to defining empowerment is based on secondary data or proposes a theoretical framework of

² Operationalization is a process of defining a phenomenon and to provide a way of quantifying it so that it may be tested. However, it is designed not directly measurable and is indicated by other phenomena (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2006).

empowerment without a substantive evidence base” (Hennink et al., 2012, p. 204). Similarly, much of the writing about empowerment often fails to connect research with theory, and often separates the empirical interventions and experiences with a framework to develop a body of knowledge on empowerment (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). It is strongly suggested that development actors, policymakers, and researchers should pay greater attention to what models or mechanisms of empowerment work for targeted beneficiaries and which levels need to be identified with context-specific issues (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

2.3 Youth

Defining ‘youth’ is not a simple task since each country defines youth differently and there is no clear-cut international indicator, such as age intervals, on what the term implies to define it (UNESCO, 2004). Similarly, apart from statistical use, there is no consensus to state a clear definition as to what youth means since development agencies and organizations employ different definitions regarding sociocultural differences, local contexts, and program requirements (Mauto, 2013). However, The United Nations defines a youth as a person aged between 15-24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by member states. This definition was made during preparations for the International Youth Year (1985) and intended for statistical purposes (Mauto, 2013; UNDP, 2014; UNDP, 2016a). It is also stated that there are several definitions for youth within UN entities and UN development programs (Mauto, 2013). Nevertheless, it is best understood that youth is the transitional period from the dependence of childhood to independent adulthood.

Youth can also be defined as the stage of constructing the self-concept, which is also known as self-perspective, self-identity, self-construction, and so on (Jones, Audley-Piotrowski, & Kiefer, 2012; Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2013). Several external factors often shape youth self-concepts, such as culture, gender, lifestyle, friends, and life experiences (Jones et al., 2012). For instance, there is a link between these external factors and individual beliefs about oneself, which shapes personal identity and individual value particularly in youth (Schlegel, Hicks, Arndt, & King, 2009). Besides, youth behave differently in daily life based on their own perspectives, interests, the way they see their lives, and engage in the society based on individual value and beliefs (Schlegel et al., 2009). It is strongly argued that access to proper or good education and desirable skills to address individual’s problems are the

fundamental requirements for young people to become better individuals and good citizens (Schusler & Krasny, 2008).

On one hand, youth are a positive force for transformational change, and they can bring positive changes not only for individual development but also for their societies (UNDP, 2014a). For example, Schusler and Krasny (2008) argue that youth are contributors, and have the power to unite individuals from different ethnic groups and communities. Moreover, youth often have a convincing power and can influence their fellow peers to participate in social initiatives (Trinidad & Ghosh, 2006). On the other hand, research, professional experiences, and the international media highlight the enormous issue regarding a growing number of youth who are living with poverty, unhealthy lifestyles, materialism, and get involved in substance abuse and violence (Morrison, Alcorn, & Nelums, 1997). Consequently, they are facing several problems such as delinquency, teenage pregnancy, and dependency, and public respect for youth has therefore degraded (Morrison et al., 1997).

Worldwide, more than one billion youth face similar problems and a wide array of development challenges. Furthermore, approximately 85 percent of the total youth population are from underdeveloped and developing countries (UNDP, 2014; UNDP, 2016a). Schwartz and Suyemoto (2013) argue that such social issues and development problems tend to disturb the individual development of youths and devastate the potential contribution of youths to their communities. It has been argued that youth engagement and their participation in political parties from all countries around the world remain lower than that of other age groups (UNDP, 2014).

2.3.1 Youth and Development

It is believed that investing in young people (such as raising awareness of individual development and capacity building in a person's early years) has a significant impact on their adulthood capabilities (Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2013). Based on inputs and outcomes of linear thinking, many governments, communities, and development agencies have explored youth issues and developed youth development frameworks according to internal social capital and have tried to support development initiatives for young generations (Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004). Youth issues and youth development have become one of the fundamental factors and principles of sustainable human development (UNDP, 2014).

The term youth development can be classified three different ways: (1) a natural process, (2) principles, and (3) practices of development (Hamilton et al., 2004). A natural process refers to the growing capacity of young individuals that enables them to understand circumstances and act appropriately in familiar environments, and it can be described as the identical process of child or adolescent development (Hamilton et al., 2004). Young persons experience various physical changes and social challenges, and they often face difficulties behaving acceptably and tackling those challenges at this stage (Hamilton et al., 2004). Schusler and Krasny (2008) state that youth can acquire skills related to planning, self-management, and interpersonal skills while they take action to those changes through youth development initiatives. The main purpose of youth development in this stage is to provide youth development initiatives that enable individuals to lead a healthy, satisfying, productive, and meaningful life in later independent adulthood (Hamilton et al., 2004).

With a rapid paradigm shift in the field of development in the 1990s, the term youth development has become a set of development principles or approaches for the young generation (Hamilton et al., 2004; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). It mainly emphasized support for the capacity development of young people from individuals, organizations, and communities (Lou, 1995; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Zeldin, 2004). There are two main principles of youth development: focusing on the inclusiveness of young people (all youth) and encouraging the positive development of youth (thriving) (Hamilton et al., 2004; Lou, 1995). Senior development workers appreciate the effect of young peoples' initiatives from the same organization and argue that it is important to encourage young people and promote youth inclusiveness to achieve a better organizational outcome (Zeldin, 2004).

One intention of the youth development approach is to counterbalance the previous conventional youth development models that emphasise prevention and treatment programs (Allison, Edmonds, Wilson, Pope, & Farrell, 2011; Hamilton et al., 2004; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). The traditional youth development models were developed with a view that underestimated the capacity of youth, were designed to categorize youth with specific kinds of problems and tried to remedy them (Hamilton et al., 2004; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). In the field of public health, it is argued that some young people need treatment and deterrence and, therefore, the formal youth development models are somehow relevant (Hamilton et al., 2004).

Admittedly, the combination of both approaches is needed for different conditions and youth issues. However, developing the combination of approaches is still under debate (Hamilton et al., 2004; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

In youth development, the term ‘practices’ is an important feature and practices in development refer to organizations, communities, and development initiatives (Hamilton et al., 2004). This feature is an application of the principles based on planned development programs for young people, and to provide youths’ requirements (Hamilton et al., 2004). Generally, the development programs, organizations’ activities, and support for youth can be categorized under the term ‘practices’ and these practices are usually rooted in or funded by donors or associations or organizations or governments (Hamilton et al., 2004). Moreover, most organizational programs were designed to achieve their program goals and have an influence on the process of youth development (Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2013).

Overall, there seems to be some evidence to indicate that there are three components of youth development: a natural process; principles; and practices of development. The three components of youth development are basically designed for youth issues to solve the problems by development actors rather than by youth themselves (Hamilton et al., 2004; Zeldin, 2004). Christens and Dolan (2010) state that youth initiatives, participation, the opportunities for youth involvement in solving the issues faced by young people, to develop strategies to address them, and their engagement in the decision-making process are essential factors for youth development initiatives. However, studies claim that youth input and participation in local level decision-making and community developed programs for youth have normally gained less attention, and low numbers of youth were invited to participate in the youth development programs (Brennan, Barnett, & Lesmeister, 2007; Christens & Dolan, 2010). The nature of youth development normally differs from that of youth empowerment. Youth development often implies a top-down approach (i.e. it is controlled and directed by the older agents in order to make youth conform to society).

2.3.2 Youth and Empowerment

Over the past two decades, the idea of empowerment has been conceptualized and applied to youth, particularly for vulnerable young people who face challenging circumstances or have the potential to be at risk (Christens & Peterson, 2012; Parpart,

2014; Soler Maso et al., 2017; Úcar Martínez et al., 2017). In academic literature, the majority of theoretical models of youth empowerment are based on the ‘positive youth development’³ (Úcar Martínez et al., 2017). Four youth empowerment models were developed based on both theory and practice to understand and navigate youth empowerment efforts or initiatives (Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger Messias, & McLoughlin, 2006). They are (1) the Adolescent Empowerment Cycle, (2) the Youth Development and Empowerment program model, (3) the Transactional Partnering model, and (4) the Empowerment Education model (Jennings et al., 2006).

The Adolescent Empowerment Cycle (AEC) was developed by Chinman and Linney (1998) and based on psychological theories of adolescent development and development processes, which aimed to prevent negative perspectives of youths or a sense of rolelessness and to enhance self-esteem (Jennings et al., 2006). The authors connected the AEC and the development process of social bonding⁴ to generate youth participation in community services, provide skill development or positive reinforcement, and bring adults recognition throughout the process (Jennings et al., 2006; Úcar Martínez et al., 2017). Chinman and Linney (1998) argue that youth participation in meaningful activities can contribute to role stability of youth via experiential learning throughout the process. Based on the community activities, providing communication skills as well as management skills to youth, and positive recognition by adults of youth initiatives in organizations and communities have positive impacts for developing self-esteem and self-respect of young people (Brennan et al., 2007).

The Youth Development and Empowerment program model (YD&E) is a process based on meaningful participation of youth in community services and projects, though it is rooted in the context of substance abuse prevention programs

³ Positive Youth Development (PYD) refers to youth development in a broad and holistic perspective with a special focus on assets and strengths (Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, & Arthur, 2002). The five Cs represent Competence, Confidence, Character, Connection, and Caring, respectively. According to the five Cs model (Lerner et al., 2005), competence is defined as an adaptation in domain specific areas (e.g., social and academic). Confidence represents an overall positive self-perception (e.g., self-worth) as opposed to domain specific beliefs. Character represents respect for societal and cultural rules. Connection means positive relationships with people and institutions. Finally, caring represents a sense of social concern and empathy for others (Chen, Wiium, & Dimitrova, 2018, p.12).

⁴ “the developmental process of social bonding, leading youth to bond to positive institutions through action, skill development, and reinforcement. Positive social bonding can prevent youth engagement in negative social activities” (Jennings et al., 2006, p.34).

(Jennings et al., 2006; Kim, Crutchfield, Williams, & Hepler, 1998). The principle of the YD&E process is to enhance positive social bonding and to prepare the participation and engagement of youth in social activities. The central idea of the YD&E model is the recognition that youths are resources or assets for their communities (Jennings et al., 2006). The community or social supports, supportive adults, opportunities to obtain knowledge and vocational skills, and shared leadership roles for youth are fundamental factors or inputs for the YD&E process (Jennings et al., 2006; Kim et al., 1998). In the same vein, research states that youth are less likely to receive support from the family and community and less likely to contribute in their communities when community structures are weak, especially in low-income minority areas (Morrison, Alcorn, & Nelums, 1997).

The Transactional Partnering model (TP) is the processes of building the relationship between youths and adults in order to create friendly environments, and facilitating and enabling youth (Jennings et al., 2006; Cargo, Grams, Ottoson, Ward, & Green, 2003). The TP model is based on the notion of power-sharing and participatory competence among youths and adults and ensuring youth have the skills and knowledge to be able to participate in community change efforts (Jennings et al., 2006). The focus of the TP model is the interrelatedness of individuals and community-level empowerment outcomes, which is the experience of individual changes of youth who have participated in community services (Jennings et al., 2006). One study highlights that by participating in community development programs and youth-led activities, targeted youths had increased self-esteem and competencies such as high participation levels in decision-making, project planning, implementation, and problem-solving, even though there was a lower involvement in financial decisions and organizing meetings (Lekies, Baker, & Baldini, 2009).

The Empowerment Education model (EE) mainly focuses on the development of individual knowledge and skills of youth to get them involved in social actions and changes (Wallerstein, Sanchez-Merki, & Verlade, 2005). The EE model is based on Freirian⁵ concepts of liberating and empowering education and links the individual empowerment and community development initiatives and social activities, as well as policy level engagement (Jennings et al., 2006). The EE model upgrades individual

⁵ “Freire (1970) developed and applied his theories of critical social praxis. The premise of his work is that liberating and empowering education is a process that involves listening, dialogue, critical reflection, and reflective action” (Jennings et al., 2006, p.38).

empowerment to include qualities such as listening skills, critical reflection, reflective actions or behavior change, and empathy that leads collective or group efforts for community and social changes and initiatives to shape related policy (Úcar Martínez et al., 2017). Throughout the process, adult monitoring and leadership, the role of the facilitator for individual empowerment and collective activities are important for the EE model (Jennings et al., 2006).

The four models working together would most likely lead to a clearer understanding of youth empowerment and provide suitable approaches to implement youth empowerment (Úcar Martínez et al., 2017). The AEC and YD&E youth empowerment models concentrate on a participatory cycle, youth engagement in meaningful activities in safe environments, and the individual level empowerment (Jennings et al., 2006). The YD&E model also focuses on the leadership role of youths and their participation with adults in social and development activities (Jennings et al., 2006; Kim et al., 1998). Paying much attention to share power among adults and youths is one of the attributes of the TP model and the TP model creates greater leadership opportunities for youth in the process of developing youth-led community-change activities (Cargo et al., 2003; Jennings et al., 2006). The significant feature of EE models is that it emphasizes on the critical reflection of individual, organizational, and community level changes while concentrating on structural level changes as well (Jennings et al., 2006).

To sum up, communities and development organizations can benefit by understanding the models of youth empowerment to address specific youth issues and to find better solutions to address them (Hennink et al., 2012). These authors also suggest exploring a wide range of empirical empowerment domains or initiatives by different development organizations to integrate into the better youth empowerment models and strategies.

2.4 Religion and Development

The role of religion and its principles has been in decline for many years in modern society, and in the Western development discourses (Haynes, 2008). There are some reasons for this, which undermine the role of religion in the field of development. One reason is the dominance of modernization theory and secularization, which argues that the existence of religion and its influence on the public and society hinders the transition process to modernity and a country's

economic growth (Haynes, 2008; Tomalin, 2014). Another reason is that some conservative religious values and practices may stand against the development interventions and processes (Tomalin, 2014). For example, some Muslim countries forbid women to engage in political participation and the Catholic Church prohibits condom use while development interventions are focused on empowering women, HIV/AIDS prevention and reproductive rights issues (Tomalin, 2014). Consequently, religion has been accepted as a private matter or expected to disappear and/ or have a limited effect on public life and social construction (Tomalin, 2014). However, “Religious traditions continue to exert a strong influence on the lives of many people in developing countries” (Tomalin, 2014, p. 529).

Haynes (2008) states that religion has returned as a significant factor in Western development discourses in recent decades. It is a fact that religious beliefs and principles can contribute to shaping values regarding major development concerns, such as education, economics and environmental sustainability, and have an impact on individual development, styles of organizations, and social structures (Tomalin, 2014). For instance, the Buddhist economics approach by E.F. Schumacher asserts that individuals’ self-actualization, a country’s economic structure, and social relations have embedded religious philosophy and practices (Sivaraksa, 2005b, 2009). The community development approach and participatory learning of Thailand were adopted from the concept of Buddhist Sangha - the community of monks and nuns or groups of people or a community who follow the Buddha way of life (Sivaraksa, 2005a, 2005b).

The spiritual dimension is a fundamental factor in most of the grassroots movements and empowerment initiatives and is directly linked to religious teachings (Wilson, 1996). The Sarvodaya grassroots movement in Sri Lanka and the Manavodaya movement in India are significant, and empower grassroots communities regarding self-awakening, self-discipline, and family and community awakening for economic self-reliance, and resource conservation (Haynes, 2008; Wilson, 1996). The foundation of both movements is based on spirituality, which is related to the religious philosophy and traditions to overcome grassroots’ poverty (Wilson, 1996). Gandhian economics is another example that follows the Hindu spiritual tradition,

which aims to satisfy human needs rather than ‘ego-nomics’⁶ and serves the communities by self-giving love (Wilson, 1996).

Many faith-based organizations (FBO) get involved in a wide range of development activities, such as social service, assisting in humanitarian aid, and emergency relief (Tomalin, 2014). In fact, FBOs have played the role of social service delivery from the 19th century and have been involved in many aspects of development initiatives until the present time (Hong, 2012). It is imperative that many FBOs have connections and collaborations not only with the governments, international aid, and development agencies but also with the traditional faith-based providers and local donors to offer services to marginalized and vulnerable communities (Hong, 2012). Such examples underline the significance of religion, religious communities, and the role of faith-based organizations in the development context.

2.4.1 Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB)

The teachings of the Buddha are a system through which we wake up to what we are; these teachings help us stop the cycle that generates and reinforces suffering. The forms that Buddhism has taken in many cultures may suggest that it is a religion, however, it is not. Buddhism is rather a collection of methods (*upaya*) to help us wake up from our confusion (Sivaraksa, 2005b, p. 6).

Buddhism means to be awake or enlightened - an individual’s level of being mindful and aware of what is happening in one’s body, feelings, mind, family and society, and the world (Sivaraksa, 2005b). Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB) emphasizes the teachings and principles of Lord Buddha that enable individuals to awaken in order to manage one’s sufferings or problems and to get involved collectively in social actions (King, 2009; Sivaraksa, 2005b; Vesely-Flad, 2017). According to Sallie B. King, SEB is an effort to express the basic Buddhist principle of loving-kindness, nonviolence, and practical actions in life (Vesely-Flad, 2017). In fact, SEB focuses on being aware and practicing a middle path in any aspect of life,

⁶ “the concept of the atomistic rational economic man calculating the benefits and costs of individual actions on the basis of self-interest” (Wilson, 1996, p. 623).

which promotes right views, right thought, and leads to ethical actions at the individual, family, and community levels (Main & Lai, 2018; Sivaraksa, 2005b). Socially engaged Buddhists argue that empowering and educating people through Buddhist principles of compassion, wisdom, and non-violence approaches is essential to cultivate individuals' inner peace and to overcome social and economic problems, and low ecological sustainability (Sivaraksa, 2005a). SEB mainly concentrates on the changes in three key areas: individual, community, and structural reform (Sivaraksa, 2005b).

Individual: Socially engaged Buddhists state that the individual's inner development and empowerment are vital for each person in order to succeed in life (Sivaraksa, 2005a). SEB argues that the individual's meditation does not mean isolation from human society, but is a social action that ensures one's peaceful existence is a foundation for the sake of others (Sivaraksa, 2005b). The SEB concepts stress that the level of an individual's mindfulness and the interconnectedness or interdependence among individuals, communities, and the natural environment are factors that have tendencies of positive or negative consequences towards individuals, societies and to the natural world (King, 2009; Sivaraksa, 2005a, 2005b).

SEB primarily emphasizes three features of the individual level: Head, Heart, and Hand (3Hs) (Sivaraksa, 2005a, 2005b). Head refers to the wisdom of an individual, which enables one to be aware of inner sufferings: greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion or ignorance (*moha*) and enables individuals to reason the religious principles as well as analyze the sufferings of the individual, societies, and the natural environment (Sivaraksa, 2005b). One can nurture inner quality in one's heart by meditation, such as loving-kindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*), and equanimity (*upekkha*) (Sivaraksa, 2009). Hand refers to the area of practice or an individual's activities associated with Heart and Head, especially Right action, Right livelihood, and Right effort in many aspects of life, which are parts of the Noble Eightfold Path (*maga*)⁷ (Marques, 2016; Sivaraksa, 2005b). In fact, SEB empowers individuals to confront the inner sufferings and

⁷ The explains the modes of progress to deliverance (*patipada*) interchangeably with the Path (*maga*) for individual enlightenment namely the Noble Eightfold Path: (1) Right Understanding, (2) Right Thoughts, (3) Right Speech, (4) Right Action, (5) Right Livelihood, (6) Right Effort, (7) Right Mindfulness, and (8) Right Concentration (Marques, 2016; Sivaraksa, 2005b).

encourages the eradication of sufferings by synchronizing the 3Hs to be able to manage well one's own matters and be ready to serve others (Sivaraksa, 2005a, 2005b).

Community: The other fundamental focus of SEB is the community level or collective human sufferings (Sivaraksa, 2005a, 2005b). SEB encourages individuals to get involved in social changes and services or actively participate in the community issues such as poverty reduction, peace, and environmental issues whilst one is trying to attain individual's mindfulness or calmness or empowerment (Sivaraksa, 2005b). Numerous texts and case studies argue that SEB has contributed to social actions and community mobilizing activities. For instance, the anti-war or peace walks in Cambodia known as the Dhammayietra walks were noteworthy social change movements, which were led by a Buddhist monk named Maha Ghosananda for peace-building and reconciliation among the general Cambodian population and the Khmer Rouge (Haynes, 2008; Sivaraksa, 2005b). The Sarvodaya community movements from Sri Lanka empower individuals' spirituality and communities to tackle community poverty (Sivaraksa, 2005b; Wilson, 1996). The environmental movements in northern Thailand, such as forest and tree ordination, where trees were ordained and recognized as a sacred resource (Isager & Ivarsson, 2002), were community movements based on local natural resource management practices and Buddhist philosophy by native communities and Buddhist monks (Sivaraksa, 2005b).

Structural reform: SEB pinpoints the appropriate interpretations of the teachings of the Buddha for individuals and communities awakened from domination, which enable the understanding of complexity of modern society regarding structural injustice, economic exploitation, and violence against humans and the natural environment (Sivaraksa, 2005b). For instance, SEB argues that the mind and the body are seen as one, and there is no duality, which runs counter to the Western philosophy of the mind-body dualism (Sivaraksa, 2005b, 2009). Moreover, SEB disputes the Western economic emphasis on the maximization of material development and profits, but it encourages people to try to avoid gigantism in all forms and to serve humans (Sivaraksa, 2005b, 2009). According to Sivaraksa (2005b) "Schumacher defines Buddhist economics as a study of economics as if people mattered" (p. 122). Furthermore, SEB typically encourages people to challenge, individually and

collectively, capitalism and its related cultures of consumerism and modernism by means of frugality, simplicity, and fair share to others, which directly counters principles of free trade and transnational corporations (Sivaraksa, 2005a, 2005b). In the West, Socially Engaged Buddhists get involved in the issues of human rights and environmental justice (Vesely-Flad, 2017).

To sum up, it can be noted that religions and faith-based associations also play an important role in assisting services, humanitarian aid, and empowering individuals and communities (Haynes, 2008; Tomalin, 2014). Religious teachings and practices somehow have a powerful influence on individual and religious communities despite having less recognition from modern society and in the field of human and community development (Sivaraksa, 2005b; Tomalin, 2014). In the same vein, SEB is a set of Buddhist principles and practices for overcoming individual sufferings by attaining a balance between the 3Hs and participating in social change actions with compassion and wisdom (Sivaraksa, 2005b). SEB is a unique form of social activism based on the Buddhist value of non-violence, peace-building, and mobilizing community activities to overcome the problems modern society is facing, and ecological activism with the views of the interconnectedness of self and others, and compassionate wisdom (Main & Lai, 2018; Sivaraksa, 2009).

2.5 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are organizations made up of groups of people and are not only development stakeholders but actors in a country's development sectors (Desai, 2014; Werker, Ahmed, & Ahmed, 2008). The two main attributes of NGOs are that they do not make or work for profit and are not branches of the government (Madon, 1999). Most NGOs today concentrate on rural development, climate change issues, human rights protection, protection of women and children, public health, and good governance as well as peace and advocacy (Werker et al., 2008). Furthermore, NGOs play a role in enhancing community capacity, delivering services, and providing development aid in rural areas, especially in developing countries (Desai, 2014; Gemmil & Bamidele-Izu, 2012). Moreover, NGOs also represent the community's voices for formulating and developing development policy and provide advocacy process for a country (Desai, 2014; Risley, 2015).

NGOs can range from regional, national, and international organizations and charities to community-based self-help groups (Ulleberg, 2009). They include churches, monasteries, professional associations, research institutes, and lobby groups (Ulleberg, 2009). NGOs generally depend partially or wholly on voluntary services, charitable donations, and international development aid for their support and intervention activities (Ulleberg, 2009).

2.5.1 The trend of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

The trends of NGOs and their contributions to human society have changed throughout the history of development according to a country's political contexts and social needs. In the 1870s, a group of anti-slavery people from Britain organized to abolish Britain's slave trade (Werker et al., 2008). In the 1950s, Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam, and the Red Cross were considered the first generation of NGOs in the form of charity relief organizations, which delivered welfare services to poor communities in the event of natural disasters throughout the world (Korten, 1987; Madon, 1999). Korten (1987) also states that since the late 1970s, there was a rapid growth in the second generation of NGOs worldwide, which focused on small-scale self-reliance or local development strategies and strengthened community capacities by accumulating the involvement of intermediate NGOs. Since the 1980s, the third generation of NGOs has strategically focused on sustainability issues (Korten, 1987) and has been involved in political actions and institutional settings to facilitate a regional or national level of development progress (Madon, 1999). Korten (1987) asserts that these three generations do not necessarily represent specifically defined categories and an individual organization might be characterized by a first generation orientation, whereas the organization's specific programs might fall into the second or the third generation.

During the 1980s, radical development theorists and practitioners searched for alternatives to conventional development due to the failure of previous development practices (Rugendyke, 2014; Sidaway, 2014). Similarly, in the 1980s, NGOs moved from purely service delivery to capacity development of individual and local development actors (Madon, 1999). For example, in 1980, the growth of Japanese NGOs and their movements had been successful and benefited younger Japanese generations (Hirata, 2002). These movements also helped to foster the emergence of citizens groups and had a positive impact on Japan's environmental policy-making

process and foreign aid policy (Hirata, 2002). After the 1990s, development agencies have focused more on human capacity development and community empowerment and have paid more attention to advocacy and policy development since the early 2000s (Gready, 2010). Development practitioners argue that human resource development is essential to overcome previous development problems, and empowerment is one of the development concepts and frameworks or an appropriate tool for human resource development (Elliott, 2014; Parpart, 2014).

2.5.2 NGOs and empowerment initiatives

NGO initiatives can be categorized into four main empowerment domains: health, economics, politics, and natural resources, although there are many initiatives by NGOs towards empowerment (Hennink et al., 2012). The health empowerment domain represents initiatives that support people by providing health-related knowledge and skills to give them control of their health, and behavior and access to health services (Hennink et al., 2012). Many health empowerment programs of NGOs focus on the targeted scopes in a community, such as children, women, youth, or refugees, and the programs often include health-related awareness and prevention training, water and sanitation, nutrition and child development, and reducing gender-based violence (Hennink et al., 2012). Patel (2014) asserts that knowledge and capacity building at the individual and family levels is a fundamental and influential factor in health empowerment. For example, women passed the traditional knowledge of fertility control across generations in most rural communities.

The economic empowerment domain assists with achieving the economic security and sustainability of an individual, a community, or a local organization (Hennink et al., 2012). It aims to encourage individuals or families to participate in income generation groups, assists in establishing community-based cooperatives, and provides local partner organizations improved financial management and diversification of funding sources (Hennink et al., 2012). Moreover, NGOs provide knowledge and skills to targeted women and youth to start income-generating activities (Hennink et al., 2012). Tempel & Beukeboom (2007) discuss Bhutan's experiences with a community lending scheme and saving groups of people in the Dzongkhag region, contributing to rural poverty reduction through increasing household incomes.

The political empowerment domain refers to “the ability of individuals, communities, and organizations to have legal rights, hold government accountable for protecting these rights, and have the freedom to advocate for political and legal change” (Hennink et al., 2012, p. 210). There are two levels of activities: micro-level activities that support shaping policy regarding service provision and delivery of the local government and macro-level activities that provide for policy and legal change such as gender and caste equity, child protection, and indigenous rights (Hennink et al., 2012; Ulleberg, 2009). Moreover, most political empowerment activities by NGOs include providing educational materials and resources as well as providing capacity building programs such as peacebuilding and community self-governance for individuals, organizations, and communities (Hennink et al., 2012).

The natural resource empowerment domain aims to enhance the capability of individuals and communities to be able to access, share, and manage natural resources towards sustainability (Hennink et al., 2012). According to the research, there are three types of programs by NGOs: food security, safe water, and the conservation of natural environments (Hennink et al., 2012). NGOs fundamentally provide technical assistance for individuals and households to manage small-scale kitchens and gardens, food production methods, and try to promote long-term agricultural practices and sustainable management techniques of forest and water sources (Hennink et al., 2012). Community forestry from Bhutan and the northern Thailand forest conservation movements are significant because these movements contribute not only to natural resource conservation but also bolster household incomes and preserve local cultures (Isager & Ivarsson, 2002; Tempel & Beukeboom 2007).

2.5.3 Youth-led organizations, empowerment initiatives, and social engagements

NGO program activities and development aid are sometimes inappropriate for local needs because of their organizational mandates and development agendas that often focus less on youth empowerment (Gready, 2010). This is one of the factors that lead to evolving youth-led social engagements and empowerment initiatives (Gready, 2010). For instance, during the 1990s, there were no empowerment initiatives for young people in the Philippines, even though social services, education, and public health professionals worked many years for rural communities (Trinidad & Ghosh, 2006). A group of Philippines college students began social activities and initiated a youth-led organization to empower young generations with interpersonal and

leadership skills to tackle social injustice (Trinidad & Ghosh, 2006). During the same period, in North America, Native American college students started youth-led movements and established one organization to empower young native students to develop social and communication skills, which aimed to realize the role of Lummi culture and their traditional practices (Zimmerman, 2007).

Youth-led movements and empowerment activities in many countries emerged to address cultural inequality and social injustice (Trinidad & Ghosh, 2006; Zimmerman, 2007). One study on Youth Leadership Development (YLD) programs states that a particular challenge in a society, youth capabilities to solve that challenges, and networks with the associations and organizations to tackle the issues are the three dimensions which drive youth to engage with their societies (Vera et al., 2016). Young leaders found a need to develop systematic organizational structures for effective management and long-term organizational sustainability based on previous experiences with social and youth empowerment initiatives (Vera et al., 2016). Young leaders started to develop strategies to run their organizations effectively and to establish networks with social associations, civil society, and development agencies (Christens & Dolan, 2010).

Schwartz and Suyemoto (2012) state that the types of organization and program have different impacts on youth development, such as the development of interpersonal skills and positive behavioral change, and skills development for social engagement. There is a wide range of organization types that youth use to engage in social change and empowerment initiatives, such as informal groups, non-profit and for-profit organizations, and social enterprises, and some of these organizations perform as youth councils or the youth wings of political parties (Ho, Clarke, & Dougherty, 2010). Generally, multiple youth-led social engagement types are included under the categories of charity, volunteerism, economic activities, political engagement, public policy, arts, and research and innovations (Ho et al., 2010). Many young people have the opportunity to build up community development knowledge, and interpersonal and leadership skills to contribute to their community development, by participating in youth-led empowerment programs and social change activities (Trinidad & Ghosh, 2006).

However, one study states that research and literature have shown little consensus, and there were no detailed programming frameworks to determine the effectiveness of youth contribution in their community (Vera et al., 2016). Moreover,

one study argues that only a small number of literature and evidence were investigated regarding the impact of youth-led initiatives on the individual and the community levels, even though a number of studies have been conducted in the areas of youth development and empowerment projects (Ho et al., 2010).

To summarize, understanding the different domains and mechanisms of empowerment enables NGOs and development agencies to produce efficient empowerment strategies for targeted families or groups of people or a community (Hennink et al., 2012). It is also argued that “The challenge is to develop empowerment initiatives across domains or through effective multi-sector partnerships, whereby a range of organizations work together on empowerment initiatives that effect change in several domains” (Hennink et al., 2012, p. 213). One common criticism is that NGOs’ empowerment projects fail to develop a holistic approach to empowerment associated with particular problems of youth and community development issues, which often generates poverty (Rugendyke, 2014).

2.6 Synopsis

Overall, this chapter has explained the nature of empowerment and empowerment models based on the studies and research at the outset of this chapter. Empowerment is a process and can be found in individual, organizational, and community levels and is conceptualized as a framework for human development and interventions of an organization.

I have elaborated on youth development and empowerment in this chapter. Research and literature that I have used in this chapter assert that the existing theoretical and practical empowerment models are typically adult-specific (Russell, Muraco, Subramaniam, & Laub, 2009). Youth development initiatives were conducted by an organization or association rather than by youth themselves. In contrast, youth empowerment concepts and models were developed to empower young individuals to lead themselves to personal development and to start social initiatives for related communities. However, several studies have revealed that the definition of empowerment is somehow controversial and vague in the context of youth.

I also emphasize the role of religions and religious teachings, which are alternative to secular development frameworks and models. Religious associations and faith-based organizations also support social services and deliver humanitarian

aid towards vulnerable individuals and communities. Furthermore, Socially Engaged Buddhism is one of the religious principles and teachings that places emphases on the individual's inner development and empowers individuals to challenge structural injustice and to participate in social changes. However, there is a question of how the religious teachings and practices contribute in the context of youth empowerment, and SEB in particular. Therefore, it is noteworthy to explore how SEB stimulates youth empowerment and their efforts to effect changes for individuals and society.

In this chapter, I have explored the nature of NGO empowerment initiatives, which attempt to support four domains: health, economy, natural resources, and political empowerment. However, it is significant that most of the research and literature have focused on a wider area of empowerment rather than being context-specific, especially for youth empowerment. Furthermore, many organizations helping youth denote empowerment as a popular descriptor and concept rather than a specific framework or programmatic approach to youth empowerment. Youth-led development organizations and youth-led social change activities are likely to have a more positive impact on young generations.

The next chapter explains the epistemology and methodology that was used in this research, and how the research was carried out the fieldwork.

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Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the methodology and research approach that was employed in this research. In this chapter, I discuss the epistemology and methodological approach to this thesis and how the research was carried out in practice. Firstly, I explain why social constructivist epistemology was used in this research. Secondly, I explain how the qualitative research and Appreciative Inquiry (AI) apply to this study. Secondly, I also clarify the process of participant recruitment, the choice of study locations, and the research timeline. Then, I describe the following methods used in the research: conducting semi-structured interviews with targeted participants, and collecting primary and secondary data to grasp the process and impact of youth-led community activities. This chapter also explains data preparation, analysis, and management. Furthermore, I discuss my position as a researcher, and the power relation among the research participants and myself, and reflect thoroughly on the experience of fieldwork. I also explain how I have prepared and paid much attention to ethical considerations to ensure this research is accountable to participants and responsible for sensitive issues of targeted participants and community members. Finally, I explain health and safety preparations for my participation and myself.

3.2 Social constructivist epistemology

The research was conducted based on stakeholders' perspectives and interactive activities: KMF staff, its alumni, and related communities. Therefore, the research is based on the constructivist epistemology and a qualitative approach. Constructivist methodology seeks to explore a range of meanings and constructions, which are described by individuals and/or groups and often aims for social transformation (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) stated that the intent of a qualitative research is to understand a particular social situation, group, role, event, or interaction. The focus of this qualitative research is to study the alumni perceptions, KMF experiences, and the way they make sense of their community work.

3.3 Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a transformational change methodology and a radical approach to understanding social phenomena (Reed, 2007). AI is the most suitable approach for my research, since my research is focused on the empowerment process of individuals, organizations, and groups of young Buddhists and the transformation of their behavior and social engagements. AI usually seeks to engage stakeholders in self-determined change in personal and organizational levels (Reed, 2007).

AI concentrates on appreciating responses to issues and actions of individuals or a group of people rather than focusing only on the problems (Creswell 2014; Reed, 2007). Employing AI in my research enables me to explore stakeholders' individual transformation from an optimistic perspective and to appreciate what they contributed to their communities. Similarly, AI significantly creates a space to reflect individual efforts, feelings, and experiences and collective actions of KMF staff, alumni, and targeted community members, which motivated stakeholders to actively participate in the interviews and in-depth discussions on their outputs and impact of their activities. After the interviews, the majority of the interviewees expressed their optimism regarding individuals' achievements, their existing strengths, and what they contribute for the sake of others.

Another significant factor is that AI is not a problem-based approach, which means it does not look for the problems of the individual alumni, KMF organizational problems or community issues, or try to solve them (Reed, 2007). However, AI takes the problems into consideration and most likely encouraged the KMF staff, alumni, and community to make rapid strategic change by focusing on the existing strength of individuals, alumni core groups, and the KMF organization. Conversely, it is noted that a reflection on individuals and the organization's problems is part of an evaluation process in order to develop future alumni action plans.

AI is a participatory learning process, which creates an interactive learning environment for researchers and stakeholders throughout the process (Reed, 2007). The interviews in this research were not just one-way interviews but dynamic processes that the interviewed participants also engaged in. The interview topics and a number of additional factors of youth empowerment were brainstormed from the participants' perspectives and their experience.

It is noted “The radical aspect of AI is in the way that it challenges us to rethink our ideas on how people work, how change happens, and how research can contribute to this process” (Reed, 2007, p. 3). AI stimulated my thinking to develop my research procedure focusing on the positive changes of individuals and collectively. In addition, AI guided my research to contribute to youth empowerment processes in Myanmar by providing research findings and recommendations.

Therefore, I used AI to understand and to be able to identify the current capability and capacity of KMF’s staff, KMF alumni, and related communities. Another reason I applied AI in my research was to explore the potential and possibilities together with research participants based on their experience, perspectives, and feelings among individuals with different backgrounds.

3.4 Recruitment of participants, locations, and research timeline

3.4.1 *Participants*

Participant selection was done by having a number of online consultations with senior KMF staff, since the central focus of this research is mainly on young Buddhists and KMF alumni. It was designed to cover a wide range of young people, ranging from senior alumni⁸ to alumni-led training alumni⁹, and to include different genders, and social change activities based on thematic issues. The research interviews were also conducted with development workers from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Local Non-governmental Organizations (LNGOs), and International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs), who are from KMF’s partner organizations and alumni core groups’ partner organizations. On one hand, the participant selection was a non-random selection for my research interviews, which means that the participants were consciously identified and purposefully selected based on geographical, and ethnic differences. On the other hand, selecting participants was flexible due to the availability and participation of targeted participants and manageable within the framework of qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). It is stated that finding a balance between flexibility and rigidity is an important factor in qualitative field research (Storey & Scheyvens, 2003). Therefore, I

⁸ BYEP’s training alumni or young people who were trained directly by KMF or BYEP.

⁹ Young people who were recruited in their areas by KMF program alumni or who joined social change activities with senior alumni in related areas. They were not directly trained nor organized by KMF program.

planned and selected a few interview participants by using a snowball method with KMF alumni while conducting interviews. It is worthwhile noting that a number of targeted participants cancelled their interviews due to their work and health issues.

My research is entirely based on semi-structured interviews due to the nature of the research and time limit. I recruited 21 participants for the research interviews. Interviewed participants can be categorized into five major groups: (1) KMF staff, (2) KMF program alumni, (3) alumni-led training/ activities alumni, (4) NGO workers from KMF's partner organizations, and (5) NGO / CSO workers from alumni core groups' partner organizations.

There are five KMF staff members in Category I, which was comprised of three senior program staff, one junior project staff member, and one financial staff member of KMF. One targeted KMF staff member could not participate due to time availability. However, a new KMF staff member who is working in the financial sector and learning the social work of the KMF program willingly participated the interview. Category II was comprised of the KMF program alumni from different states and regions and is the highest quantity of targeted participants. The research interviews covered nine young laypersons of eight alumni core groups. Some of them are presently working for LNGOs as project staff, and a number of them are doing family business and working in alumni core groups. Moreover, a young monk who actively gets involved in educational, environmental, and social change activities joined my research interview. Category III contained one female and one male participant who attended KMF alumni-led training and participated in social and ecological activities. I interviewed one person from KMF's partner organization, who currently performs as an Executive Director of one of the respectful LNGOs of Myanmar for Category IV. In Category V, I recruited one female INGO worker, who works as an alumni core group's partner in order to learn personal ideas on religious teaching, and is a Catholic, although this research is focused on the Buddhist perspectives. Furthermore, I conducted interviews with two persons from different CSOs, which are standing as alumni core groups' partner organizations and associations. Unfortunately, I was not able to conduct indented interviews with one participant from a CSO and a community leader, both of whom are actively working with alumni core groups, due to their time and health issues.

It was also important to obtain a range of perspectives and voices from both males and females in qualitative research. Therefore, the research pays much attention

to the participation of young women for the interviews. There are eight females out of a total twenty-one participants spanning the four major categories of targeted participants. This is about thirty-eight percent of interview participants. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the interviewed participants.

Table 3.1 Number of interview participants.

No.	Category	Female	Male	Total	Remark
1	KMF staff	3	2	5	
2	KMF alumni	3	7	10	
3	Alumni-led training/ activities alumni	1	1	2	
4	KMF's partner organizations	-	1	1	LNGO
5	Alumni's partner organizations	1	2	3	INGO, LNGO
	Total participants	8	13	21	

Table 3.2 Number of interview participants.

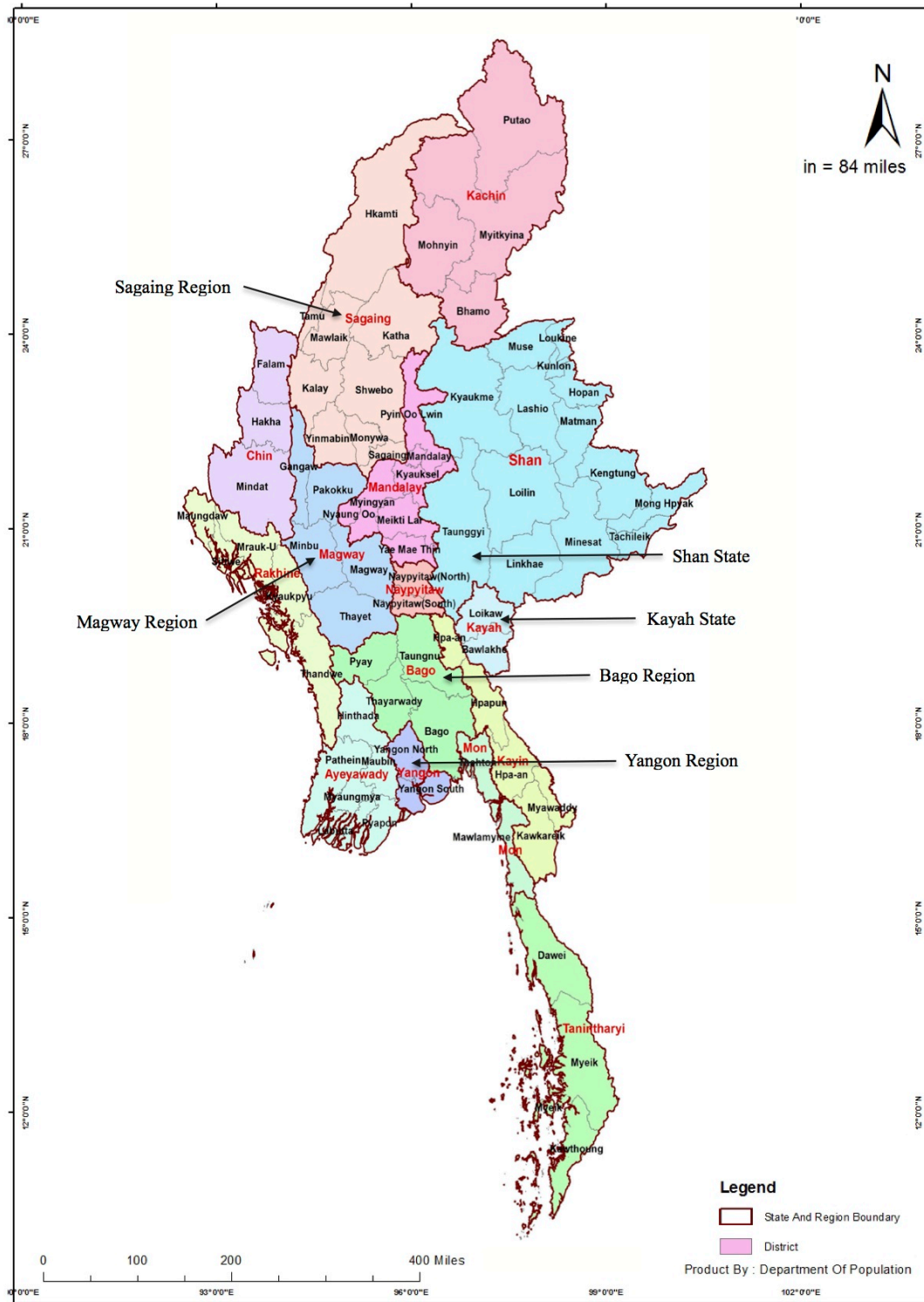
Category	No. of person	Code Name	Interview Date	Name of alumni core group / Organization	Position of participants	Location/ region
I	5	IP-2	20.06.18	KMF	Program Manager	Yangon Reion
		IP-9	25.06.18	KMF	Program Coordinator	Shan State
		IP-11	09.07.18	KMF	Project Coordinator	Yangon Region
		IP-13	09.07.18	KMF	Program Director	Yangon Region
		IP-14	10.07.18	KMF	Junior Accountant	Yangon Region
II	10	IP-1	20.06.18	Kayah Ray Youth for Development	Member	Kayah State
		IP-4	23.06.18	Mizzima Hnalonethar	Member	Kayah State
		IP-5	24.06.18	Hnalone Hla Inn Maung Mal	Member	Shan State
		IP-6	25.06.18	Hnalone Hla Inn Maung Mal	Executive Committee	Shan State
		IP-7	25.06.18	Hnalonee Hla Inn Maung Mal	Executive Committee	Shan State
		IP-10	08.07.18	Youth for Better Future	Team Leader	Pago Region
		IP-12	09.07.18	Hnalone Hla Inn Maung Mal	Member	Kayah State
		IP-15	12.07.18	Shwebo Buddhist Youth	Group Leader	Sagaing Region
		IP-16	14.07.18	Chin Dwin Youth	Member	Sagaing Region
		IP-18	16.07.18	Taung Zalat Youth	Team Leader	Magwe Region
III	2	IP-19	18.07.18	Gan Gaw Youth	Member	Magwe Region
		IP-20	18.07.18	Gan Gaw Youth	Member	Magwe Region
IV	1	IP-21	27.07.18	Metta Development Foundation	Executive Director	Yangon Region
V	3	IP-3	22.06.18	IRL	Organizational development Manager	Kayah State
		IP-8	25.06.18	Inn Culture and Literacy	Executive Committee	Shan State
		IP-17	16.07.18	Ponya Heattate rice donation	Member	Magwe Region

Note: IP = Interview Participant; Category I = KMF staff; Category II = KMF program alumni; Category III = alumni of KMF alumni-led training and activities; Category IV = NGO workers from KMF's partner organizations; Category V = NGO/ CSO workers from alumni core groups' partner organizations.

3.4.2 Locations

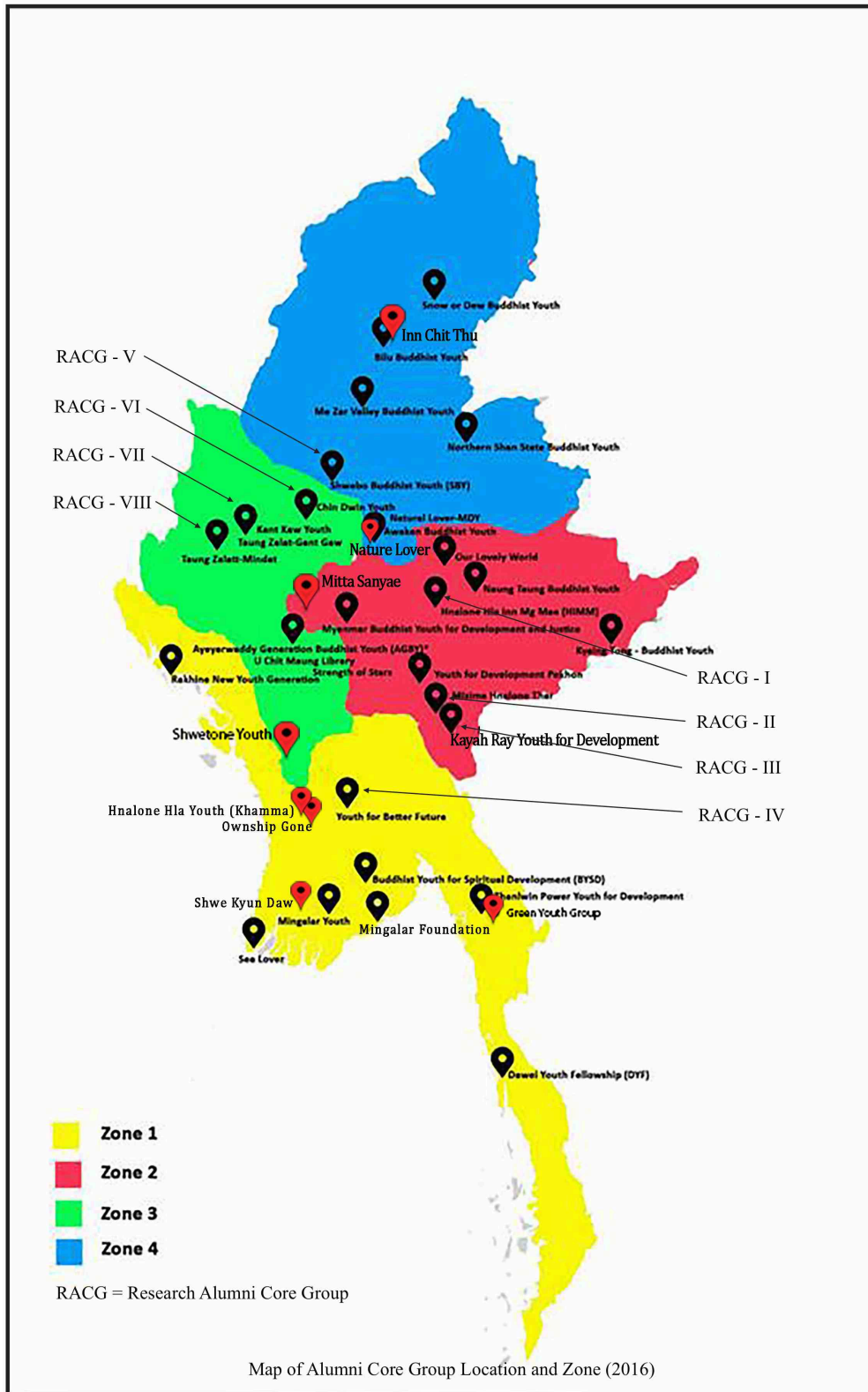
I purposefully planned to cover diverse locations where I could collect various social perspectives and social experiences of ACGs. The interviews were conducted in six main areas, which covered two states and four regions of Myanmar. The two states, Kayah and Southern Shan, are located in the southeastern part of the country. The four regions of the targeted research areas are: (1) Yangon, the formal capital city of Myanmar, (2) Bago, which is located in lower part of Myanmar, (3) the Sagian region situated in the northwestern part of the country at higher elevations, and (4) the Magwe region, which is situated in the country's dry zones. Regarding conducting interviews with intended participants in different locations, I conducted interviews with more than one participant or ACG in a state or in a region. In fact, my research covered two ACGs and one ACG's partner organization from two cities in Kayah state, and one ACG and one ACG's partner organization in Shan state. Furthermore, my research reached two ACGs and one ACG's partner organization in the Magwe region, two ACGs from the Sagaing region and one ACG from the Bago region. Moreover, I interviewed a number of KMF staff and one KMF partner organization in Yangon. Figure 3.1 illustrates different research locations and Figure 3.2 indicates the alumni core groups from different areas. Similarly, Figure 3.3 shows the locations of ACGs' partner organizations and KMF's partner organizations where the interviews were conducted.

Figure 3.1 Research locations from different states and regions of Myanmar.



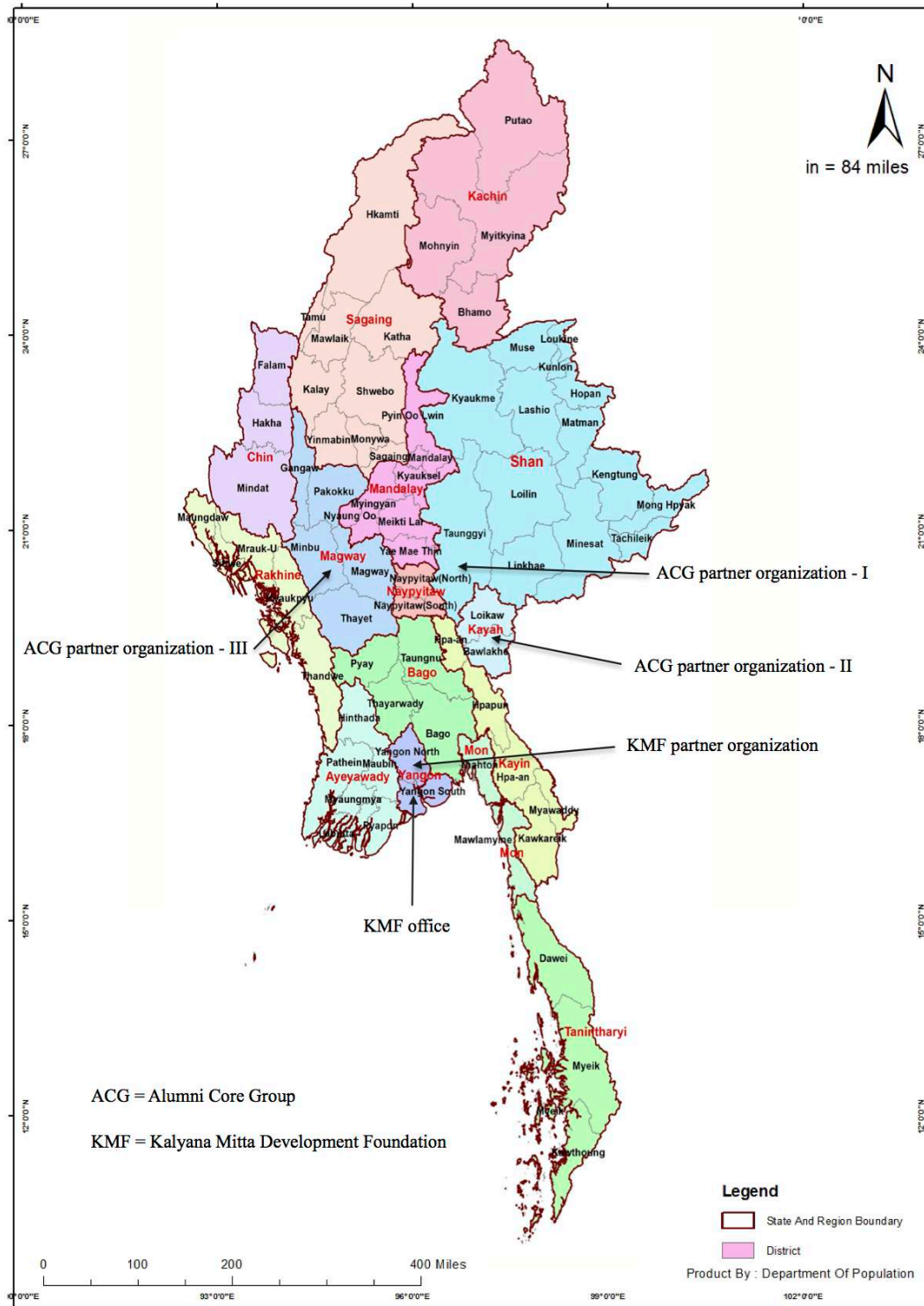
Source: Department of Population, Ministry of Labour, Immigration, and Population (2016).

Figure 3.2 Research locations of alumni core groups in Myanmar.



Source: Kalyana Mitta Development Foundation (2016).

Figure 3.3 Research locations of KMF and ACG partner organizations.

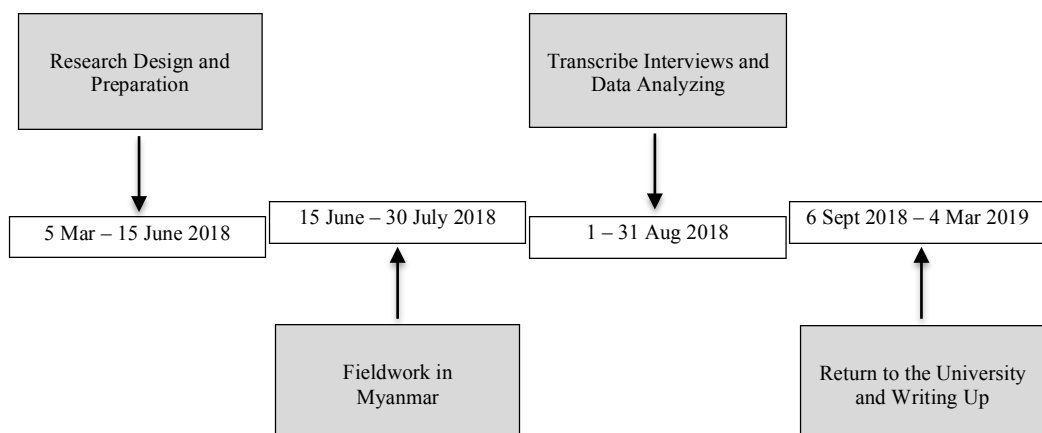


Source: Department of Population, Ministry of Labour, Immigration, and Population (2016).

3.4.3 Research timeline

This research took approximately twelve months to complete. I spent the first three months designing research, preparing a research proposal and required documents, and applying for VUW Human Ethics Committee approval. There were a number of online discussions with KMF senior staff and senior KMF alumni in order to set up and coordinate field trips to different ACGs. Furthermore, I sent electronic mails to each interview participant who could access the Internet. Likewise, I sent informal requests and brief information about my study to targeted participants who were living in remote areas through the senior alumni network. I then spent two and half months in Myanmar conducting semi-structured interviews as well as collecting data and information from targeted participants. After the interviews, I spent two weeks transcribing them. The remaining time was spent at university analyzing collected data and writing.

Figure 3.4 Research Timeline.



Source: Author (2018).

3.5 Research methods

3.5.1 *Semi-structured interviews*

I used semi-structured interviews with research stakeholders comprised of targeted participants from KMF staff, KMF alumni, and alumni-related community members from different locations. It is a flexible method for qualitative research, which explores the participants' perceptions, experiences, and feelings of individual empowerment progress (Creswell, 2014; Fife, 2005). The semi-structured interview usually begins with a series of questions based on researcher interests and can end when the planned questions are covered (Fife, 2005). I carried out semi-structured interviews throughout my fieldwork because it is suitable for my research to allow open-ended questions, enables the interviewer to gain a broader perspective of intended topic areas and, in turn, allows the interviews to go in-depth on a specific issue (Fife, 2005; Thiel, 2014). Moreover, the method enables the participants to easily follow the structured questions and the additional questions by the interviewer throughout the interview (Denscombe, 2014; Thomas, 2013). It often allows the participants to interpret the questions, develop ideas, and elaborate on answers from different perspectives in a timely manner (Denscombe, 2014; Fife, 2005).

This method allowed me to organize questions before the interviews, enabled me to interact with targeted participants and to ask more in-depth questions regarding the specific issues throughout the interviews (Thiel, 2014; Thomas, 2013). The interviews were prepared to be flexible in terms of a series of interview questions and the topics considered, and I conducted the interviews in a relaxed and safe environment for both participants and myself. Therefore, I was able to study participants perspectives, feelings, experiences, and suggestions to enhance youth empowerment.

I sent interview information, a brief nature of my research, and a request and invitation letter to targeted participants by electronic mail one and half months prior to my field research. I also sent a request letter and the interview information sheets to the KMF office in order to get permission to conduct interviews with the KMF staff. During the fieldwork, I introduced the aims of my research briefly and provided the interview guide and information sheets to the participants before each interview so they could understand the scope of the interview. Providing such research information to participants enabled them to be aware of the nature of my research and procedures to follow during the interview. The research information provided before the

interviews also served as a reminder for the discussions (Thiel, 2014; Thomas, 2013). Information sheets and an interview guide are attached in Appendixes (3.1 & 6).

In Table 3.2, the interview participants were KMF staff, KMF alumni, alumni-related beneficiaries, and a number of people from KMF partner organizations and alumni core groups' partner organizations. Interviews with the KMF staff were organized at the KMF office where they felt more comfortable and this saved time for them. Interviewing with alumni core group members took place at their workplaces such as their offices, monasteries, community centers, alumni operated restaurant, and in their university depending on their comfort requests and desires. A number of participants invited me to conduct the interviews at their homes where they felt more relaxed and safe. However, unpredictable interruptions were noted while we were doing interviews at alumni homes. For instance, unexpected rain and noise at one interviewee's home led us to move our interview to a new location. Moreover, there were minor disturbances to the interview process, unintentionally caused by alumni family members during the interviews. For example, we were asked to have meals and traditional snacks during interviews.

Interviews lasted approximately 45-60 minutes per participant. All interview participants agreed to an audio recording of their interview. I made interview notes for a few participants regarding their working and study experiences.

3.5.2 Other data collection method

3.5.2.1 Formal data collection

There are many ways to obtain required data and information from primary and secondary sources (Habib, Pathik, & Maryam, 2014). For instance, KMF provided primary data, which contains the background and statistical information of KMF, number of alumni core groups, potential interview participants, and locations for the research, which enabled me to produce a trip plan and select the interview participants. I collected secondary data through online databases, such as KMF's website, government department websites, NGO pages, UN reports, and VUW libraries and bookstores.

3.5.2.2 *Informal data collection*

I was invited to participate in the KMF mid-term program review workshop at the beginning of my fieldwork. In addition, I was invited by an interview participant to facilitate a workshop at the end of my field trip. This workshop was environment focused and involved a young farmer network workshop for youth activists, university students, and young farmers in the KMF program. Those were unexpected opportunities for me to understand the progress of KMF program activities and to hear a number of youth voices on their social and ecological issues. I made notes of discussion points on thematic issues, their previous activities, possibilities, risks, and planning for future activities even though these were not primary data sources for my research.

3.6 Data preparation, analysis, and management

3.6.1 *Transcribing the data*

Interviews were conducted in the Burmese language¹⁰ by participants' consent. All the interview participants were able to use the common language fluently, even though a number of them were from different ethnicities and used their own dialect. Each interview was translated and transcribed into English.

3.6.2 *Data analysis*

Analyzing collected data is one of the most important tasks in conducting research in order to identify key factors that represent empirical data (Habib, Pathik, & Maryam, 2014; Thiel, 2014). Similarly, it helps to produce significant findings that will seek a contribution to the current works of literatures and theories.

It is accepted that there is no singular framework or particular format to analyze and interpret in qualitative research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), especially in youth empowerment. One approach researching youth empowerment is to begin from data collection and analysis with no preconceived ideas on findings, then seek to incorporate the findings into existing theory or to generate a new theory, a procedure known as inductive data analysis (Thiel, 2014).

¹⁰ It is the common language in Myanmar though many ethnic people use their own dialect and Burmese language to communicate with each other.

The social constructivist approach enabled me to undertake qualitative analysis in my research where stakeholders' perspectives, knowledge, and experience were explored (Creswell, 2014). It also seeks to explore the individual research participant's sense of construction for social transformation (Creswell, 2014). Likewise, by applying the lens of AI, this research covered the facts that identify alumni' optimistic perspectives, individual transformation through youth empowerment activities, individual and collective contributions in their communities, and recognizing their potential to address the problems they are facing currently.

I used the inductive approach to analyze collective data. Guided by the research questions and literature works on empowerment, I designed four major themes for interview questions: (1) KMF's empowerment program interventions; (2) Alumni and alumni core groups; (3) Youth and Youth Empowerment; and (4) Socially Engaged Buddhism and Religious teaching. They were designed to cover a range of perspective and experience of targeted interview participants. Furthermore, I identified sub-themes for data analysis. Table 3.3 illustrates the identified major themes and sub-themes in this research, particularly in data analysis.

I initially developed codes in structured order. However, I refined and generated codes during the process of analyzing interview data and information where there were variations and contrasts in participants' perspectives on the same thematic issue (Thiel, 2014). Making notes during transcribing interviews and analyzing data helped me to pinpoint and substantiate facts and perceptions of the participants.

Table 3.3 Four identified major themes and sub-themes.

Major Themes	Sub-themes
KMF's empowerment program interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KMF empowerment program and activities - How KMF program interventions are relevant to targeted young people - Challenges and limitations of KMF program - Recommendation to KMF program
Alumni and alumni core groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Objectives, aims, and activities of ACGs - Role and responsibility of the interview participants - Successful social or community development activities of ACGs - Individual's feeling and perspective on related ACG and team members - Relationship with KMF, other ACGs, and partner organizations - Potential and limitations of related ACG
Youth and Youth empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification of youth and youth empowerment - Role and social status of young people in Myanmar's society - The importance of youth empowerment for personal and community levels - Youth empowerment programs in different areas - Youth and progress of country's development - Barriers to youth empowerment and solutions for it
Socially Engaged Buddhism and Religious teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difference between traditional Buddhism and SEB - Individual perception on SEB - How SEB concept and practices are relevant to individual's daily life and social engagement - Individual and ACG activities based on SEB - SEB and youth empowerment - SEB and sustainable development

3.6.3 Data management

All data and information was kept confidential and stored on a password-protected computer and all hard copy materials were stored securely in a locked filing cabinet according to ethical considerations (Hay, 2010). Only my supervisor and I have access to interview notes and transcripts. Photographs were taken during visits to project areas with participants' consent and all photographs are stored in a private and secured place. All electronic and hard copy material of interview data; summaries, transcripts, and recordings will be appropriately destroyed three years after the research is completed.

3.7 Positionality, reflexivity, and power relations

It is noted that the concepts of positionality, reflexivity, and power relations are obvious aspects in the field of social research. Various researchers conceptualized positionality in several ways and applied it in social research using different theories. In the context of social and community development research, positionality is accepted as the perspectives and involvement of the researcher and research stakeholders in the research (Henry, Higate, & Sanghera, 2009). It is often suggested that the researcher should be aware of and understand the nature and the context of qualitative research in the fieldwork.

In this research, I have paid much attention to aspects of positionality including identity, race, class, gender, and other attributes that have been accepted in society (Chacko, 2004). During my fieldwork, I accepted the concept of positionality by describing it not in terms of fixed identities, but by relationships and locations of the interview participants, which can be changed and are flexible (McGarry, 2016). For instance, being a mixed-blood person, I was treated as an insider when I conducted interviews with ethnic youth stakeholders, which means that the commonality between interview participants and myself led to a smooth interview process with a comfortable atmosphere. Interview participants openly shared their opinions and discussed ethnic minority youth issues, different opportunities between urban and rural young people, and injustice situations.

It was important to constantly reflect on my role during the interview process. However, my positionality regarding my role changed while conducting interviews with KMF program alumni. I used to perform as a training resource person in KMF youth training and almost all of the targeted alumni attended the training that I

facilitated. On one hand, I found that they treated me as an outsider unintentionally in some aspects. For example, a number of alumni did not want to explain the relationship between the related alumni core group and KMF. On the other hand, the experience motivated me to dig deeper into correlative aspects and encouraged me to analyze corresponding factors critically. According to McGarry (2016) “Awareness of positionality has been shown to benefit both the research and analysis processes as it enables researchers to consider and to critically analyze the terms of their inclusion within the collaboration” (p. 241).

I was simply perceived as a university student collecting data for research when interviewing persons from ACGs’ partner organization. Furthermore, I felt some of them treated me as a complete outsider during the interviews. However, they actively participated in the interviews and contributed to the youth empowerment process by providing options and ideas in their own way. This experience helped me to reflect on my communication abilities and limitations throughout the research. “Positionality enables the researcher to consider the terms of their inclusion within the collaboration by considering interpersonal encounters along the research journey, and the ability to collaborate (as opposed to lead, control or delegate)” (Nicholls, 2009, p. 122).

Reflexivity refers to the individual’s ability to reflect own feelings, reactions, and motives as well as to critically examine the research process: research design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Nicholls, 2009; Sultana, 2007). Reflexivity is an individual action or process of adapting in order to respond positively to an immediate situation and to navigate the research process in the right direction. In fact, interviews were not conducted as originally planned due to locations and availabilities of targeted participants. Additionally, it is noted that a number of interview participants changed their interest and discussed wider social issues during interviews, going beyond interview questions and research themes. Understanding the nature of reflexivity and those circumstances allowed me to understand how knowledge is formed and is associated with various discourses.

Reflexivity is often accepted as one of the fundamental tools necessary to acquire interview participants’ knowledge and perspectives in qualitative social research. Reflexivity allowed me to realize that knowledge is comprised of different facts, information, feelings, and practical understandings of a particular subject by interview participants, and it can be acquired through participants experience or

education. Similarly, throughout the process of data collection, analyzing, and writing in this research, I realized that individuals' and social knowledge were created depending on how I accumulated discourses, understood different situations, and that collected data can contribute towards the current works of empowerment literature and further youth empowerment for younger generations.

3.8 Ethical considerations

In social research, researchers need to pay much attention to the ethical implications of research objectives and methods, in particular with qualitative research on grassroots communities and research with interactive activities (Creswell, 2014). The ethical consideration is also a moral imperative, which is “about building mutually beneficial relationships with people you meet in the field and about acting in a sensitive and respectful manner” (Scheyvens, Nowak, & Scheyvens, 2003, p. 139). The issue of ethics has to be considered and questioned in the field of social research (Scheyvens et al., 2003) and ethical considerations, such as participant consent of the research has become essential to conducting the interview (Creswell, 2014). These factors have been considered throughout the research process and the research has followed the protocol of The Human Ethics Committee of the Victoria University of Wellington (VUW-HEC).

In order to protect the research participants, I applied for and received the VUW-HEC approval for my fieldwork (Appendix 1) and letters of support by my research supervisor were prepared to obtain required support from related organizations (Appendix 2). I then sought the permission from KMF to conduct interviews and to arrange formal conversations with KMF's staff (Appendix 5.1). I did not require getting organizational permission from partner organizations of alumni for the interviewees who participated in my research interviews. I conducted interviews with individual consents rather than obtaining consent from local development organizations or community-based social initiative groups. However, I requested permission from KMF in order to interview KMF's staff and to conduct interviews at the KMF office.

The participation of all interviewees was entirely voluntary and I carefully paid attention to minimize discomfort and inconveniences to the participants. I explained the nature of my research and the interview process, their rights in the interview, and the confidentiality of their identities to all interviewees (Creswell,

2014). Samples of information sheets and the consent form that were given to interviewees are attached as (Appendix 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, & 4.2).

In order to protect participants identities and maintain their anonymity in my research, I explained and used pseudonyms for them with their consent. A number of participants preferred to be identified by their role, organization or community rather than by their real name.

3.9 Health and safety

Health and safety is another essential factor in conducting off-campus activities. I received the approval of the School of Geography, Environment, and Earth Sciences (SGEES) health and safety requirements as my fieldwork had to be conducted overseas. In terms of my health, I avoided consuming unclean water and foods when I was in unsanitary areas, and I carried a small first-aid kit with adequate medical supplies. I planned and selected study locations and participants from the areas where there was no ethnic armed conflict. It was important to ensure smooth and safe transport to mountainous areas during the raining season throughout my research. Therefore, I checked and monitored weather forecasts before my trips and I traveled with reputable and reliable transportation companies. It was also important to make regular contact with my family and colleagues and my supervisor about my field trip itinerary. Moreover, a safe and comfortable environment is essential for both interviewer and interviewees. Therefore, I interviewed my participants where they suggested and agreed to participate in the interviews, including participants' homes, offices, workplaces, university, and monasteries.

3.10 Synopsis

This chapter has described the research methodology applied in this research and how the research was undertaken (i.e. by conducting interviews with different stakeholders, selecting research locations and developing a timeline). It also presented data preparation, analysis, and data management throughout the research process. Positionality, reflexivity, and power relations were also vital features of the research. Fundamental considerations for the research, such as human ethics approval and off-campus activities approval, have been discussed. The next chapter will provide the overall picture or context of Myanmar, before presenting the result or findings of this research.

Chapter Four: Context of Myanmar

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a picture of the geographical and political situations, the emergence of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) in Myanmar, and background information of the Kalyana Mitta Development Foundation (KMF). This contextual information is a foundation to understand the context of Myanmar and is vital for the research analysis and discussion in subsequent chapters. Similarly, the contexts of the country provide a basic view of the country's social development progress, particularly in the young generation. Hence, this chapter provides insight into the situations of the young generation and youth empowerment program of a youth-led development organization.

This chapter is divided into three parts. Part one (4.2 and 4.3) provides geographical information of Myanmar, its people, and the cultural context of the country. Furthermore, part one presents political systems and changes that have taken place in the country. Part two (4.4) discusses youth and youth empowerment programs in Myanmar. It (4.5) also discusses the emergence of NGOs in the country as well as limitations of them. Furthermore, the conditions of conducting social research in Myanmar are briefly discussed in (4.6). Part three (4.7) discusses background information and progress of the KMF program, its alumni core groups (ACG) and alumni network.

4.2 Geography, people, religion, and culture of the country

Myanmar, officially the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, is also known as Burma. Myanmar is situated in Southeast Asia (676,552 square kilometers) (Ministry of Planning and Finance, 2016). In 2018, the population was estimated to be approximately 55 million, with 51 million people having been recorded in the 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census (Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, 2014). Myanmar has been one of the full members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) since 1997 (James, 2005; Steinberg, 3013).

Myanmar is divided into seven states, seven regions that are formally called divisions, and one union territory (Ministry of Planning and Finance, 2016). The seven states were basically organized along ethnic groups and all regions were

allocated to the majority of Burma's population (Kipgen, 2016). It is stated that "If we think of Burma/Myanmar in ethnic terms, around a central geographic core of lowlands inhabited by the majority Burmans, two-thirds of the population, there is a horseshoe of highland areas inhabited by minority peoples who also live across the frontiers in adjacent states" (Steinberg, 2013, p. xxvii). Myanmar is a country comprised of great ethnic diversity. The government recognizes 135 indigenous ethnic groups and there are at least 108 ethnolinguistic groups in the country (Kipgen, 2016). The majority of the population is Bamar (estimated at 68% of the total population), while other ethnic minorities make up 32% of the population (Ministry of Immigration and Population, 2015). There is a diverse range of indigenous cultures in Myanmar and it is stated that the majority of the population has been influenced by the Buddhist and Bamar cultures in the country (Jolliffe & Mears, 2016).

Myanmar citizens practice many religions and faiths. In the country, religious practices are perceived as sacred and an important factor for individuals and each community. The majority of the population (89.7%) practices Buddhism (Ministry of Planning and Finance, 2016). In the 2014 Myanmar Census, 6.3% of the population identified as Christian, while 2.3% followed Islam and only 0.5% practiced Hinduism (Ministry of Planning and Finance, 2016). Furthermore, 0.8% of the population is recorded as Animist, while 0.2% identified as followers of other religions, and 0.1% followed no religion. There are numerous religious festivals, ceremonies, and rituals by related communities and religious associations in Myanmar. Religion is one of the important factors that shape the local culture, social practices, and even a country's policy (Kipgen, 2016; Sivaraksa, 2005a, 2009). Steinberg (2013) states that Buddhism is the primordial religion of the majority of Myanmar's population and is associated with many rites of passage in the society as well as social and cultural customs of Myanmar people.

Similarly, Kipgen (2016) states that religious associations and ethnic-based organizations are recognized as a traditional civil society and have influential power in Myanmar society. Traditionally, Buddhist monasteries have been providing social principles and teaching literacy to the children and youth in Myanmar (Jolliffe & Mears, 2016) and the monastery is still the centre of the community and village life (Steinberg, 2013). Catholic missionary schools were established to provide educational services from the sixteenth century onwards (Jolliffe & Mears, 2016).

4.3 The context of Myanmar and its political transitions

This section explains political changes in Myanmar and their impacts on the society. The political transitions of the country have had both positive and negative effects on the socioeconomic well-being of the citizens and administrative systems of the country. More specifically, many social sectors have been changed under different political systems, which has had direct effects on each citizen, ethnic minority groups, and the younger generation in particular. Similarly, the country's administration, educational system, economy, and international relationships have collapsed due to misrule by a group of military leaders and consequently, the country has endured poverty.

In the nineteenth century, after the three Anglo-Burmese wars (1824-1826, 1852, and 1885) Burma came entirely under British rule (Steinberg, 2013). With the end of the monarchy in 1885, the British colonial period lasted from 1886 to 1948 (Steinberg, 2013). The 1947 constitution was significant in securing the national independence of the country and was designed to develop a parliamentary democracy in a multiethnic state (Steinberg, 2013).

On the 4th January 1948, Myanmar became an independent republic. The 1947 constitution provided a legal framework for the democratic civilian government and the administrative traditions were relatively well developed (Hook, Than, & Ninh, 2015). Steinberg (2013) states "there is no question that the civilian government (1948-1958, 1960-1962) provided more freedom for the average citizen than any government since that time" (p. 61). However, there were many factors that contributed to political and economic instability during the periods of civilian government rule. For instance, the non-Burmese ethnic groups pushed for federalism and ethnic tensions increased; there were many civil wars with ethnic armed groups and the communist party; national economic plans failed; the 1961 State Religion Promotion Act was passed; and the weakness of democratic government was apparent (Hook et al., 2015; Steinberg, 2013).

There was a significant transition in 1962 when military leaders staged a coup d'état and the Revolutionary Council (1962-1974) seized power (Hook et al., 2015; Steinberg, 2013). It is noted that the government has been run by indirect or direct military control since then (Steinberg, 2013). The Revolutionary Council founded a new political party known as the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) and appointed a cabinet consisting mainly of military officers, and announced the

abolition of all other political parties two years after seizing power (Hook et al., 2015). The most significant move of the government was nationalization of the country's economy, affecting banks, trades, factories, and industries (Hook et al., 2015). Almost all the ethnic political leaders and experienced civil services were replaced (Steinberg, 2013). Many student demonstrations and anti-government protests were savagely suppressed by the military (Steinberg, 2013). Around the year 1974, "distance education" for the university students was designed, which attempted to prevent students from attending regular classes and gathering publicly (Steinberg, 2013).

In 1974, the Constitution of 1974 came into effect and the Burma Socialist Programme era lasted from 1974 to 1988 (Hook et al., 2015; Steinberg, 2013). The Constitution declared Burma as a 'Socialist Republic' and marked the beginning of a new era of civilian rule (Hook et al., 2015). However, it is stated that the country became a socialist authoritarian state (Steinberg, 2013). The military leaders ignored the agreement on federal structure and the situations of the ethnic minorities remained, which led to the ethnic insurrections at the borders (Steinberg, 2013). Moreover, the civil service played a smaller role in the formulation of public policy, while the military's leading role continued (Hook et al., 2015). "The government was not in a position to provide schools or medical facilities or even the means to improve agriculture. Minority dissatisfaction grew" (Steinberg, 2013, p. 72). The monastic educational system was intentionally developed during the Socialist period, which attempted to control and monitor the educational activities of monks (Steinberg, 2013).

Following a coup in 1988, a military regime started again and lasted for more than twenty years. The military leaders argued that they aimed to preserve the sovereignty and integrity of the state. They believed that the civilian administration had failed and it is stated that countrywide protests brought down the ruling BSPP (Hook et al., 2015). The '8888' university student demonstrations were a significant factor in the young generation's demand for justice and freedom, and there was much public participation in demonstrations (Steinberg, 2013). About 10,000 university students fled across the borders and to ethnic armed groups and, universities and schools were closed down for long periods (Steinberg, 2013). The military government created an administrative top-down structure, that attempted to control all levels of society (Hook et al., 2015).

The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) won the election in 2010 and the military junta was dissolved in 2011. A new foreign investment law was passed and foreign collaborations were welcomed to assist the country's development (Steinberg, 2013). The government invited INGOs and international aid, but a number of Western donor countries and multilateral aid providers avoided direct contact with the government even though they supported LINGOs and CSOs of Myanmar (Burke, Williams, Barron, Jolliffe, & Carr, 2017).

In 2015, the National League for Democracy (NLD) won the general election and the NLD government tried to initiate political and economic reform (Burke et al., 2017). The NLD government has developed a new high-level platform for policy development, coordination, and decision making on aid projects (Carr, 2018). The volume of aid for the country increased significantly after 2015 due to the government's reengagement in international development cooperation (Carr, 2018).

In conclusion, this section has provided the background political transitions of the country briefly and highlighted a number of aspects that link to the youth development issue in the country.

4.4 Youth and youth empowerment in Myanmar

4.4.1 Youth: their role and social status in Myanmar

There are about 9 million youth in Myanmar, which is 18 percent of the total population (50.3 million people) according to the 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census (Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, 2014). Traditionally, young people do not possess high social status in Myanmar's society. Similarly, youth have less opportunity for a leadership role in the community even though they play many important roles. This may be due to public assumptions that young people are considered to lack skills and work experience. Another factor might be that a number of youths and youth associations were used for political purposes in the BSPP era, which was designed in favour of the coups and to show nationalism (Hook et al., 2015). Consequently, groups of youth were perceived as military-backed associations and a uniformly negative image of the public might last for the current young generation (Kipgen, 2016).

Moreover, young people have fewer job opportunities in the country due to lower levels of education, the country's undeveloped economy, and poverty (Aye, 2015; Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, 2014). Most of the young

people, both educated and uneducated, are migrating to neighboring countries to seek job opportunities, resulting in a great brain drain for the nation (Steinberg, 2013; Thuzar, 2015). In the 1990s, ethnic conflicts in four states caused hundreds of thousands of people to flee to neighboring countries and seek refuge in camps, and the guarantee for the future of ethnic young generation was uncertain (Jolliffe, 2014). Steinberg (2013) states that it is likely more emigration will occur due to the lack of a future for the young generation in society. The migration of the young people to other countries as well as to different cities inside the country threatens the elderly population and has a negative impact on the labour force in particular cities and regions (Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, 2014; Ministry of Immigration and Population, 2015).

4.4.2 Youth and education in Myanmar

It is widely accepted that education is one of the most fundamental pillars for individual development, especially for children and young generations. Myanmar was recognized as a country with one of the best educational systems in Southeast Asia in the mid-1900s. However, the educational system declined seriously when the country entered the Socialist Era in 1962, due to government control over educational institutions (The Asia Foundation and the Myanmar Book Aid and Preservation Foundation, 2014). In other words, the Burmese military has retained power since 1962 and the country's education sector in Myanmar was in crisis due to military control and armed conflicts (Steinberg, 2013; South & Lall, 2016). It is strongly argued that primary schooling was often expensive for the country's grassroots population (Steinberg, 2013). Similarly, younger generations wanted higher education, "but universities have been closed for many years and higher degree programs are said to be weak and not internationally recognized. There is no correlation between a degree and a good job" (Steinberg, 2013, p. 12). Similarly, children and young people from ethnic conflict areas have far less opportunity to access formal education, health care, and job opportunities (Jolliffe, 2014; South, 2008). According to the 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, more than half a million youth are still illiterate in Myanmar (Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, 2014).

Nowadays, monastic education, which is one of the alternative empowerment programs in the country aimed at helping the young generation, differs from that of

the Socialist era (Kyaw, 2015). Buddhist monasteries and monastic education deliver free primary education or formal education for rural children of poor families and provide a few work opportunities for young people (Asia News Monitor, 2015). A number of Christian churches and church-based associations support similar formal education for young people from conflict ridden and remote ethnic areas (Jolliffe, 2014; Jolliffe & Mears, 2016). There are few schools built and run by ethnic armed groups in border areas and refugee camps for ethnic children and youth (South & Lall, 2016). Monastic education and faith-based organizations (FBO) and their educational programs, as well as ethnic armed groups' schools, are trying to tackle the needs of children and youth. However, it is a huge amount of work to cover about 4.5 million children, about 31 percent of the total child population of the country, who cannot attend school for many reasons, (Kyaw, 2015; Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, 2014). Those demographic factors and recent educational needs highlight that youth empowerment programs and activities are important. However, they have gained less priority status compared to many other issues such as policy, economy, and so on.

4.4.3 Informal youth empowerment in Myanmar

There were only a few youth-led community development activities by NGOs or development agencies, although numerous youth social engagements¹¹ were found in Myanmar (Prasse-Freeman, 2012). Several faith-based organizations (FBO) and religious associations provide vocational training and life skills for a limited number of young people (South, 2008). There are few technical, agricultural, and vocational training programs for youths and young adults by government departments (Ministry of Planning and Finance, 2016). After 2010, a number of youth-led organizations and youth empowerment programs have emerged around the country to tackle youth issues. Similarly, youth empowerment programs by international organizations were founded a few years ago. For example, the Myanmar Young Leader Programme (MYLP) by UnionAID, New Zealand Council of Trade Unions is one of the significant empowerment programs for young social and development workers (UnionAid, n.d.). However, the majority of young people who are working in

¹¹ Traditionally, the social engagements of young people in Myanmar are community activities (e.g., social and religious ceremonies, traditional festivals, and cultural events) and are often motivated by altruism.

community development and agricultural sectors, especially young people who belong to ethnic minority groups and are from mountainous areas, still struggle to get such opportunities for personal growth and for their community (Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, 2014).

4.4.4 Youth social engagement and youth-led community development activities in the country

Since the BSPP time, the military has controlled social mobility or movements in Myanmar, particularly in youth and student-led movements for educational reforms and democratic change (Steinberg, 2013). Most significantly, the country's political and social life has been tightened since the military takeover of the government in 1988 (The Asia Foundation and the Myanmar Book Aid and Preservation Foundation, 2014). Youth movements and social mobilizing have been seriously oppressed and undermined by the control of the military government. Consequently, the roles of the youth in the community have declined and no youth-led community development initiatives have been discovered. However, after cyclone Nargis, many young people got involved in local NGOs and religious-based associations to help cyclone-affected communities. Similarly, one survey on public participation in social activities shows that more people participated in volunteer work to improve the society and the government (The Asia Foundation, 2014). Furthermore, more mobilizations of youth outside the military-backed political party brought the significant changes in the society and policy after 2008 (Kipgen, 2016).

4.5 NGOs and Aid in Myanmar

4.5.1 The emergence of NGOs and Aid in Myanmar

In the 1990s, only a few Local Non-Governmental Organizations (LNGOs) worked in the field of community development in Myanmar, with very limited conditions under the military government (Thuzar, 2015). In May 2008, the tropical cyclone Nargis took more than 140,000 civilian lives from the lower part of Myanmar (Belanger & Horsey, 2008). According to UN assessments, more than 2.4 million people were severely affected and needed emergency assistance (Belanger & Horsey, 2008). International assistance and humanitarian aid were delivered to address the urgent needs of the country, while the national response to the severe natural disaster was limited (Belanger & Horsey, 2008). A number of INGO officers signed the

memorandum of understanding (MoU) with government ministries to extend their aid programs for rehabilitation after emergency relief (Belanger & Horsey, 2008). At the same time, several international aid agencies were spread to targeted communities by supporting LNGOs and civil society organizations (CSO) (Aye, 2015).

Myanmar is a country that has gone through some of the longest armed conflicts in the world (Kipgen, 2016). Various forms of ethnic conflicts and civil wars have persisted between Burman and non-Burman groups in the country since independence from Britain in 1948 (Jolliffe, 2014). The international community and aid groups have a strong interest in supporting the country's effort to find a solution and develop a platform to peace-building (Jolliffe, 2014). International aid agencies have pondered over the peace process among the state army and the non-state army groups and had paid close attention to the process of state building (Jolliffe, 2014; South, 2008). Myanmar is in the process of transition to democracy, and promoting the culture of democracy has been of the utmost importance since 2010 (Aye, 2015). During the country's political and economic transitions, the majority of aid actors targeted and committed their efforts to the energy, health, and transport sectors in Myanmar according to a recently published report by the Asia Foundation Myanmar (Carr, 2018). However, it is argued that different development priorities were identified between National Development Plans and international aid actors (Carr, 2018).

4.5.2 Local Non-Governmental Organizations (LNGOs) and their limitations

After four and a half decades of military misrule, millions of people today live in poverty, lack human dignity and social security, and are displaced, especially in areas where ethnic populations live (South, 2008; Bächtold, 2015). The LNGOs of Myanmar play an important role in building the country's social capital, supporting community development and environmental conservation (Bächtold, 2015). With the promise of democratization, the recent Myanmar government is creating more spaces for NGOs and civil society through community development programs and aid (Pursch, Woodhouse, Woolcock, & Zurstrassen, 2017; World Bank, 2015). As a positive consequence, the role and interventions of the LNGOs in Myanmar experienced a steady increase due to the country's current political transitioning (World Bank, 2015).

Most NGOs mainly concentrate on rural development, climate change issues, human rights, women and child protection, public health, good governance, and peace and advocacy (Werker, Ahmed, & Ahmed, 2008). Similarly, LNGOs and INGOs in Myanmar have focused on poverty reduction, rural development projects, HIV/ AIDS and health care, and nutrition projects for children in remote areas (South, 2008). However, LNGOs and INGOs do not combine empowerment agendas and activities for the young generation (South, 2008). To date, the majority of the NGOs projects and aid are going to somewhat similar issues in the country, such as health and rural development (Carr, 2018). Meanwhile, it is significant that many aid programs and INGOs supports have halted due to the country's political instability and policy changes.

4.6 Study and limitations of youth issues in Myanmar

Myanmar's political systems, complexity in transition, and challenges in the society have attracted international attention from scholars to study the situations of the country. However, it is stated "Myanmar is opaque in research terms. Access is limited except within a few nonpolitical fields" (Steinberg, 2013, p. 9). It is stated that doing social research in Myanmar is not easy due to very limited resources and secondary data. Steinberg (2013) argues "studying Myanmar is often neither science nor social science, but more akin to art, where truth is in the eye of the beholder. Consequently, different interpretations abound" (p. 11). Moreover, in-depth research and comprehensive study for youth and youth empowerment programs are rarely found in Myanmar. South (2008) also states that governments and NGOs can identify specific country development needs and the vulnerability assessments in order to empower citizens and conduct social research in partnership with local communities and CBOs through the rights-based approach. However, collaborative studies like this one are rarely found inside the country.

4.7 Background of Kalyana Mitta Development Foundation (KMF) and its intervention

The Kalyana Mitta Development Foundation (KMF) is a registered youth-led development foundation in Myanmar run by a group of young people for youth (KMF, 2011). ‘Kalyana Mitta’ is a Pali¹² word meaning ‘good friends’. In 2013, KMF was officially registered as a local NGO in Myanmar. KMF is grounded in Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB)¹³ and principles that encourage compassion, wisdom, and solidarity among the diversity of ethnic and religious identities in Myanmar. The aim of the KMF is to empower young Buddhists to be able to contribute to their communities towards just, inclusive and sustainable social development based on the concept of SEB and bottom-up community development process.

The Buddhist Youth Empowerment Program (BYEP) ran for six years (2008-2013) before developing KMF. Under the military junta, BYEP had been run as an underground movement with a series of youth empowerment projects. BYEP projects appeared in two phases: Phase I, a pilot project with a series of trainings held during 2008-2010 and, Phase II, continuous training and follow-up activities conducted during 2011-2013. BYEP mainly focused on empowering young Buddhists to become socially engaged Buddhists for social transformation and community development initiatives. Since then, KMF has focused on community engagement towards self-reliance, resilience, and peace through mobilizing by youth-led Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

BYEP particularly focused on awareness raising, leadership, and capacity building of young Buddhists. In 2008, BYEP began coordinating with Buddhist youth across the country to strengthen their capacity in order to actively get involved in social change and peace activities. BYEP started a one-week development awareness training program known as Buddhist Youth Meeting for Spiritual Development (BYMSD) with targeted young Buddhists from different regions in Myanmar. BYMSD aimed to raise awareness of young people and social phenomena associated with community issues and to motivate the young Buddhists’ spirituality and

¹² The Pali Tipitaka is the Theravada Buddhist canon, written in an early form of Middle Indo-Aryan of roughly contemporary date with Epic Sanskrit (Lowe, 2017).

¹³ SEB is the alternative social and community development practices based on Buddha’s teachings and his way of living (Sivaraksa, 2005). SEB has been discussed details in Literature Review, Section 2.4.1.

enthusiasm to address them. Moreover, it aimed to empower Buddhist youth to actively participate in socially engaging activities for their communities, which is discussed in Chapter Five. In fact, BYMSD was designed to help young Buddhists to understand an individual's inner problems and personal development process. Likewise, BYMSD introduced the country's social problems, community development issues, environmental degradation, and structural injustice.

The one-month Buddhist Youth Leadership Training (BYLT) has also been conducted for BYMSD alumni. BYLT were designed to promote the knowledge of BYMSD alumni and to upgrade individuals skills in order to become youth leaders and community facilitators. In fact, BYLT provided wider knowledge on individual development progress, regional development and environmental issues, global development paradigms, and community development concepts to training participants. Moreover, BYLT provided interpersonal, leadership and community organizing skills to young people to enable them to organize youth meetings in their own region and to start small social initiatives.

BYEP also conducted follow-up activities, which included skill training, capacity building activities, and financial support for alumni training initiatives. According to their annual program evaluation, BYEP's skill training programs included Training of Transformation (TOT) for alumni who wanted to become trainers and training facilitators; Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Action Research (PAR) for community development works; Project Cycle Management (PCM) for alumni who wanted to manage ACG's small scale projects. Moreover, BYEP organized internship programs and fellowships for program alumni, which will be presented more detailed in Chapter Five. Similarly, BYEP provided small start-up grants to like-minded training alumni groups for initiating community development projects and environmental activities.

After six years of work, progress and positive changes in BYEP's alumni are remarkable. In different states and regions in Myanmar, 36 interest-based Alumni Core Groups (ACG) were established by training alumni and a number of ACGs have been transformed into CBOs. The alumni core groups and their activities are discussed in Chapter Five. Most significantly, ACGs and training alumni have found a nationwide youth network known as the Socially Engaged Ethnic Buddhist Youth Network (SEEBYN). Over 1500 youth have participated in BYEP training and the alumni network. A number of alumni are actively engaging in a variety of

development sectors such as community development projects, peace, gender equality, environmental conservation, and social justice movements.

BYEP also provided organizational development for the ACG's to ensure that accountable and participatory organizational structures and democratic practices were in place. Moreover, the Annual Alumni Assembly (AAA) was successfully organized five times in different areas by BYEP with the help of ACGs from related areas. AAA has created a space for young alumni from different areas and created an opportunity for youth to learn from different experiences and from diverse backgrounds, which is discussed more detail in Chapter Five.

During 2013, KMF developed a three-year program (2013-2015) based on the previous program experience and alumni feedback. In the program, KMF planned to focus on community development projects and to empower ACGs to become Community-Based Organizations. In the (2013-2015) program, KMF projects were planned to reach targeted Buddhist monks and nuns. Moreover, the program provided training to help strengthen the Buddhist youths' network and started to initiate the interfaith network in the country. After the three years program, KMF developed a proposal for another three years in 2015, which mainly focuses on the capacity development of ACGs and CBO strengthening.

4.8 Synopsis

In summary, Myanmar has had a long and complex history of political transitions, especially since the nation became an independent country from the British. It is clear that the historical and political transitions have influenced the way in which the country's policies were developed and have affected the social structure, educational systems, and economy of the country. In fact, the educational system of the country is systematically broken down by military rule or dictatorship, which has directly affected the young generations and human resource development for the country. Moreover, there are ongoing ethnic conflicts and armed conflicts in the country, which hindering the country's development progress, contributing to the migration cycle, and destroying the future of the ethnic young generation. Many challenges remain although attempts have been made to address the country's issues. International aid programs and INGOs are helping in a number of areas, such as energy, transportation, and health. However, many limitations of foreign support are clearly seen. Local NOGs and CSOs also play an important role for the grassroots

communities and youth empowerment. It is a fact that youth have been affected by the above-mentioned circumstances and those problems remain to be solved. The context of Myanmar, its political systems, aid programs, and spontaneous changes in the social sector are relevant to the research topic and research questions, especially youth empowerment by KMF and its program alumni. Additionally, SEB contributes to the youth empowerment process and social change actions. These are key themes of this research and they will be discussed detailed in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter Five: Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to present the findings from the 21 semi-structured interviews. It also attempts to provide answers to the central research question by looking at four specific secondary questions in particular sections. Four main themes were developed and used as an interview guide in order to examine and bridge secondary research questions: (1) KMF empowerment program intervention; (2) Alumni and alumni core groups' social engagement; (3) Youth and youth empowerment in Myanmar; and (4) Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB) and religious teaching. These themes are outlined in Table 3.3.

Employing the empowerment concept, Appreciative Inquiry (AI), and participatory learning, this chapter attempts to answer secondary research questions in four sections. The first section explains how the KMF program has strengthened the individual growth of the targeted young people. The second section explains how KMF interventions and activities help alumni to be able to run and lead alumni core groups in different areas. The third section presents self-reflection of targeted alumni and their perceptions of the social activities of alumni core groups. The fourth section focuses on the SEB by interviewees and how SEB stimulates their commitment to join social and development works in related sectors. Finally, section 5.5 gives a brief summary of this chapter.

5.2 KMF program interventions and youth empowerment

This section mainly focuses on the first secondary research question of this thesis: 'How has the KMF program strengthened the individual development of targeted young people?' Youth or young people in this chapter often refers to KMF's program alumni who participated in this research. Alumni in this research can also be noted as BYEP's training alumni or senior alumni of KMF. The program interventions and activities that interviewees or senior alumni shared in this section were mostly focused on BYEP's activities. Similarly, a number of interview participants explained KMF's current program activities and projects.

5.2.1 The KMF or BYEP program and activities

The initial activities of BYEP were conducting awareness and leadership training. It then provided skill training, workshops, internship programs, and summer work camps in remote areas. Twelve interview participants of this research joined BYEP's one-week development awareness training known as the Buddhist Youth Meeting for Spiritual Development (BYMSD), which was conducted in different states and regions in Myanmar. After the training, they returned to their home towns and started small initiatives to gather friends, plant trees, and collect garbage in their wards. After that, BYEP recruited active one-week training alumni from different areas and organized a one-month leadership training program called Buddhist Youth Leadership Training (BYLT). About ten interview participants participated in different BYLTs organized by BYEP.

Buddhist Youth Meeting for Spiritual Development (BYMSD)

All the one-week development awareness trainings (BYMSDs) were organized with the inclusion of community development workers from different Local Non-Governmental Organizations (LNGOs). BYMSDs were designed to promote the interest and commitment of youth in social work and empower them to organize socially engaged activities by providing knowledge, and raising awareness in young people about social, local economy, and global development issues, and introduce different worldviews. BYMSD mainly aims to introduce young people to a number of areas such as youth and social works, traditional practices, mainstream and alternative education, gender equality, peace, localization and globalization, natural environment, and SEB. Training participants from the same state or region but with different ethnic backgrounds were selected. In addition, young people with high school education and a strong interest in social work were invited through BYEP's partner organizations, friends, and other local social teams and associations.

The participatory learning and alternative education were the fundamental pillars of BYMSD. Most of the targeted alumni expressed that the BYMSDs provided much learning space in a short period by encouraging young people to actively participate in the group learning process as well as activities focused on self-realization. One of the interview participants who is a senior KMF alumni stated:

The structure and flow of BYMSD were incredibly well designed because they helped me to expand my horizons and learning process. It comprised of many participatory learning methods: games; small group discussion; group challenges; and experiential learning and so on (IP-10).

Human resources are one important pillar for BYMSDs to be able to introduce new topics and create a better learning environment for young people. Social servants, community development workers, and training facilitators who have experience in specific areas facilitated BYMSDs and training organizers and facilitators assisted with training participants and the training process. Another senior alumnus stated in the interview:

Even the way in which the facilitators facilitated the training stimulated my learning habits and created smooth communication among people from different backgrounds and ideas. Similarly, interactive activities and reflective learning of each subject surprisingly touched my heart as we had never experienced this type of activity in our mainstream education system (IP-15).

Topics of the BYMSD were also designed to cover different topics and issues ranging from local to global and from the individual level to the levels of society and natural environment. One of the objectives of the BYMSD was about knowing self and others by reflecting on one's own individual daily routine. It aimed for young people to see an individual's inner suffering and collective suffering by means of learning the current social, ecological, political, and economic issues. The majority of the interviewees stated that almost all of the subjects and topics that they had learned and discussed in BYMSD were essential for young persons who want to address an individual's and social problems. It is also noted that BYMSD is one of the platforms that encourages young peoples' self-reflection, realizing of the individual's situations, and choosing one's own path based on individual interests.

I might say that "how to be a good Buddhist" was the topic that inspired me the most. Learning even basic Buddhist principles and reflecting on

my behaviors challenged me to go beyond my comfort zones and to get involved to tackle structural injustice, although it was not easy to understand during the training period (IP-2).

On the other hand, a number of interviewees mentioned that some topics in BYMSD were too vague and were not really relevant or applicable to the daily lives of young people. For instance, social, economic and political injustices in the country are big issues and are challenging for a young person to address. Furthermore, some participants stated that it is beyond their capacity to individually tackle global issues such as capitalism, globalization, environmental degradation, and climate change.

Buddhist Youth Leadership Training (BYLT)

Buddhist Youth Leadership Training (BYLT) was another significant component of BYEP's youth empowerment process. BYLTs were designed to promote leadership skills of active BYMSD alumni in order for them to become good community facilitators and to acquire broader knowledge on regional development and environmental issues. During the one-month training period, BYLTs were conducted by moving to different areas in the country to inspire young training participants to learn from the community-based development works of different organizations.

The contents of BYLT were designed to cover individual level to wider local and global issues. For example, knowing oneself and others, team building, and critical and analytical thinking were aspects that focused on the individual's inner development and interpersonal skills. In addition, BYLTs included leadership and organizing skills to become potential leaders for the prospect of community development and peace-building activities. In the same vein, introducing broader local and global issues was another sector of training content. For example, understanding religions and inter-faiths, the nature of globalization and modernization, consumerism and simplicity, environment and deep ecology, peace and non-violence communication, sustainable development concepts, and socially engaged spirituality were the main topics in the training. Additionally, exposure trips and field visits to LNGOs and community development project sites enabled young people to get exposed and learning.

I learned many things from peace and the peace process. It starts from the individual's activities and inner peace leads to getting involved in social works and to solve injustices of social and political systems (IP-4).

Similarly, BYLTs aimed to strengthen the network among socially engaged Buddhist youths from different areas. Recruiting young people or BYMSD alumni from different areas in the same training helped create a better communication mode and encouraged young people to establish a nationwide alumni Buddhist youth network. Likewise, BYLTs created an opportunity for training young alumni, which helped alumni to get in contact with LNGOs, CBOs, and religious associations for future cooperation in social change activities and community development works.

During 2008-2013, BYEP organized 14 BYMSDs and 7 BYLTs as a pilot project (KMF, 2011). According to BYEP's monitoring and evaluation results, the program's training changed young peoples' attitudes to become humble, more open-hearted, interested in social work, and more aware of global issues. Moreover, their critical thinking skills and ability to perform teamwork improved. The majority of both BYMSD and BYLT alumni are getting involved in socially engaged activities. In addition, they have become active volunteers for the community's social welfare and environmental conservation works (IP-2, IP-9, IP-11, and IP-13.). It is also noted that a number of training alumni have improved their skills in social dealings such as managing conflicts, practicing non-violence communication, and participatory approaches in their core groups' social initiatives. Most importantly, after the training, all of the training alumni have tried to gather young people and recruited friends to establish core groups in their village or city.

5.3 KMF program and Alumni Core Groups (ACGs)

This section mainly focuses on answering the second secondary research question: 'How has the KMF program strengthened the organizational development of Alumni Core Groups (ACGs) to become Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)?' This section explains how the KMF or BYEP program strengthened the organizational development of alumni core groups (ACGs). The follow-up activities of BYEP held after the previous training and how the BYEP focused on capacity

building of existing alumni and empowering the ACGs are explained. In addition, networking and solidarity is a countrywide activity for alumni and ACGs.

5.3.1 BYEP's capacity building activities for individual alumni and ACGs

BYEP provided a number of capacity building programs for individual alumni and ACGs after BYMSDs and BYLTs: Training of Transformation (TOT); Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Action Research (PAR); Project Cycle Management (PCM). Also, BYEP provided environmental workshops and organized appropriate skill training such as Appropriate Technology, Peace Building, and Conflict Management.

5.3.2 BYEP internship programs and fellowship supports

BYEP created a space for alumni to build up their skills in dealing with local grassroots communities and in coordinating activities. BYEP invited a certain number of young people to its internship program and trained them to be community development workers and to build up interpersonal and office management skills.

Right after BYLT, I volunteered for Nargis Cyclone emergency relief and rehabilitation by BYEP. I got an opportunity to apply community development concepts in the rehabilitation process in grassroots communities. I volunteered for BYEP for about six years including emergency relief and rehabilitation in Cyclone affected areas. Such work experience and BYEP's follow-up activities encouraged me to lead a group of young people from my areas for our community (IP-18).

Likewise, BYEP arranged internship programs for alumni in collaboration with local partner development organizations and faith-based associations. Furthermore, BYEP organized exchange internship programs between BYEP and organizations in neighbouring countries, including Thailand, Cambodia, and India. The regional exchange program was designed to bring young people from different cultures and backgrounds together for experiential learning and sharing.

The internship program in one faith-based organization helped to upgrade my capacity by teaching me the nature of different working

styles and another internship experience in a joint program of three local nongovernmental organizations helped me to improve my social dealing skills and encouraged me to work in the field of community development (IP-1).

BYEP provided partial support for short courses or seminars in the country. This program was meant to contribute a certain amount of financial support to alumni in need for their attendance of training and workshops organized by other organizations. BYEP also offered scholarships for short courses abroad to potential alumni for further advancement of their skills and knowledge and to provide informal education.

In contrast, it is noted that a number of trainings such as disaster risk preparedness, small-scale business, and micro-enterprise training and activities for alumni were cancelled due to financial limitations (IP-2 and IP-13).

5.3.3 BYEP follow-up activities and small grants

It was believed that training and activities without follow-up would not be effective and progressive (IP-13). It is often accepted that a follow-up plan is an important component in program design, which makes sure whether the program and project processes are on the right track and within a timeframe (IP-21). Follow-up activities and small grants for alumni initiatives by BYEP were direct supports to alumni core groups.

It is important to provide effective follow-up supports to the trainees within a certain period so as to make sure they have individual and collective initiatives and then they will be enthusiastic in the field of social work (IP-11).

A number of follow-up meetings for alumni core groups were organized once a year by BYEP in order to update information from both parties. Moreover, most of the ACGs had chances to share their social work experience and limitations associated with human resources, management skills, organizational development, and partner organizations. Furthermore, ACGs and alumni were encouraged to participate in follow-up activities of BYEP staff and senior fellows. Also, BYEP held

follow-up meetings for specific training and activities, such as TOT training, PRA training, PCM training, and environmental workshop follow-up meetings.

In line with the follow-up program, BYEP shared resources with and offered reading materials to ACGs. BYEP provided suitable information to ACGs, such as scholarship opportunities, job vacancy announcements, training information, and vocational skill opportunities. Regarding Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials, BYEP crated environmental exhibition display materials for alumni core groups. For the sake of alumni knowledge development, BYEP provided suitable reading materials, films, and documentary to ACGs.

Most of the alumni core groups were doing various kinds of volunteer work and extended their activities into small-scale projects. In mid-2010, after PRA and PCM training, the majority of ACGs developed their own organizational structure and identified detailed roles and responsibilities. This can be seen in the outcome of BYEP's skill training and workshop conducted for its alumni. BYEP supported small grants or projects for ACGs' initiatives on various issues and provided close supervision during the early project period (IP-2). BYEP acted as a sub-contractor to support ACGs' needs, particularly to evolve from like-minded core groups into Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

BYEP's follow-up activities assisted me to realize the potential of our members and to understand the aspect of sustainability for our team and social change movement for the future. It also helped me to see clearly local issues and needs and solutions to them (IP-5).

5.3.4 Annual Alumni Assembly (AAA)

In 2010, BYEP organized the Annual Alumni Assembly (AAA), to be held once in a year. The aim of the AAA is to build up mutual understanding and friendship among different ethnic groups and to strengthen the youth network for future initiatives (IP-9). AAA was designed to provide a convenient space for young alumni to get together, and to share their experiences and cultures. AAAs often helped to review alumni initiative and the progressive trend of BYEP. Significantly, AAA supported not only ACGs to develop the vision of a peaceful society but also to envision the future prospect of BYEP and the ACGs network by alumni participation. Consequently, a nationwide alumni network was formed following the

recommendations of ACGs in AAAs. BYEP organized six AAAs in different areas with the invitation of alumni core groups. Next, the alumni network committed to organizing AAAs in different areas with the assistance of ACGs. Referring to her AAA experience, one of the alumni-led training participants stated that:

I got an opportunity to travel with friends and met alumni with different backgrounds from many areas of the country. I got a chance to learn many social service and community development skills by ACGs and it encouraged me to make a strong commitment for social services (IP-20).

This section has focused on looking at the KMF or BYEP's different programs on strengthening the needs of young individuals and on the capacity development of ACGs. It described how BYEP's programs were designed and targeted to build up the capacity of BYEP's alumni in different ways such as by providing leadership skills in individuals, and small grants for ACGs, and supporting PCM training. The majority of the interview participants from Category II (KMF program alumni) stated that BYEP's activities helped them not only to build up individuals' knowledge and interpersonal skills but also stimulated their team spirit and encouraged them to work together as a team or a core group. In the following section, I will present the alumni perception of ACGs situations and social change activities associated with the BYEP's youth empowerment program intervention.

5.4 The social cohesion and community development activities of ACGs

Turning now to alumni perceptions of their social works, this section focuses on the third secondary question of the research: 'How do research participants perceive the Alumni Core Groups' social cohesion and community development work in their areas?' This section explains the ACGs initiatives and the individuals' contributions to their communities after BYEP training, and follow-up support by BYEP. Based on the active participation of interviewees and interview notes, this section covers the emergence of like-minded groups or ACGs, the reasons to develop ACGs in different areas, visions and objectives of ACGs, ACGs' social change initiatives, alumni feelings on their successful works in the communities, and collaborative experiences with INGOs, LNGOs and CBOs. This section covers the

opportunities and limitations of ACGs. Additionally, this section presents alumni reflections on their social cohesion associated with their roles and social status in their communities.

5.4.1 The emergence of ACGs in different areas

After BYMSD training, most of the BYMSD alumni gathered young people or friends with similar opinions and interests to serve their communities. They recruited a group of like-minded individuals and held knowledge sharing meetings and issue-based group discussions, then started small social and environmental initiatives (e.g., collecting plastic garbage from the wards, planting trees at their university compounds, and volunteering for emergency relief). From these experiences, they found that they could work more effectively to address related local issues if the group was formed systematically. They also reflected on the essence of teamwork, participation, and networking that they learned from the training. Consequently, ACGs were shaped and developed by senior alumni with the participation of junior alumni from their own geographical areas. The number of members in each ACG was different, ranging from seven active young persons in one area to five hundred volunteers for regional events in another. One interviewee from the biggest ACG stated that:

About five hundred members have actively participated in our group activities. They are comprised of youth leaders and representatives from thirty villages from our regions, covering sixty to sixty-five per cent of youths in the region. We are running the group activities with a senior management team, which is comprised of active members and youth representatives from different villages (IP-6).

5.4.2 The reasons to establish ACGs

There were a number of reasons that contributed to young alumni developing ACGs in their own areas. The inspiration and learning from the AAAs were one factor for young people to team up with like-minded BYLTs and BYMSDs training alumni in the same area. Traditionally, there were few youth teams or groups of young people concerned with, and willing to get involved in, social transformation works and environmental conservation. However, young people have often

participated in religious festivals and social occasions of joy or grief in their villages or rural areas and cities. Lack of youth-led social and ecological movements in their society was one reason to set up ACGs in different places (IP-6). The experiential learning of individuals and reflection of their collective societal and environmental actions around their areas often stimulated them to develop the ACGs. Therefore, they systematically contributed to addressing thematic issues based on their interests and local issues, according to the majority of interview participants.

5.4.3 Vision and Goals setting of ACGs

After forming ACGs, all the BYEP alumni realized that the action of developing a vision, goal, and plan of each ACG activity was also an important factor to kick-start their ambitions. Nearly all of the alumni realized and agreed on the importance of goal-setting and having a vision for their own ACG. Therefore, they proceeded to develop a core group vision, specific goals, and activity plans as fundamental features for related ACGs. Based on interview results, the ACGs visions can be observed in a number of positive circumstances in their villages or cities, such as progress towards a peaceful, just, and green region (IP-6). They all set short term and long term goals in order to fulfil their vision, and their goals were mainly focused on the areas of youth awakening, environmental conservation, rural students education, sustainable agriculture, and community development. It is worthy to note that they paid significant attention to the issues of peace and social justice, gender equality, alternative education, appropriate technology, and ecological sustainability.

5.4.4 Individual alumni contributions and ACG community activities

ACGs initiated their movements or planned activities by concentrating on related goals. There were different activities based on local needs and ACG interests and capabilities. Their activities have taken in different forms and while some of the activities were done individually most activities were accomplished collectively. Few of the ACGs' long-term activities were supported by BYEP and partner organizations. However, they initiated many activities with their own human resources and budget. Based on interviews, ACG activities and on-going actions that were successfully completed can be identified as follows:

- * Individuals volunteering to teach in Monastic Education schools,
- * A number of senior alumni facilitate in youth trainings, workshops, or meetings organized by different ACGs and CBOs,
- * Awareness training for the young generation, such as BYMSDs, environmental awareness, and peace,
- * Skill training or vocational training, such as soap and shampoo making,
- * The workshops and conducting PRA and PAR with community members to start community development activities such as farming, and biogas for the village's electricity,
- * Technical assistance for communities such as organic agriculture, and appropriate technology,
- * Small-scale community development projects such as youth-led community vegetables shops and building bridges for the village,
- * Campaign movements such as environmental exhibitions, talk shows with famous writers, tree planting, and plastic and garbage collection,
- * Educational support for remote areas including providing educational materials for students, and establishing kindergartens in the communities,
- * Running social enterprises for ACG income generation,
- * Networking and collaborating with KMF, local NGOs and CSOs, and performing facilitative roles among different CSOs,
- * Building good relationships and maintaining communication with local government departments,
- * Conducting the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in local industry zones, such as by lessening the impact of coal mining and cement factory to the surrounding villages and farming,
- * Advocacy and community mobilizing to address land grabbing issues in tourism and hotel zones,
- * Insisting on lobbying the local government to shape the local environmental policy, rules, and regulations,

5.4.5 Individual feeling of alumni and supporting factors

By employing Appreciative Inquiry (AI) throughout this research, it is important to concentrate on the appreciation of successful individual activities and

group actions for their communities. Likewise, taking the individual's feelings and self-satisfaction into account is another important feature of AI and the empowerment process. All of the senior alumni who participated in the research mentioned a certain level of satisfaction associated with individuals' performance in related ACGs works and their individual participation in interest-based issues. In fact, working happily with fellow ACG members, their successful targeted actions, appreciation of family members, and community recognition were factors that contributed to a positive feeling in the young individuals and built up their self-confidence for future works.

Being with my team members and doing meaningful activities for the children made my life complete. The most significant and unforgettable feelings were experienced by doing environmental essay contests for schools and planting trees together with school children. Our group is now well recognized by all the primary schools in the region and is often invited to provide more activities for children (IP-6).

The empowerment of women is also perceived as an essential aspect to success in community development and the youth empowerment process. Providing awareness training of gender equality and creating opportunities for young women to participate in ACGs actions helped them to build up self-confidence. In Myanmar's society, young women are culturally portrayed as passive citizens, especially young women from rural areas. In contrast, young women from ACGs participated actively in team activities and often played the leadership role for the team and related community-mobilizing activities. One of the female interview informants stated that:

I really appreciated that my team created spaces for women in our ACG. I am one of the members of the senior management team and I am a leader of my village's youth group. In the past, it was very difficult to advocate for village leaders and community members because I was a young woman in the village. However, I can convince my village dwellers to take part in community development and environmental activities now, especially in village schools for children (IP-7).

One interviewee from the eastern part of the country stated that their ACG and ACG's activities are well recognized by the communities and local government departments from that region. Successful community mobilizing activities, environmental activities (e.g., campaigns, exhibitions, and biodiversity conservation) in the region, development awareness training for young people, and activities for school children were significant factors that ACGs have received community recognition for. ACGs used to take part in social change activities and environmental conservation movements in collaboration with local CSOs, and public education initiatives with a few local government departments. Those collaborative actions strengthened ACG participation among local CSOs and social change activities. One interview participant spoke regarding the condition of their ACG as follow:

Our group is well known by local communities and local authorities. We were requested to organize the regional youth conference put on by local communities. Also, we have successfully convinced the local authorities and senior local development associations to fix the ethnic national day of our region. Most importantly, we have successfully advocated shaping the regional tourism policy. Consequently, three to five per cent of tourist admission fees of our region will go to regional conservation funds and activities (IP-9).

5.4.6 Limitations of ACGs

There were factors that hindered accomplishing ACG activities in the targeted timeline. According to senior alumni and their evaluation, contributing factors were classified into two groups: (1) the internal limitations of each ACG and (2) the external factors that constrained ACG initiatives. Limited human resources and budget limitations for ACGs' wider activities were identified as the internal limitations. Lack of collaboration by the local authority in some areas and restricted approval for ACGs' activities were the external factors that delayed ACG activities.

The majority of ACGs faced a limited human resource issue when they get involved in community development projects because most young alumni were university students and volunteered for their groups. A significant challenge for ACGs might be that most trained young alumni had migrated to different cities in order to earn income and search for job opportunities after they graduated from high

schools and universities. Human resource and income generation were essential for group sustainability. Most of ACGs performed their tasks in the form of a social movement with plans; however, they could not continue a number of social movement activities and community development actions due to other financial burdens (e.g., campaign, exhibition, and regular educational support for children).

Most of the ACGs had to deal with local authorities in different forms. In fact, most of the alumni youths struggled to convince older people to support ACGs' social change activities, especially local authorities, because youth were perceived as a less capable group in society. Some of the village leaders and local authorities strongly prohibited youth training and environmental movements. Additionally, some youth leaders were threatened by village heads and police officers and prevented from initiating activities in the areas. One interviewee shared his experience dealing with local authorities and police officers:

About eight years ago, I went to my friends' village to help in conducting a youth awareness training similar to BYMSD. It was in the early morning, and all the training participants and training facilitators were asked to go to the city police station by village leaders. Just before starting the training, we were asked many questions individually the whole day and finally we were forced to stop the training. We could not continue the training; however, our young people became close friends and we have good and regular communication to work together for the future (IP-15).

In summary, this section noted the positive feelings alumni expressed regarding individuals' knowledge and skill development and how the majority of alumni were satisfied with ACGs' actions despite their limitations. The individuals' commitments and ACGs' collaborative actions contributed to creating spaces for the young generation in their communities and pinpointed the importance of youth in society. This section also noted that an individual's empowerment can be achieved by participating in collective social actions, and successful ACG activities were often related to individuals' capabilities. In addition, there were different methods and tools for youth development and empowerment processes such as training topics, issue-based approaches, and different social actions. One significant feature, Socially

Engaged Buddhism that encouraged young training alumni in many areas will be discussed in the following section.

5.5 Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB) and KMF alumni social engagement

This section attempts to provide the answers to the fourth research secondary question: ‘How does the concept and practice of Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB) stimulate KMF alumni social engagement in a variety of development activities in their communities?’ This section provides alumni perceptions of traditional religious teaching and the essence of SEB. Similarly, how the religious practices and SEB concepts inspired individuals to contribute their time for others are discussed. Moreover, this section covers the application of SEB concepts in individual development progress and ACG actions by alumni. Furthermore, it shows that the SEB concept can be used as an instrument for youth empowerment but that there are factors that limit the spreading out of SEB to wider audiences in the country.

5.5.1 *Alumni perceptions of traditional religious teaching, Theravada Buddhism, and SEB*

The young people who took part in this research were all Buddhists. They all stated that they have been following Buddha’s philosophy and practices. Most of them know the differences between traditional Buddhism and the essence of the Buddha’s teachings. In Myanmar, almost all the Buddhist communities follow Theravada¹⁴ Buddhism, which is based on the Buddha’s philosophy, principles, and texts written by Buddhist monks (IP-21). According to different interpretations and schools of thought, Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar is widely recognized for the principles that mainly focus on an individual’s enlightenment and self-initiative. The interviewees also explained that traditional Buddhists are just following local rituals and cultural practices rather than practicing inner development. In fact, young alumni stated that the majority of Buddhists who follow traditional Buddhism only go to monasteries for religious occasions and social ceremonies rather than for practicing Buddha Dharma and teaching in daily life. They also stated that young persons who had grown up in such environments often perceived those rituals and religious related

¹⁴ “Theravada. The work itself means *vada* or teaching of the *thera* the elders.” (Sivaraksa, 2005, p. 134).

occasions as a symbol of Buddhism rather than opportunities to attain inner transformation or peace. A young Buddhist shared his experience:

We were asked to listen to Buddha Dharma from the monks and to read Dharma books. We have been going to monasteries and pagodas with our grandparents and family members. Traditionally, we love to celebrate in religious and local festivals every year. In contrast, we have never questioned the Buddha's principles for individuals' daily actions and just follow the traditions (IP-6).

They further distinguished traditional Buddhism and the essence of the Buddha's teachings. In fact, traditional Buddhists pay more attention to the symbols and rituals but not much to the individual's transformation. For example, the basic principle known as five precepts is for laypersons but most of the traditional Buddhists do not commit to following it but actively participate in religious festivals instead. And the majority of the traditional Buddhists accepted that reciting the teachings of Buddha from the text is essential rather than practicing it in daily actions. One interview participant stated that:

The essence and the principle of Theravada Buddhism and Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB) are almost the same and they are derived from the same roots. However, religious institutions and societies interpret them in different ways. For example, in Theravada Buddhism, the five precepts are generally accepted and applied only as the principle of the individual's level, while the five precepts in SEB, reach beyond individuals' levels and usually focus on the community and structural injustice (IP-21).

They stated that SEB not only focuses on the development of individuals but also pays attention to wider issues such as social, economic, and political justice. SEB not only navigates individuals away from harming others but also encourages them to get involved in preventing others from attempting to do harm. They also highlighted that SEB reminds individuals to try to understand more about Buddha Dharma, the

individual's enlightenment or inner suffering, and collective suffering or social problems.

SEB mainly focuses on wisdom and compassion. I might say it is socially engaged spirituality, which is Buddha philosophy in social actions. Socially Engaged Buddhists are proactive and often pay attention to the reasons behind the issues and raise the question over why the issues were occurred (IP-13).

5.5.2 SEB and individuals' inspirations

All of the senior alumni who participated in this research firmly stated that SEB was one of the subjects that most inspired young people to devote their time for the sake of others. They elaborated on SEB in separate parts through examples. Firstly, SEB has stimulated individuals' transformation and development. The alumni stated that SEB concepts challenged individuals' attitudes to try positive changes in daily actions. At that same time, SEB helped to realize the individual's inner suffering as well as a particular individual's capability, which they had not noticed deeply themselves. Most significantly, SEB motivated individuals' attitudes to overcome the inner conflicts or problems by highlighting the essence of the Buddha's teachings and guiding them to practice social principles of Buddha Dharma. Individuals' potentials of young Buddhists' were polished by SEB principles for individual's development. Young alumni stated that:

In the first place, attitude change is the most obvious entry point to me for better situations at individual levels. Regarding attitude change, SEB concepts and principles were the best supporting factor to change my attitude (IP-12).

Secondly, SEB was a significant tool that contributed to the behavior change process for young people. The interview participants stated that reflecting on the Buddha's teachings and practicing Buddha's Dharma in basic daily chores much supported the process of the individual change process. It is a fact that the basic Dharma principles guided young individuals to overcome problems and issues associated with friends and family members, as well as related conflicts with the

social environment. Furthermore, they explained the point that SEB steered them to select the right paths in order to deal with specific problems and issues. For example, meditation is one of the best methods to heal inner suffering, and being mindful of speech and actions are an essential skill in communication with others (IP-13). Another interview participant shared in the interview that:

I might say that socially engaged Buddhists' way of life and their examples inspired me to change my behavior, especially in communication with family members and my colleagues. SEB often provided suitable methods for a better communication and social dealing (IP-1).

Thirdly, SEB encouraged young individuals to get involved in community works and social change actions. In fact, the fundamental concept of SEB is not only a relevant tool for individual development but also an effective tool to address structured injustices (IP-13 and IP-21). According to alumni experiences, the examples of socially engaged Buddhists who persistently get involved in social movements to tackle structural injustice inspired the young generation to understand the local and global issues. Likewise, such factors motivated alumni youth to participate in similar issues from particular areas. It is worthy to note one interviewee's perspective that SEB stimulated young individuals' enthusiasm and mindfulness to get involved in nonviolence social actions.

SEB encourages me to make the individual level changes. Similarly, its concept pulls me to join social activities with other people. Due to my work, the SEB principles help to improve my level of awareness, which has enhanced a strong connection among my work motivation and the issues, especially natural environment and ecological injustice (IP-11).

5.5.3 SEB and ACGs activities

Young alumni asserted that it is easy to organize young people who have a common understanding and similar ideas for social change activities. For instance, active youths with different backgrounds and who know SEB easily gathered for ACGs activities. They found that SEB was one of the effective organizing platforms,

which was much more likely to motivate young individuals' passion for committing their time and energy for each ACG activity.

We feel that we are on the same page when we discuss future activities of our ACG under the common understanding of SEB. We firmly decided that SEB is a compulsory topic whenever we conducted youth awareness training. It is not because we like to expand the SEB concepts but because it can bring many advantages to individuals' development and ACGs works (IP-10).

Young training alumni normally regarded SEB as a moral principle for ACG members and for their works. They clearly stated that SEB is the most effective tool for alumni, especially for senior alumni, and that SEB guided them to make the right decisions regarding ACG activities. For example, they decided to conduct youth awareness training for personal development with limitations and restriction by local authorities. Furthermore, they organized campaign movements for environmental conservation in industrial zones, and grassroots mobilizing activities with local CSOs to address land-grabbing issues. Similarly, a number of experienced alumni used SEB as conflict resolution and community development tools when working with different CSOs and grassroots communities.

We used SEB principles to have a balance among work and ourselves when we face controversial circumstances and issues regarding our values, ethics, and morality. We found that SEB principles helped us to make sharp consensus decisions for our ACGs' values and works (IP-15).

I used to facilitate workshops for the local Buddhist leaders and community members in my areas when they failed to understand each other. With the guidance of SEB principles, I helped them to not grow inner hatred and helped them to realize the real issues behind local religious problems (IP-5).

5.5.4 SEB and limitations in the country

A number of interview participants argued that SEB needs to be transferred to the young generation in various ways. In fact, very limited resources on SEB were available in Myanmar. For example, many alumni stated that not many translated books and papers about SEB are available for the readers, and the majority of young people have language barriers hindering further learning on SEB. There is an online platform for alumni; however, it provides very limited information and resources about SEB and it is difficult for youths from remote areas to access the Internet. One interview participant argued that using multiple platforms to distribute SEB is necessary for wider audiences. He also stated that it would likely bring much positive impact to the young generation if SEB would be mainstreamed in formal media and online informal media. Many senior alumni stated that religious leaders play an essential role in delivering the essence of the Buddha's teachings and SEB concepts. However, only a limited number of monks and nuns are actively participating in transferring their knowledge and practices regarding SEB (IP-13). They also stated that SEB was introduced by neighboring countries and only a few social activists have been practicing and delivering SEB in Myanmar's society until recently.

5.6 Synopsis

The findings from this research showed the individuals and collective empowerment progress of young alumni. It is obvious that awareness training and leadership training were the most effective techniques to raise individual awareness levels, and skills to do something for others. Alumni core groups and their commitments to their communities and social change activities indicated the meaningful contribution of youth to the society and underlined the vital role of young generations for the future. Similarly, this study identified the limitations of youth-led activities based on the experiences of young individuals and ACG activities. Moreover, this chapter explained how the SEB assists individual empowerment and ACG works. It can be noted that SEB is the heart of the youth empowerment process and principles for youth activities in Myanmar, even though a number of limitations in SEB were documented. The next chapter moves on to discuss how the study findings are related to the existing literature on empowerment, youth empowerment models, SEB in the empowerment process, and empowerment programs of development agencies.

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Chapter Six: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The research findings presented in Chapter Five were based on perspectives and experiences of targeted interview participants. This chapter discusses research findings in relation to the existing literature presented in Chapter Two. The meaning of ‘empowerment’ in the Myanmar context revealed similarities and differences to what mainstream literature has suggested. This chapter will discuss the nature of youth development as well as the relevance of youth empowerment models in general. Similarly, this chapter particularly discusses the significant contribution of SEB to the youth empowerment process in Myanmar. Likewise, the principles of SEB provide three main areas in the process of empowerment: individual, community, and structural reform. A number of similarities between youth empowerment models and SEB are briefly discussed. Furthermore, this chapter argues that the interventions of development agencies and their empowerment programs need to be redesigned based on local contexts in order to fulfil the needs of targeted beneficiaries and the youth empowerment process in particular.

6.2 Empowerment

This section discusses the meaning of empowerment, which is commonly accepted and understood by research informants as contributing factors to the empowerment process. It is stated that the definition of empowerment is defined differently in the field of social and community development (Hennink et al., 2012; MacKenzie, 2009; Peterson, 2014; Soler Maso et al., 2017). It is not because of a particular concept of empowerment used in different areas of social and scientific environments, but because it had been mainstreamed and applied in many areas of human development and used for many purposes without modification (Úcar Martínez et al., 2017). Perkins and Zimmerman (1995) state that many of the existing documents written about empowerment fail to connect with theory and evidence-based research. Similarly, the existing literature was published defining empowerment based on secondary data with less substantive evidence (Hennink et al., 2012).

In Myanmar, the word ‘empowerment’ is widely used in development projects by development agencies, such as the UN, INGOs and their programs, and LNGOs.

Almost all of the interview participants stated that no definite meaning of empowerment is defined in the Myanmar context, even though most young alumni generally learned the concept of empowerment. The interview participants stated that the concept of empowerment in the country had come together with community development projects, women's issues, and child development projects. They also stated that in the development agencies programs and projects, there were different understandings of empowerment among the program implementers and program beneficiaries while the word 'empowerment' is interpreted differently in local languages. It is likely that different factors contribute to the vague meaning of empowerment in Myanmar.

Empowerment is an ongoing process of the individuals, group of people, and a process of community development (UNSDN, 2012). Empowerment can also be defined the process of organizational development and social changes (Hennink et al., 2012; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Rappaport, 1984) and the results or outcomes of particular process (Christens & Peterson, 2012; Parpart, 2014; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Swift & Levin, 1987).

All the interview participants presented their perspectives on defining empowerment in similar ways to existing literature and documents. Based on empirical observations and experiences of the alumni, they stated that empowerment is more likely perceived in the form of a process for individuals' development and positive behavior change for their lives. For example, upgrading individuals' knowledge and providing interpersonal skills for young people in the BYEP training directly contributed to the individual development (IP-16). One interview participant from KMF stated that it is not simple to indicate how a young person had acquired knowledge and changed their attitude, but it is an ongoing process and can be seen in individual's commitment and active participation in social change activities. Similarly, interview participants distinguished empowerment as a result or outcome of organizational and community actions. ACGs planned actions, and collaborations with partner organizations were the outcomes of organizational empowerment (IP-2 and IP-3). Similarly, the community mobilizing and advocacy activities with grassroots communities for wider local issues can be considered outcomes of the ongoing empowerment process (IP-13).

The research results partially support the existing work of literature on defining empowerment based on Myanmar's context. The fact is that empowerment is

not likely to be described simply in one specific definition and it is most likely to be accepted with vague meanings due to diverse local contexts, perspectives, and other contributing factors (Hennink et al., 2012; MacKenzie, 2009; Peterson, 2014; Soler Maso et al., 2017). This research also highlights related factors that need to be taken into consideration in defining empowerment and the empowerment process, such as cultural practices, societal settings, and religious principles, SEB in particular.

6.3 Youth and Development

Youth are accepted as the future leaders for their communities and society. However, it is argued that there are a growing number of youth who are struggling with poverty, have less opportunity to attain basic and practical education, are involved in violence and crime, and face several other social problems (Morrison et al., 1997). These situations were commonly found in studies on developing and underdeveloped countries (UNDP, 2014; UNDP, 2016a). Youth issues have gained attention and need to be addressed (UNDP, 2014) and youth development principles and frameworks have been developed for youth issues (Hamilton et al., 2004).

The majority of the interview participants acknowledged youth development concepts such as skill building, knowledge gaining, and attitude and behavior changing through youth development programs. However, they also stated that most components of youth development were organized and steered by government departments, development organizations, and their projects. Therefore, beneficiaries had likely no opportunity to understand the whole process of youth development. Moreover, according to interviewees, such youth development programs and projects were normally run only for the short-term in a few areas and rarely found in most of the research locations. Such findings support the argument that most youth problems and issues are solved by development actors from the outside of the community (Hamilton et al., 2004; Zeldin, 2004).

Myanmar's society traditionally accepts that youth possess lower social status in the community and youth issues and their social problems receive less attention in the development programs (IP-3, IP-13, and IP-21). For instance, local community leaders, local government authorities, and development agencies rarely listened to the voices of young people and there were fewer chances for young people to participate in community and social change activities, according to the majority of interview participants. The research findings also support the argument that only a few youth

participants were invited to join in youth development programs organized by development agencies (Brennan et al., 2007; Christens & Dolan, 2010).

6.4 Youth empowerment and existing empowerment models

This section discusses youth empowerment models in relation to literature review presented in Chapter Two. The concept of empowerment has been mainstreamed and used for young people who live with difficult circumstances in their lives (Christens & Peterson, 2012; Parpart, 2014; Soler Maso et al., 2017; Úcar Martínez et al., 2017). Furthermore, other scholars argue that young individuals can be empowered by contributing their efforts to social work and their time for their community (Chinman & Linney, 1998).

The Youth Development and Empowerment program model (YD&E) refers to the process of youth empowerment based on meaningful youth engagement in community projects and social services (Jennings et al., 2006; Kim et al., 1998). The aim of the YD&E process is to upgrade youths' capabilities and to prepare youths to participate in local and community affairs. The research findings highlighted that the activities on raising awareness and capacity building of individual and ACGs levels are the fundamental factors for the young generation. All the interview participants stated that providing knowledge and skill was the main factor in changing their attitude and behaviors. Likewise, through the empowerment process, alumni were educated in particular subjects or interest-based topics through different types of BYEP activities which enabled them to participate in community activities (IP-3, IP-9, and IP-12).

It is argued that youths are assets or resources for the community and that spaces for youths should be created enable them to get involved in community and social actions (Jennings et al., 2006). All the interview participants accepted the previous notion of youth; however, it is difficult to generalize such a perception for traditional society (IP-2, IP-3, IP-6, IP-9, IP-13, and IP-21). This research supports findings in relation to the existing YD&E model, which shows an important aspect in the youth empowerment process that traditional societies fail to create space for the young generation and offer fewer opportunities to address social problems of young people.

In the YD&E model, community support, supportive adults, and encouragement from family members are important factors for a young generation to

make positive individual changes (Jennings et al., 2006; Kim et al., 1998). According to alumni, assistance by adults such as village leaders, abbots, or well-known persons of the community has helped in the process of individual development and collective community works or ACG activities. In contrast, they also stated that little or no support from family members and the community hindered the process of the individual development of youths and often stopped individuals from attaining youth empowerment, an aspect supported by Morrison et al., (1997).

Building a good relationship between youth and adults in order to generate a friendly environment is one of the focuses of *the Transactional Partnering model (TP)* (Jennings et al., 2006; Cargo et al., 2003). Moreover, Jennings et al., (2006) state that power-sharing and improving the participatory competence among youths and adults for community actions are basic principles in the TP model. According to ACGs and alumni, it is noted that many ACG activities had more potential to be accomplished where there was support and cooperation from senior adults in the community. Alumni often found that a good relationship with elder peoples and a welcoming environment encouraged them to join community services, make individual changes, and participate in ACGs activities.

The TP model primarily focuses on the interconnections between the individual's participation and the outcomes of collective actions in the community (Jennings et al., 2006). The positive feelings of alumni associated with successful individuals initiatives and collective social change projects were the primary factors in changing their behavior. Research participants normally stated that successful situations of individuals or peer ACG activities were what motivated them. A number of research informants built strong friendships with other ACG members and presented contrasting perspectives they had learned after many lessons through the experience of unsuccessful social actions and obstacles, even though there were no outcomes from the collective actions. These research findings contribute to the existing TP model by providing two different learning experiences of young alumni: (1) not only successful outcomes contribute to the empowerment process but so do lessons learned and (2) challenges can be transformed into an opportunity for youth empowerment.

The Empowerment Education model (EE) emphasizes upgrading individual knowledge and skills of young persons, which enables youths to participate in related social change actions (Wallerstein et al., 2005). The EE model also looks at the link

between the individual's empowerment and social activities, as well as policy level engagement (Jennings et al., 2006). It was noted that the level of an individual's knowledge and capability are fundamental in accomplishing ACG activities or community works (IP-2, IP-9, IP-11, and IP-13). In fact, individual development is a stepping stone to youth commitment to interest-based issues and motivation to address injustice in social systems. It can be seen that the local level environmental policy was shaped by community mobilizing and advocacy activities of empowered young people (IP-2, IP-9, and IP-6).

Each model focuses on particular areas of empowerment for young generations and a combination of those models might likely provide the perfect complement to the youth empowerment model (Úcar Martínez et al., 2017). It is not a simple test to identify a clear-cut youth empowerment model in KMF's empowerment program. Because the differing nature of individual development patterns and similarities in collective social change actions and empowerment models were observed. Furthermore, most of the KMF alumni activities were in progress at the time of this research. This observation supports the previous argument for developing a combination of youth empowerment models. In addition, Hennink et al., (2012) also assert that understanding youth empowerment models and adopting existing empowerment models might bring advantages to the young generation.

6.5 Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB)

Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB) provides Buddha's philosophy and teachings on attaining a level of awareness of an individual's sufferings and offers the Buddha way of life and social principles to every person (Main & Lai, 2018; Sivaraksa, 2009). The SEB concept also provides other important aspects of collective sufferings and injustices of the society to each and every individual (Sivaraksa, 2005a, 2005b, 2009). Therefore, it can be noted that SEB covers three levels for a better transformation: individual, community, and structural reform.

The SEB concept and principles can be recognized as a set of development principles and an empowerment model for social activists, particularly young individuals. In fact, this research found that SEB has a clear connection to individual development and empowerment models. SEB typically helped the inner development of individual young persons and helped them to make positive behaviour change before they work for their society (IP-6, IP-11, IP-12, and IP-21). For instance, KMF

alumni were motivated to look at personal inner conflicts and to address them using SEB concepts. Likewise, alumni often found solutions to individual inner development and transformation by SEB. This evidence clearly proves previous perceptions of Sivaraksa (2005a, 2005b) that SEB empowers individuals to be aware of their own inner sufferings and to eradicate those sufferings step by step. KMF alumni who participated in this research firmly stated that SEB was guidance for young people and one of the most inspired topics among BYEP training subjects. For instance, senior alumni stated that the principle of SEB is a foundational feature that changes the level of an individual's attitude and stimulates an individual's commitment to help others. Furthermore, principles of SEB clearly assisted in the behavior change process of young training alumni.

Similarly, this research showed that SEB is fundamental to the social cohesion of a group of young Buddhist alumni and to tackling related community problems and local issues. It turns out that young people who were inspired by SEB gathered together to initiate services for their communities, despite not having concrete plans in the early stages of their activities. Such findings show that like-minded groups were developed under the SEB concepts and principles. Moreover, research participants stated that individual and ACG activities were mostly accomplished under the guidance of SEB principles, which were explained in Chapter Five. Furthermore, senior alumni who lead ACG and facilitate team members mainly use the concepts and apply principles of SEB in their ACG activities.

It can also be noted that SEB has encouraged groups of young people to actively participate in addressing communal problems and local environmental issues in their areas (IP-9, IP-11, IP-13, and IP-15). As a positive consequence, there are many ACG activities and social movements with local communities, which aim to tackle particular community and environmental problems. This alumni experience underlined the significance of SEB's contribution to social activism and collective movements: the Dhammayietra walks for peace-building of Cambodia (Haynes, 2008; Sivaraksa, 2005b), the Sarvodaya community movements from Sri Lanka (Sivaraksa, 2005b; Wilson, 1996), and the environmental movements of northern Thailand (Isager & Ivarsson, 2002; Sivaraksa, 2005b).

Individual and communal initiatives are foundational components in challenging social problems, economic and structural injustice, and environmental problems (Sivaraksa, 2005a). Many participants stated that one of the aims of the SEB

is to encourage people, individually or collectively, to take part in tackling wider social issues and systems. The majority of KMF alumni and ACGs had embarked on activities of this nature, despite constraints including the country's political instability, ethnic and armed conflicts, and oppression by local authorities. In this case, senior alumni stated that SEB provides a foundation to address nationwide problems and global injustice, but that there were many limitations for young people to reform structural injustices and they somehow needed alternatives. For instance, a few research participants argued that young people need support from local communities to keep up the momentum of their social change movements through the process of empowerment. For example, they stated that they need more moral supports from senior and experienced adults as a means to bring out more youth participation for further activities.

Furthermore, a critical argument of senior alumni was that countrywide movements and external collaborations such as the nationwide youth networks, religious associations from neighboring countries, and regional and global SEB networks are needed to address broader local problems and global injustice issues. One KMF staff person stressed the fact that a majority of alumni were focusing on individual empowerment and ACG level activities associated with SEB concepts. Similarly, senior NGO workers and experienced social workers who participated in this research also suggested that young alumni might need to participate collectively in broader issues by following SEB principles.

6.6 SEB and youth empowerment models

A number of SEB approaches for youth empowerment are classified and it seems that they are nearly identical to the youth empowerment models discussed in Chapter Two. Similarities between SEB and empowerment models are observed and discussed in three levels: individual, individual and community levels, and structural changes.

Firstly, in the individual level, both the AEC model and SEB assist the enhancement of self-actualization and self-esteem (Sivaraksa, 2005a, 2005b), and address the rolelessness of young persons in their lives (Chinman, & Linney, 1998; Jennings et al., 2006). Moreover, SEB (Sivaraksa, 2005a, 2005b), the AEC model, and the YD&E model (Jennings et al., 2006) encourage young individuals to get involved in meaningful community actions and to achieve community recognition for

their efforts. SEB and the EE model have similar focuses and principles on the development of individual knowledge and skills of youths (Sivaraksa, 2005a), which prepare young people to contribute to social change actions (Wallerstein et al., 2005).

Secondly, the SEB principles, which were practiced by KMF alumni at the community level, are similar to youth empowerment models. For example, the AEC model (Jennings et al., 2006; Úcar Martínez et al., 2017), the YD&E model (Jennings et al., 2006; Kim et al., 1998) and the activism of socially engaged Buddhists (Sivaraksa, 2005a, 2005b) generate youth participation in socioeconomic and community affairs. Both SEB and the TP model (Jennings et al., 2006; Cargo et al., 2003) focus on the interrelatedness of individuals and related community in the empowerment process and outcome in the TP model.

Thirdly, the TP model (Jennings et al., 2006) and SEB concepts (Sivaraksa, 2005a, 2005b) challenge society to recognize the role of young people and take part in the process of power-sharing among senior adults and youths in the traditional society and community works. Likewise, SEB and the EE model support initiations that encourage young individuals and groups of young people to shape related local policy as well as collaboration among youths and adults (Sivaraksa, 2005b; Úcar Martínez et al., 2017).

On one hand, there are advantages to there being similarity between SEB and youth empowerment models. On the other hand, this study found boundaries in both the process of youth empowerment and SEB in Myanmar. First of all, the positive impacts of youth empowerment models might be less likely to occur for young people if the models were applied without modification in particular country contexts. The country contexts may vary due to a variety of factors, such as cultural diversity, different religions and faiths, socioeconomic situations, levels of public education, the participation of local authorities, and cooperation of NGOs and CSOs (IP-13 and IP-21). Second, the adaptation in youth empowerment models might bring advantages to young people since each model was developed for a specific purpose (Úcar Martínez et al., 2017). For instance, developing suitable youth empowerment models in the Myanmar context might necessitate considering the aspects of religious practice, rituals of ethnic faiths, traditional practices, and local resources. Third, SEB has accepted the Buddha's teachings or religious based principles. Therefore, it has limitations in reaching out to young people from different faiths and religions, even though SEB is not only open to young Buddhists (IP-13 and IP-21). Another

limitation is that the religious leaders and the people who deliver SEB to young generations are too preoccupied to create appropriate knowledge transfer methods; however, a limited number of people are contributing albeit with restrictions (IP-21).

6.7 Development Agencies and empowerment initiatives

The trend of NGOs and their works to beneficiaries has changed in accordance with conventional development progress and aid from donor agencies (Rugendyke, 2014; Sidaway, 2014). Based on the interview participants' experiences, similar situations of NGOs' trends were observed in this research area. On one hand, they stated that active young people faced difficulty adapting to and following INGO and NOG program agendas; in particular, ACGs experienced many constraints dealing with NGO support. They argued that development aid and NGO programs somehow should be delivered in the form of empowering youth-led associations or small organizations rather than only by implementing their agendas with conditionality. On the other hand, one research participant who is working for one INGO stated that the nature of the youth empowerment process is complicated due to eagerness and interests of individual youths, especially with regards to their collective social change actions.

It is noted that there were different values and development approaches between ACGs and INGOs when working together. In fact, INGO projects were program-based approaches while ACGs performed their activities in the form of social movements (IP-2, IP-3, and IP-9). Young people are eager to implement their development actions based on their interests such as environmental campaigns and youth development awareness training, whilst INGOs pay more attention to the organization's planned programs on infrastructure and public health (IP-3 and IP-15). Similarly, NGO programs were normally implemented under organizational rules and regulations, which often caused tension between them and young people who often prefer flexibility and freedom in their work (IP-2 and IP-3). Gready (2010) also discusses a similar argument in his papers, that such situations often hindered the collaborations of NGOs and youth-led groups in many activities.

Similarly, many ACGs were treated as the least experienced groups in the community and given less priority for support by donor agencies, INGOs, and even LNGOs, according to senior alumni who participated in this research. This kind of situation creates a low level of trust among local youth-led social organizations and

development agencies (IP-10, IP-12, and IP-16). This research finding supports previous literature, which stated that several NGOs program activities and development aid often did not cover the area of youth empowerment and failed to support youth-led initiations (Gready, 2010; Trinidad & Ghosh, 2006). Such weak collaboration and assistance by development agencies were some of the factors that encouraged young people to develop youth-led organizations (Gready, 2010) and strengthen organizational structures using their own resources (IP-21). However, a contrasting argument was noted when networks with different associations and cooperation with development organizations encouraged youths to engage in community work and social activities (Christens & Dolan, 2010; Vera et al., 2016).

All senior alumni who participated in this research explained the transition process and the nature of KMF programs as well as the nature of ACGs. In fact, KMF implemented the youth empowerment program as a pilot program for a certain period. After that KMF focused more on its planned organizational program and community mobilizing activities (IP-2 and IP-13). Almost all the senior alumni in this research stated that KMF offered a low level of collaboration, communication, and support to ACGs after its organizational structure was changed. This finding supports the argument about organizational structures and their impact on beneficiaries by Schwartz and Suyemoto (2012), which states that different organizations and their program affect the youth empowerment process differently.

Developing appropriate development models and tools and empowering human resources are essential to overcoming the limitations of previous mainstream development principles and practices (Elliott, 2014; Parpart, 2014). Similarly, senior alumni argued that there is a need to develop more inclusive youth empowerment models and principles based on SEB concepts. They also recommended KMF to develop a comprehensive empowerment model and set of principles for Myanmar's young generation. Furthermore, more alumni suggestions were noted during the interviews, which mainly proposed KMF to reflect on its capacity, structure, and program design in order to create more collaboration with ACGs, rather than focusing only on organizational programs. In the same vein, interview participants argued that KMF staff were more likely to pay attention to the accomplishments of planned projects and it is firmly stated that SEB concepts and principles might need to be incorporated into and practiced more in particular KMF projects.

6.8 Synopsis

This chapter discussed the meaning of empowerment in Myanmar and global contexts. In Myanmar, the word ‘empowerment’ has been perceived as a popular concept and principle comprised of Western development approaches. Moreover, it has been interpreted to have various meanings due to local contexts. KMF training alumni accepted that empowerment is an ongoing process and it can help produce outcome or results of a particular process. The research findings and some researchers discussed the importance of youth and youth development in their communities. However, youth development and youth issues were normally given low priority in society. Youth development actions were implemented by development actors or outsiders, rather than by the youth themselves, which differs from the youth empowerment process. Youth empowerment models aimed to address particular youth issues and encouraged youth to get involved in social change actions but the combination of empowerment models more likely contributed to the youth empowerment process. Moreover, SEB provides Buddhist concepts and social principles for individual development, the process of community empowerment (e.g., ACGs’ social activities and community mobilizing movements), and collective actions to tackle structural injustices. Furthermore, this chapter covered the factors that hindered SEB in reality, especially in Myanmar’s context. This chapter also discussed the corresponding concept and approaches in SEB and youth empowerment models for the young generation. The different nature of social change movements by youth-led associations and program based development aid and agencies were significant factors, which need to be taken into consideration in the youth empowerment process. Finally, this chapter presented alumni recommendations for KMF staff and alumni associated with SEB and the youth empowerment process.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Overview of the research

This chapter recaps the research findings and discussions, which presented the nature of youth empowerment in Myanmar based on KMF's empowerment program and ACG social change initiatives, as well as SEB in the empowerment process. It also outlines the contributions of the youth empowerment models and development approaches. Finally, research limitations and areas for further exploration are presented in this chapter.

The central objective of this research was to examine youth empowerment by a youth-led development organization's programs and social cohesion of its alumni in social change activities in Myanmar. It attempted to explore youth empowerment and to identify the different forms of youth empowerment associated with SEB in the country. The question of relevance was raised and classified by examining the nature of KMF's youth empowerment programs for targeted alumni and the contribution of SEB in the youth empowerment process. The research focused on youth empowerment models that had been mainstreamed and used in a global context and pinpointed the distinctive features of the youth empowerment process in Myanmar. In addition, the research indicated what needs to be adopted and done in order to ensure youth empowerment is an appropriate instrument for individuals and social transformation, as well as a suitable tool for development agencies.

Through social constructivist epistemology and a transformational change methodology known as Appreciative Inquiry (AI), the research was able to provide more understanding of social phenomena; for example, the empowerment process and transformation of individuals, organizations, and a group of young Buddhists. AI also provided optimistic worldviews and an alternative to the youth empowerment pattern, the process of youth-led development programs, and youth initiatives in social change activities. The research was able to discuss why and how groups of Buddhist youth have worked to contribute to their communities, what their inspirations and motivating factors to get involved in collective movements are and how the KMF empowerment program assisted young individuals and ACGs in the empowerment process. Relatedly, this study discussed how SEB concepts and principles stimulated the enthusiasm of young individuals for social change activities and assisted in youth-

led organizations and their collective activities. Youth perspectives on the characteristics of youth empowerment and their feelings regarding the individual and collective empowerment processes in this research showed that it is necessary to pay attention to alternative development ideas for young generations and the youth empowerment process.

The empirical experience of young Buddhists based on their social cohesion and community development activities in this research challenged the conventional society and their perception of youth as well as conventional empowerment activities for young generations by the society. Moreover, this research stressed the role of the aid of providers and NGOs' approaches to the country's development progress as well as their limitations to youth empowerment. For instance, a group of young people showed that youth play a significant role, and through their contributions to related communities had many positive impacts on society. Furthermore, the inspiration and experience of the younger generation provided a series of questions on the nature of NGOs, their community development projects, and aid programs. Similarly, it provided the important message to the youth empowerment program to synchronize empowerment models with SEB concepts and principles for the young generation and in local contexts.

7.2 Summary of findings and discussion

Much literature argued that empowerment is perceived as an ongoing process in most circumstances; for instance, the empowerment of young people can be noted as a series of positive actions in their lives (Christens & Peterson, 2012; Konenberg, 2007; Labonte, 1989; Soler Maso et al., 2017). Likewise, empowerment is classified as the outputs or outcomes of the process in some areas of social study. For example, the positive outcomes of youth-led social initiatives and youth-led organizational projects are measurable and have brought the individual development of young people and community development (Hennink et al., 2012; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Peterson, 2014; Swift & Levin, 2987). Findings of this study also asserted that youth empowerment in Myanmar can be seen as a spontaneous process with and without external factors or aid. It can also be seen in the outcomes of attempts based on KMF empowerment programs and the communal activities and social movements of groups of young Buddhists. Therefore, it is likely that different perceptions and

circumstances of youth empowerment associated with various interpretations and discourses could be found in the field of community development and social research.

One of the aims of this study was to emphasize the significant roles of youth and their contribution to society, which had been lost in Myanmar's society for many years. The research confirmed that self-development and empowerment are essential not only for young individuals but are also important for the future of society. The voluntary work and communal activities of Buddhist youth showed that youth are one of the essential parts of the society (Schusler & Krasny, 2008; UNDP, 2014a) and the importance of youth was characterized by means of particular efforts or various contributions to the society (Trinidad & Ghosh, 2006). However, there were many youth issues that normally received much less public attention and youth empowerment often was given low priority among other social issues, especially in Third World countries (South, 2008; UNDP, 2014; UNDP, 2016a).

The research showed that the organizations that are run by and for youth offered learning opportunities and created spaces for the young generation. More precisely, the study revealed the nature of a youth-led development foundation, the organizational ethos associated with SEB, alternative ways of delivering services to young Buddhists, and how the youth empowerment process is shaped by a group of youth for targeted young persons. The study also observed the nature of development agencies and aid programs as well as their interventions and projects, which had been run with much conditionality.

Many aspects of SEB in the youth empowerment process were substantially recognized in Myanmar's context. SEB particularly offers individual development and empowerment principles, and encourages the inner transformation of individuals (King, 2009; Sivaraksa, 2005b; Vesely-Flad, 2017). Moreover, it stimulates collective enthusiasm for social change movements and challenges institutional and structural injustices in the areas of social aspects, politics, and the economy of the country (King, 2009; Main & Lai, 2018; Sivaraksa, 2005b, 2009; Vesely-Flad, 2017). This research discovered that SEB is not only applicable to youth empowerment but also to community development programs.

This study set out four secondary questions to respond to the aim of the research. Brief accounts of the main points were discussed under the respective questions in order to support the central research question.

1. How has the KMF program strengthened the individual development of targeted young people?

In order to strengthen the individual development of Buddhist youth, KMF provided the Buddhist Youth Meeting for Spiritual Development (BYMSD) and the Buddhist Youth Leadership Training (BYLT) in different areas. BYMSDs and BYLTs promoted the interest and commitment of youths in social actions and empowered them to organize socially engaged activities by providing knowledge, raising awareness in young people about local and global issues, and providing required skills to take part in related social change actions and community development projects. Follow-up capacity building activities assisted the development process of individual young Buddhists, such as interest-based skill training, internship programs and fellowship supports, small grants for alumni initiatives, and reading materials for particular issues and topics.

2. How has the KMF program strengthened the organizational development of Alumni Core Groups (ACGs) to become Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)?

After providing the related training and follow up activities for individual alumni and ACGs for a certain period, KMF reflected on the pilot empowerment program and devoted time to designing programs focused on the development of ACGs. Based on alumni agreements, BYMSDs and BYLTs were conducted by following the project period timeline and follow-up plans proceeded to support the development of ACGs. KMF provided training for its alumni to assist with the organizational development of ACGs, and provided networks to a number of INGOs, LNGOs, and CSOs, as well as some donor agencies and government departments. Small-scale project funds by KMF assisted ACGs to start their interest-based initiatives. KMF facilitated the Annual Alumni Assembly (AAA) for six years and a nationwide alumni network was formed following the recommendation of ACGs for the forthcoming countrywide social change movements.

3. How do research participants perceive the Alumni Core Groups' social cohesion and community development work in their areas?

The majority of the young alumni were satisfied with the individual and ACG social movements and community development actions for their communities. The

ACGs' empowerment actions created a space for fellow young people to acquire new knowledge and develop life skills. Furthermore, ACGs often provided opportunities for youth to actively participate in social and community movements. Consequently, there were varying levels of individual empowerment progress in targeted young people after participating in collective activities by ACGs. Similarly, the intra-organizational empowerment and inter-organizational empowerment of ACGs in research areas signified the progress of organizational level empowerment. The nature of ACGs' social and community development actions was based on the participatory approach and movement towards interest-based issues, which gave the flexibility and freedom to ACGs even though there were limitations for ACGs and their activities.

4. How does the concept and practice of “Socially Engaged Buddhism” (SEB) stimulate social engagement of KMF alumni in a variety of development activities for their communities?

There are two concepts of SEB that have stimulated young Buddhists: individual development and collective social change engagement. Firstly, SEB challenges young Buddhists to contemplate the nature of traditional Buddhism and encourages young individuals to practice the essence of the Buddha's teachings. Furthermore, SEB stimulates young people's inner transformation and personal development by looking at their own inner suffering, and in order to understand an individual's strength and limitations. Also, SEB provides Buddha Dharma for individuals to deal with their inner problems and issues. Secondly, SEB helps young people to realize the communal suffering and structured injustices in society and offers Buddhist principles to initiate collective actions to address those suffering and injustices. Consequently, the enthusiasm of young Buddhists was stimulated to get them involved in social change actions and community development activities.

The findings of this research, the discussion points of the study, and the summary of four secondary questions have contributed to the core research question:

How does the KMF's program intervention aim to empower its program alumni to become socially engaged for social transformation and get involved in the country's development sectors in Myanmar?

This is the heart of this thesis, which stressed the role of young people in Myanmar and underlined the significance of youth-led empowerment for social change movements, as well as alternative pathways to youth empowerment and community development in Myanmar. Furthermore, this study provided important facts necessitating the process of youth empowerment in Myanmar.

7.3 Research contributions

This research reveals that there is a new dimension of youth empowerment in Myanmar. This suggests that not only mainstream youth empowerment models are applicable but that different forms of youth empowerment occur and are beneficial. This research also confirms that there is no clear-cut meaning of empowerment due to various circumstances of and interpretations by different people, and that empowerment is comprised of several contributing factors, including different local and global contexts, cultural settings, and social practices.

More importantly, this research is significant for bridging the concepts and principles of SEB and youth empowerment in Myanmar. This is the most significant contribution to broadly used empowerment models and conventional community development approaches in development history. The research clearly asserts that SEB is a youth empowerment approach and principle in line with conventional youth empowerment models. The findings, on the contrary, suggest that SEB can be seen as one of the alternative youth empowerment approaches and is an independent principle for individuals, collective development initiatives and the empowerment process. This study asserts that religious teachings and principles naturally assist the individual empowerment process and provide social approaches to tackle communal issues and global problems.

The results of this research show that the young generation is an essential human resource for a country's development progress. This study points out several factors regarding the individual efforts of youths and their collective contributions to their respective communities even though youths efforts in their society were recognized as being relatively insignificant. This research aims to inform society that there are many problems for the younger generation, especially people from underdeveloped and developing countries. Likewise, this research shows that the young generation has significant potential to improve the future.

Similarly, this study confirms the substantial role of youth-led development organizations in assisting young generations and the importance of youth-led social change initiatives. More specifically, the research provides the benefit of the alternative community development approach or participatory learning and youth empowerment by youth-led organizations, which challenges the nature of conventional community development agencies and their aid programs. Additionally, the findings contribute an alternative way of thinking on empowerment to the conventional development perspectives and principles.

7.4 Limitations and areas for further research

A number of limitations and constraints were encountered in this research, despite being successfully conducted. Firstly, access to information and statistics on the country, especially for youth, was very limited. It was a factor that restricted my understanding of the diverse nature of youths from different areas, their roles, and social status in their communities. Similarly, there was a limited body of literature and research in the field of youth empowerment, especially youth empowerment in Myanmar.

Secondly, the 12-month time frame of the research and fieldwork limited my research scope and methods. I used only semi-structured interviews to collect data, even though I believed that the nature of my study could contribute more findings if more research (e.g. participant observation, focus group discussions, and participatory visual methods) were used in the fieldwork. Moreover, due to time limitations, this research could not cover distinct voices of youth from different religious backgrounds, or reach young people from war-affected areas and ethnic youths from isolated mountainous areas, where different perceptions and situations on youth empowerment might likely be discovered. This could be an area of further research on youth and the youth empowerment process.

Thirdly, the research was conducted by using the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach, which is not a problem-based methodology and does not attempt to fix problems (Creswell 2014; Reed, 2007). For instance, AI does not attempt to look for the problems of youth or issues around youth empowerment, which need be solved by development theories and principles (Reed, 2007). However, AI takes youth problems and empowerment issues into account for further research and actions. This research, therefore, did not pay greater attention to the problems of KMF, ACG activities, and

social problems of young individuals. Nevertheless, this research showed a number of significant youth issues and the requirements of the empowerment model in Myanmar's contexts. It is clear that more research on youth empowerment is necessary in order to identify the root causes of youth problems associated with social, educational, political and economic issues, as well as to develop solutions for individuals and collective problems in Myanmar.

Finally, this research was based on the perspective that empowerment as an ongoing process rather than outputs and outcomes of any process (Christens & Peterson, 2012; Koenig, 2007; Labonte, 1989; Soler Maso et al., 2017). Therefore, the outcomes of the KMF's empowerment program and ACG activities often had not been identified and documented in detail. Further research might be conducted by focusing on outputs and impacts of youth empowerment, which might offer a slightly different aspect of youth empowerment.

7.5 In closing

This thesis has explored the process of empowerment from youth-led social change movements. It focuses on the youth empowerment program of the Kalyana Mitta Development Foundation and its alumni-led Alumni Core Groups and their social change actions in related communities. The KMF empowerment programs and ACGs actions both provided a great deal of information regarding the situation of the younger generation and the youth empowerment process. Moreover, they both underscored significant aspects that need to be taken into consideration for youth empowerment in Myanmar's context, such as the role of the younger generation in the traditional society, the substantial role of youth-led organizations, and their community development movements and youth empowerment initiatives. This study of youth empowerment also shows the essence of Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB), which is perceived as one of the fundamental pillars in Myanmar's youth empowerment process, as it generates enthusiasm and provides principles for individuals' development of and collective social change movements for youth in the country. Likewise, the concepts of SEB and alternative development practices of groups of young Buddhists have challenged the conventional development approaches and made known the facts to put forward a holistic perspective of empowerment.

This research represents life experiences, perspectives, and feelings of groups of young Buddhists from Myanmar who commit themselves for the sake of others and

practice SEB in their daily activities. Moreover, this research embodies the empirical experiences of development workers with and voices of dissent with regards to youth and youth empowerment. The insightful and active participation of targeted research participants has enriched this thesis by enabling me to conduct in-depth research on youth and to draw a conclusion for youth empowerment. Altogether, I hope this thesis will contribute to youth empowerment process of individuals and collective youth-led social change movements, and further youth empowerment actions by NGOs, CSOs, FBOs in Myanmar.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1 Human ethics approval



Phone 0-4-463 6028
Email judith.loveridge@vuw.ac.nz

MEMORANDUM

TO	Thu Maung Soe
FROM	Dr Judith Loveridge, Convenor, Human Ethics Committee
DATE	4 May 2018
PAGES	1
SUBJECT	Ethics Approval: 25969 The significance and impacts of a youth-led empowerment program and youth-led community development interventions in Myanmar

Thank you for your application for ethical approval, which has now been considered by the Human Ethics Committee.

Your application has been approved from the above date and this approval is valid for three years. If your data collection is not completed by this date you should apply to the Human Ethics Committee for an extension to this approval.

Best wishes with the research.

Kind regards

Judith Loveridge

Convenor, Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee

Appendix 2 Support letter from supervisor for fieldwork



School of Geography, Environment and Earth Science
Victoria University of Wellington, Kelburn Parade, Wellington
6012 New Zealand
Email: geo-enquiries@vuw.ac.nz Phone: +64 4 463 5337

Date: 9 May 2018

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing this letter as the supervisor of Mr. Thu Maung Soe to support him in collecting data for his master thesis in his home country, Myanmar.

Thu Maung was awarded New Zealand ASEAN Scholarship to study a Master of Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. In order to complete his master degree, Thu Maung needs to conduct research and write a thesis based on the fieldwork in his home country.

Thu Maung proposes to conduct a research on "*The significance and impacts of a youth-led empowerment program and youth-led community development interventions in Myanmar*" in Myanmar, from 15 June to 7 September 2018.

Therefore, I am writing this letter to support him and urge related organizations to cooperate and assist him in providing necessary information to complete his thesis.

If you require any further information please contact me at John.overton@vuw.ac.nz.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. John Overton
Course coordinator, Lecturer
School of Geography,
Environment, and Earth Sciences
John.overton@vuw.ac.nz

Appendix 3.1 Information sheet for interview participants



The significance and impacts of a youth-led empowerment program and youth-led community development interventions in Myanmar.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Researcher : Thu Maung Soe, School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington.

Thank you for your interest in this research. Please read the information before deciding whether you would participate or not.

This research focuses on youth and the youth empowerment program in Myanmar. This research is based on the interventions of one youth-led development organization “Kalyana Mitta Development Foundation” (KMF) and the social engagement of KMF’s alumni.

The research aims to examine the impact of KMF program interventions to both its alumni and targeted communities. Moreover, the research aims to find out about the work of KMF alumni core groups, their initiatives in social change projects and community development activities in related communities.

Furthermore, the research aims to study how the concept and practice of “Socially Engaged Buddhism” (SEB) stimulates young Buddhists’ commitment and social engagement towards their community.

In order to conduct this research, I wish to interview KMF staff, a number of KMF alumni, a few community members and people from the alumni core group’s partner organizations.

Interview Format

The interview will take approximately 30-60 minutes per person. I would like to audio-record the interview with your permission and will make a summary of the interview. I will write notes based on the conversation if you do not wish your interview being audio recorded. The interview will be conducted in a semi-structured format so that the exact nature of the questions have not been determined in advance but will depend on the way that interview develops. If at any stage you feel uncomfortable, you are free to skip a particular question or decline to answer any question(s).

Participation

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate the interview will be conducted where it is convenient for you. I will ask you questions about KMF interventions, alumni's social engagement and community development activities as well as your perception on "SEB". You can stop the interview at any stage and time, without having to give reasons. Should you wish to change any information you provided or withdraw from the study, you may do it so until **15 August 2018**. The information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you if you withdraw from this research.

Data Use and Storage

This research is confidential. This means that myself and my supervisor Prof John Overton will be aware of your identity but your identity will not be disclosed to any other person or be shown in any other academic papers, reports, presentations, or public document. Pseudonyms will be used in order to protect your identity and to maintain anonymity. Names will be confidential, but other identifying characteristics will be used only with your consent. Participants will be referred to by role, association with an organization, community rather than by name. All provided data and information will be kept confidential and stored on a password-protected computer and all hard copy material will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet. Only my supervisor and I will have access to interview notes and transcripts. Photographs may be taken during visits to project areas with participant consent and all photographs will be stored in a private and secured place when the study is

completed. All the electronic and hard copy material of interview data; summaries, transcripts, and recordings will be appropriately destroyed 3 years right after the research is completed.

This research is an essential part towards my thesis, to be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Development Studies. All data and information from my research will be used only for my thesis, academic publication, conferences, and a summary report.

Feedback

You may receive the final summary of the findings if you would like to (Please indicate it on the consent form). You may receive a copy of the summary of your interview as well.

If you accept this invitation, you have the right to:

- choose not to answer any question,
- ask for the audio recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview,
- withdraw from the study before **15 August 2018**,
- ask any questions about the research at any time,
- receive a copy of your interview recording,
- read over and comment on a written summary of your interview,
- agree on another name for me to use rather than using your real name,
- be able to read any report of this research by emailing the researcher to request a copy.

This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee (Ethics Approval: 25969).

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact myself Thu Maung Soe (primary researcher) or alternatively you may contact Professor John Overton (supervisor) on the details as follow:

Student:

Name : Thu Maung Soe

E-mail: thumau@myvuw.ac.nz

Supervisor:

Name : Professor John Overton

Address: School of Geography,
Environment and Earth Sciences.

Phone : +64-4-4635281

E-mail: john.overton@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact directly to Victoria University HEC Convener: Dr Judith Loveridge via e-mail at hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-4636028.

Appendix 3.2 Information sheet for the interview participants (Burmese translation)



မြန်မာနိုင်ငံမှလူငယ်များဦးဆောင်သော စွမ်းရည်မြှင့်အစီအစဉ်နှင့် ရပ်ကျေးလူထုဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးလုပ်ငန်းစဉ်များ၏ အရေးပါမှုနှင့် သက်ရောက်မှုများ

အင်တာဗျူး (အမေးအဖြေကဏ္ဍ) တွင် ပါဝင်သောသူများအတွက် အကြောင်းကြားလွှာ

သုတေသီ ။ ။ သုမောင်စိုး၊ School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington.

သုတေသနအပေါ် စိတ်ဝင်စားမှုအတွက် သင့်ကိုကျေးဇူးတင်ပါသည်။ ဤသုတေသနတွင် ပါဝင်မည်၊ မပါဝင်မည်ကို မဆုံးဖြတ်မီ စာရွက်ပါအချက်အလက်များကို ကျေးဇူးပြု၍ဖတ်စေလိုပါသည်။ ဤသုတေသနသည် မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ တွင်းမှလူငယ်များနှင့် လူငယ်စွမ်းရည်မြှင့်အစီအစဉ်ကို အဓိကထားလေ့လာသော သုတေသနဖြစ်ပါသည်။ အထူးသဖြင့် လူငယ်များဦးစီးပြီး၊ ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးလုပ်ငန်းများကိုလုပ်ဆောင်နေသည့် အဖွဲ့အစည်းတစ်ခုဖြစ်သော ကလျာဏမိတ္တဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးဖောင်ဒေးရှင်း (KMF) ၏ ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးလုပ်ဆောင်ချက်များနှင့် (KMF) သင်တန်းသားဟောင်း များ၏ လူမှုရေးရာပါဝင်ဆောင်ရွက်မှုများပေါ်တွင် အခြေပြုလေ့လာမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ရည်ရွယ်ချက်မှာ (KMF) ၏ ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးအစီအစဉ်များသည် သင်တန်းသားဟောင်းများနှင့် ရပ်ကျေးလူထုအပေါ် မည်သို့သက်ရောက်မှုရှိသည်ကို လေ့လာဆန်းစစ်ရန်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ဤမျှမက (KMF) သင်တန်းသားဟောင်းအမခံအဖွဲ့များ (ACG) ၏ စွမ်းဆောင်ရည် များ၊ အထူးသဖြင့် လူမှုအပြောင်းအလဲအတွက် စီမံကိန်းများနှင့် ရပ်ကျေးလူထုဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးလုပ်ဆောင်ချက်များတွင် ပါဝင်ဆောင်ရွက်လာခြင်းများအပေါ် လေ့လာရန်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ထို့အပြင် လူမှုအကျိုးပြုဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာ (SEB) ၏ အခြေခံ သဘောတရားများနှင့် လက်တွေ့ကျင့်စဉ်များသည် သင်တန်းသားဟောင်း ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာဝင်လူငယ်များ၏ လူမှု အကျိုးပြုလုပ်ငန်းများတွင် ပါဝင်ပေးဆပ်နေမှုများအပေါ် မည်သို့အထောက်အပံ့ဖြစ်ကြောင်း လေ့လာရန်လည်း ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ဤသုတေသနလုပ်ငန်းကို အကောင်အထည်ဖော်လုပ်ဆောင်နိုင်ရန်အတွက် (KMF) မှဝန်ထမ်းအချို့၊ သင်တန်းသားဟောင်းများနှင့် (ACG) များ၏ မိတ်ဖက်အဖွဲ့များမှ အချို့ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်များကိုတွေ့ဆုံကာ အင်တာဗျူးမည် ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

(က) အင်တာဗျူးပုံစံ

အင်တာဗျူးကြာချိန်သည် လူတစ်ဦးလျှင်ပျမ်းမျှ (၃၀ မှ ၆၀) မိနစ်ခန့် ကြာမြင့်မည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ကျွန်ုပ်တို့သည် သင်၏ ခွင့်ပြုချက်ဖြင့် အသံသွင်းခြင်းကိုပြုလုပ်မည်ဖြစ်ပြီး၊ အင်တာဗျူးအနှစ်ချုပ်ရေးမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ အကယ်၍ သင်က အသံသွင်းခြင်းကို မပြုလုပ်စေလိုလျှင် ကျွန်ုပ်တို့မှမှတ်တမ်းတိုလေးများဖြင့် ရေးမှတ်မည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ အင်တာဗျူးသည် ပုံသေသတ်မှတ်ထားသောပုံစံ မဟုတ်သည့်အတွက်ကြောင့် မေးခွန်းများသည် အခြေအနေပေါ်မူတည်၍ အပြောင်း အလဲရှိနိုင်ပါသည်။ အကယ်၍ အချို့မေးခွန်းများသည် သင့်အတွက်သက်တောင့်သက်သာမရှိဖြစ်ခဲ့လျှင် မဖြေဆိုခြင်း (သို့) ငြင်းဆိုခြင်းကို ပြုလုပ်နိုင်ပါသည်။

ခ) သင်၏ ပူးပေါင်းပါဝင်ခြင်းကဏ္ဍ

သင်၏ပူးပေါင်းဖြေဆိုခြင်းသည် သင့်စိတ်စေတနာအလျောက် ပါဝင်ခြင်းဖြစ်သည်။ အကယ်၍ အမေးအဖြေကဏ္ဍ (အင်တာဗျူး)ကို ပါဝင်ရန်သဘောတူသည်ဆိုပါက သင့်အတွက်အဆင်ပြေပြီး သင့်လျော်မည့်နေရာတွင် ပြုလုပ်သွားမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ကျွန်ုပ်တို့သည် သင့်အား (KMF) ၏ ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးလုပ်ငန်းစဉ်များ၊ သင်တန်းသားဟောင်းများ၏ လူမှုအခြေပြု ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးလုပ်ဆောင်ချက်များနှင့်အတူ၊ သင်၏ (SEB) အပေါ် ထင်မြင်သုံးသပ်ချက်များကို မေးမြန်းသွားမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ သင်သည် အင်တာဗျူးအတွင်း မည်သည့်အချိန်နှင့် မည်သည့်အခြေအနေတွင်မဆို အကြောင်းပြချက်ပေးစရာမလိုဘဲ ရပ်တံ့နိုင်ပါသည်။ အကယ်၍ သင်၏သတင်းအချက်အလက်များကို ပြုပြင်ပြောင်းလဲလိုခြင်း (သို့) ဤလေ့လာမှုမှနှုတ်ထွက်လိုပါက ၁၅ ရက်၊ ဩဂုတ်လ၊ ၂၀၁၈ အတွင်းပြုလုပ်နိုင်ပါသည်။ အကယ်၍ သင်သည် ဤလေ့လာမှုမှနှုတ်ထွက်သွားပါက သင်ပံ့ပိုးပေးထားသော သတင်းအချက်အလက်များကို ဖျက်ဆီးခြင်း (သို့) သင့်ထံသို့ ပြန်ပေးအပ်ခြင်းများကို ပြုလုပ်သွားမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

(ဂ) သင်ပံ့ပိုးပေးထားသော သတင်းအချက်အလက်များအပေါ် အသုံးပြုမှုနှင့် ထိန်းသိမ်းခြင်း

ဤသုတေသနသည် မှတ်တမ်းမှတ်ရာများကို လျှို့ဝှက်ထားမည်ဖြစ်သည်။ ဆိုလိုသည်မှာ ကျွန်ုပ်တို့၏အဖွဲ့နှင့် ကျွန်ုပ်တို့၏ကျမ်းကြီးကြပ်သူသည် သင်မည်သူမည်ဝါဖြစ်ကြောင်းကို အခြားပုဂ္ဂိုလ်များနှင့် အခြားသောသုတေသနစာတမ်းများ၊ မှတ်တမ်းမှတ်ရာများတွင် ဖော်ပြမည်မဟုတ်ပါ။ အမည်မှန်ကိုလျှို့ဝှက်ထားပြီး၊ အမည်ပုံ (နာမည်လွှဲ) ကို အသုံးပြုမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ပါဝင်သူများ၏အဖွဲ့အစည်း (သို့) ရပ်ရွာအတွင်းတွင် တာဝန်ယူရသောအခန်းကဏ္ဍများကိုသာ သဘောတူညီမှုရယူပြီး အသုံးပြုမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ သင်ပံ့ပိုးထားသော သတင်းအချက်အလက်များကို လျှို့ဝှက်ထားမည်ဖြစ်ကာ၊ လျှို့ဝှက်ကုတ်ဖြင့် ကာကွယ်ထားသောကွန်ပျူတာစနစ်ဖြင့် ထိန်းသိမ်းထားမည်ဖြစ်ပြီး၊ အခြားစာရွက်စာတမ်းများကိုလည်း သော့ခတ်သိမ်းဆည်းထားမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ကျွန်ုပ်တို့နှင့်ကျွန်ုပ်တို့၏ ကျမ်းကြီးကြပ်သူ သာလျှင် ၎င်းအချက်အလက်များကို အသုံးပြုပိုင်ခွင့်ရှိမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးလုပ်ငန်းစဉ်များနှင့် ၎င်းနေရာများကို ဓါတ်ပုံမှတ်တမ်းပြုလုပ်သွားမည်ဖြစ်ပြီး၊ ၎င်းဓါတ်ပုံမှတ်တမ်းများကို သုတေသနပြီးဆုံးသည်အထိ ထိန်းသိမ်းထားမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ သတင်းအချက်အလက်များနှင့် မှတ်တမ်းမှတ်ရာများအားလုံးကို သုတေသနပြီးဆုံးပြီး (၃)နှစ် အပြည့်တွင် သင့်လျော်သလို ဖျက်ဆီးသွားမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

ဤသုတေသနသည် ကျွန်ုပ်တို့၏မဟာဘွဲ့ကျမ်းပြုစုခြင်းအတွက်ဖြစ်သည်။ အားလုံးသောအချက်အလက်များကို ကျွန်ုပ်တို့၏ မဟာဘွဲ့သုတေသနကျမ်းပြုစုခြင်းအတွက်နှင့် စာတမ်းများတင်သွင်းခြင်း၊ ဖတ်ကြားခြင်းများအတွက်သာ လျှင် အသုံးပြုသွားမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

အကယ်၍ ဤသုတေသနရှာဖွေတွေ့ရှိမှုများ၏အနှစ်ချုပ်ကို သင်မှရယူလိုလျှင် ရရှိမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ (ကျေးဇူးပြု၍ သဘောတူညီမှုပုံစံတွင် ဖော်ပြပေးပါ။) သင်၏အင်တာဗျူးအနှစ်ချုပ်ကိုလည်း ဆန္ဒရှိပါက ရယူနိုင်ပါသည်။

(ဃ) ပူးပေါင်းပါဝင်မှုကို သင့်ဘက်မှလက်ခံပြီဆိုပါက

- မည်သည့်မေးခွန်းကိုမဆို မဖြေဆိုရန် သင်ရွေးချယ်ခွင့်ရှိပါသည်။
- အင်တာဗျူးချိန်အတွင်း အသံသွင်းစက်ကို ပိတ်ထားရန် သင်တောင်းဆိုခွင့်ရှိပါသည်။
- ၁၅ ရက်၊ ဩဂုတ်လ၊ ၂၀၁၈ မတိုင်ခင် သုတေသနမှ သင်နှုတ်ထွက်နိုင်ပါသည်။
- မည်သည့်အချိန်တွင်မဆို သုတေသနနှင့်ပတ်သတ်သော မေးခွန်းများကို သင်မေးခွင့်ရှိပါသည်။

- သင်၏ အင်တာဗျူးမှတ်တမ်းအနှစ်ချုပ်ကို သင်အလိုရှိပါက တောင်းဆိုခွင့်ရှိသည်။
- သင်၏ အင်တာဗျူးအနှစ်ချုပ်ကို သင်ဖတ်ခွင့်၊ အကြံပြုခွင့်ရှိသည်။
- သင်၏ အမည်မှန်အစား အမည်လွှဲကိုအသုံးပြုရန် သဘောတူသည်။
- ဤသုတေသနနှင့်ပတ်သတ်သော အစီရင်ခံစာကို အလိုရှိပါက ဆက်သွယ် တောင်းဆိုခွင့်ရှိသည်။

မှတ်ချက်

ဤသုတေသနသည် Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee မှ ခွင့်ပြုနံပါတ် (Ethics Approval: 25969) ဖြင့် ခွင့်ပြုချက်ရရှိပြီးသားဖြစ်ပါသည်။

အကယ်၍ ဤသုတေသနဆိုင်ရာမေးခွန်းများ (သို့) အကြောင်းတစ်စုံတစ်ရာရှိခဲ့ပါက ကျွန်ုပ်ကျွမ်းပြုသူအား တိုက်ရိုက်သော်လည်းကောင်း (သို့) ကျွန်ုပ်၏ကျမ်းကြီးကြပ်သူအား အောက်ပါလိပ်စာများအတိုင်း ဆက်သွယ် မေးမြန်းနိုင်ပါသည်။

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Human Ethics Committee သတင်းအချက်အလက်

အကယ်၍ ဤသုတေသနနှင့်စပ်လျဉ်း၍ ကျင့်ဝတ်ပိုင်းဆိုင်ရာများတွင် တစ်စုံတစ်ရာစိုးရိမ်ပူပန်မှုများရှိပါက Victoria University HEC Convener: Dr Judith Loveridge ကိုအီးမေး(လ်) hec@vuw.ac.nz ဖြင့်သော်လည်းကောင်း၊ ဖုန်း +64-4-4636028 သို့လည်းကောင်း တိုက်ရိုက်ဆက်သွယ်နိုင်ပါသည်။

Appendix 4.1 Participant consent form



The significance and impacts of a youth-led empowerment program and youth-led community development interventions in Myanmar.

CONSENT TO INTERVIEW

I agree to take part in this research. I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I understand that:
 1. My participation is voluntary and I may withdraw my participation at any point before **15 August 2018** without having to give any reason, and information that I have provided will be returned to me or completely destroyed.
 2. My interview result will be used for a Master thesis and a summary of the results may be appropriately used in academic papers, reports, and conferences.
 3. The information I provide will be kept confidential during the project and will be appropriately destroyed 3 years after the research is completed.

• I consent to being audio recorded: Yes No

• I consent to take photos of project areas: Yes No

• I consent to being referred to by role or by association with my organization or community in any reports on this research: Yes No

Please indicate your role:.....

(or)

Please indicate organization:.....

(or)

Please indicate community:.....

- I would like to be referred to by a code name (pseudonym): Yes No

If yes, you may suggest a code name:.....

- I would like to receive a copy of the summary of my interview: Yes No

- I would like to receive a summary of the findings: Yes No

If yes, please provide mailing address:.....

.....

Signed:.....

Name:.....

Date:.....

Address:.....

.....

.....

Appendix 4.2 Participant consent form (Burmese translation)



မြန်မာနိုင်ငံမှလူငယ်များဦးဆောင်သော စွမ်းရည်မြှင့်တင်ရေးအစီအစဉ်နှင့် ရုပ်ကျေးလူထုဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးလုပ်ငန်းစဉ်များ၏ အရေးပါမှုနှင့် သက်ရောက်မှုများ

အင်တာဗျူး (အမေးအဖြေကဏ္ဍ) ပြုလုပ်ရန်အတွက် ခွင့်ပြုချက်နှင့် သဘောတူညီခြင်း

ဤသုတေသနတွင်ပါဝင်ကူညီရန် ကျွန်ုပ်သဘောတူပါသည်။ ဤသုတေသနအကြောင်းကိုလည်း ကျွန်ုပ်အား နားလည်သဘောပေါက်သည်အထိ ရှင်းပြထားပြီးဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ကျွန်ုပ်သည်မေးခွန်းများမေးရန် အခွင့်အရေးများ ရရှိခဲ့ပြီး၊ စိတ်ကျေနပ်လောက်သည့် ရှင်းလင်းချက်များလည်း ရရှိခဲ့ပြီးဖြစ်ပါသည်။

၁။ ကျွန်ုပ်အနေဖြင့် အောက်ပါအချက်အလက်များကို နားလည်ပါသည်။

- ကျွန်ုပ်၏ပါဝင်မှုသည် မိမိ၏စိတ်ဆန္ဒအရဖြစ်ပြီး၊ သုတေသနမှနှုတ်ထွက်လိုပါက အကြောင်းပြချက် တစ်စုံတစ်ရာပေးရန်မလိုဘဲ ၁၅ ရက်၊ ဩဂုတ်လ၊ ၂၀၁၈ မတိုင်ခင်နှုတ်ထွက်နိုင်ပါသည်။ ကျွန်ုပ်ပံ့ပိုးထားသော သတင်းအချက်အလက်များကို ဖျက်ဆီးခြင်း (သို့) ကျွန်ုပ်ထံသို့ ပြန်ပေးအပ်ခြင်းများရှိမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။
- ကျွန်ုပ်၏ အင်တာဗျူးမှတ်တမ်းနှင့် အနှစ်ချုပ်မှတ်တမ်း အချက်အလက်များကို မဟာဘွဲ့သုတေသနကျမ်းပြုစာတမ်းနှင့် စာတမ်းများတင်သွင်းခြင်း၊ ဖတ်ကြားခြင်းများအတွက်သာလျှင် အသုံးပြုသွားမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။
- ကျွန်ုပ်ပံ့ပိုးထားသော သတင်းအချက်အလက်များကို သုတေသနကာလအတွင်း လျှို့ဝှက်ထိန်းသိမ်းထားမည် ဖြစ်ပြီး၊ သတင်းအချက်အလက်များနှင့် မှတ်တမ်းမှတ်ရာများအားလုံးကို သုတေသနပြီးဆုံးပြီးနောက် (၃)နှစ် အပြည့်တွင် သင့်လျော်သလို ဖျက်ဆီးသွားမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

၂။ ကျွန်ုပ်အနေဖြင့် အသံသွင်းမှတ်တမ်းတင်ခြင်းကို သဘောတူပါသည် မတူပါ

၃။ ကျွန်ုပ်အနေဖြင့် ဓါတ်ပုံမှတ်တမ်းတင်ခြင်းကို သဘောတူပါသည် မတူပါ

၄။ သုတေသနပြုမှုနှင့်စပ်လျဉ်း၍ မည်သည့်အစီရင်ခံစာတွင်မဆို ကျွန်ုပ်၏ ရာထူး (တာဝန်) (သို့) အသင်းအဖွဲ့အမည် (အဖွဲ့အစည်း) (သို့) ရုပ်ရွာအမည် အသုံးပြုခြင်းကို သဘောတူပါသည် မတူပါ

ရာထူး (တာဝန်)ကို ဖော်ပြပေးပါ။.....
(သို့)

အသင်းအဖွဲ့အမည်ကို ဖော်ပြပေးပါ။.....
(သို့)

ရုပ်ရွာအမည်ကို ဖော်ပြပေးပါ။.....

၅။ ကျွန်ုပ်ကို ညွှန်းဆိုရာတွင် ကုတ်နံပါတ်တစ်ခုခုသတ်မှတ်၍ ညွှန်းဆို

စေလိုပါသည်။ (အမည်၎င်း)

လိုအပ်ပါသည် မလိုအပ်ပါ

လိုအပ်ပါက ကုတ်နံပါတ် (အမည်၎င်း) ကို သတ်မှတ်ပေးပါ။

.....

၆။ အင်တာဗျူး အမေးအဖြေ၏ အနှစ်ချုပ်ကိုရယူ လက်ခံလိုပါသည်။

လက်ခံလိုပါသည် မလိုအပ်ပါ

၇။ စာတမ်းတွေ့ရှိချက်အနှစ်ချုပ်ကို လက်ခံလိုပါသည်။

လက်ခံလိုပါသည် မလိုအပ်ပါ

လက်ခံလိုပါက ဆက်သွယ်ရန်လိပ်စာ။

.....

.....

လက်မှတ်

အမည်

နေ့စွဲ

လိပ်စာ အပြည့်အစုံ

.....

.....

Appendix 5.1 Information sheet and request letter for the interview participants from KMF (Burmese translation)



ရက်စွဲ။ ။ ()ရက် မေလ ၂၀၁၈။

သို့

ကလျာဏမိတ္တဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးဖောင်ဒေးရှင်း (KMF)

အကြောင်းအရာ။ ။ (KMF) မှဝန်ထမ်းအချို့အား အင်တာဗျူး (အမေးအဖြေကဏ္ဍ) ပြုလုပ်နိုင်ရန်အတွက် ခွင့်ပြုပေးပါရန်နှင့် ပါဝင်ကူညီပေးပါရန် တောင်းဆိုအကြောင်းကြားခြင်း။

သုတေသီ။ ။ သုမောင်စိုး၊ School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington.

သုတေသနခေါင်းစဉ်။ ။ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံမှလူငယ်များဦးဆောင်သော စွမ်းရည်မြှင့်တင်မှုအစီအစဉ်နှင့် ရုပ်ကျေးလူထု ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးလုပ်ငန်းစဉ်များ၏ အရေးပါမှုနှင့် သက်ရောက်မှုများ

သုတေသနအကျဉ်းချုပ်။ ။ ဤသုတေသနသည် မြန်မာနိုင်ငံတွင်းမှလူငယ်များနှင့် လူငယ်စွမ်းရည်မြှင့်တင်မှုအစီအစဉ်ကို အဓိကထားလေ့လာသော သုတေသနဖြစ်ပါသည်။ အထူးသဖြင့် လူငယ်များဦးစီးပြီး၊ ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးလုပ်ငန်းများကိုလုပ်ဆောင်နေသည့် အဖွဲ့အစည်းတစ်ခုဖြစ်သော ကလျာဏမိတ္တဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးဖောင်ဒေးရှင်း (KMF) ၏ ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးလုပ်ဆောင်ချက်များနှင့် (KMF) သင်တန်းသားဟောင်းများ၏ လူမှုရေးရာပါဝင်ဆောင်ရွက်မှုများပေါ်တွင် အခြေပြုလေ့လာမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ရည်ရွယ်ချက်မှာ (KMF) ၏ ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးအစီအစဉ်များသည် သင်တန်းသားဟောင်းများနှင့် ရုပ်ကျေးလူထုအပေါ် မည်သို့သက်ရောက်မှုရှိသည်ကို လေ့လာဆန်းစစ်ရန်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ဤမျှမက (KMF) သင်တန်းသားဟောင်းအဖွဲ့များ (ACG) ၏ စွမ်းဆောင်ရည်များ၊ အထူးသဖြင့် လူမှုအပြောင်းအလဲအတွက် စီမံကိန်းများနှင့် ရုပ်ကျေးလူထုဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးလုပ်ဆောင်ချက်များတွင် ပါဝင်ဆောင်ရွက်လာခြင်းများအပေါ် လေ့လာရန်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ထို့အပြင် လူမှုအကျိုးပြုဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာ (SEB) ၏ အခြေခံသဘောတရားများနှင့် လက်တွေ့ကျင့်စဉ်များသည် သင်တန်းသားဟောင်း ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာဝင်လူငယ်များ၏ လူမှုအကျိုးပြုလုပ်ငန်းများတွင် ပါဝင်ပေးဆပ်နေမှုများအပေါ် မည်သို့အထောက်အပံ့ဖြစ်ကြောင်း လေ့လာရန်လည်းဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ဤသုတေသနလုပ်ငန်းကို အကောင်အထည်ဖော်လုပ်ဆောင်နိုင်ရန်အတွက် (KMF) မှဝန်ထမ်းအချို့၊ သင်တန်းသားဟောင်းများနှင့် (ACG) များ၏ မိတ်ဖက်အဖွဲ့များမှ အချို့ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်များကို တွေ့ဆုံကာ အင်တာဗျူးမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

ဤသုတေသနသည် ကျွန်ုပ်၏ မဟာဘွဲ့ကျမ်းပြုစုခြင်းအတွက်ဖြစ်ပြီး၊ Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee မှ ခွင့်ပြုနံပါတ် (Ethics Approval: 25969) ဖြင့် ခွင့်ပြုချက်ရရှိပြီးသားဖြစ်ပါသည်။ အားလုံးသောအချက်အလက်များကို ကျွန်ုပ်၏ မဟာဘွဲ့သုတေသနကျမ်းပြုစုခြင်းအတွက်နှင့် စာတမ်းများတင်သွင်းခြင်း၊ ဖတ်ကြားခြင်းများအတွက်သာလျှင် အသုံးပြုသွားမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

အင်တာဗျူးပုံစံ။ ။အင်တာဗျူးသည် တစ်ဦးချင်းစီပြုလုပ်မည်ဖြစ်ကာ၊ တစ်ဦးလျှင်ပျမ်းမျှ (၃၀ မှ ၆၀) မိနစ်ခန့် ကြာမြင့်မည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ကျွန်ုပ်သည် အင်တာဗျူးပါဝင်သူ၏ ခွင့်ပြုချက်ဖြင့် အသံသွင်းခြင်းကိုပြုလုပ်မည်ဖြစ်ပြီး၊ အင်တာဗျူးအနှစ်ချုပ်ရေးမည်ဖြစ်သည်။ အင်တာဗျူးတွင်ပါဝင်သူများအား သီးသန့်တွေ့ဆုံပြီး သုတေသနဆိုင်ရာသတင်းအချက်အလက်များနှင့် အင်တာဗျူးအစီအစဉ်များအား ရှင်းလင်းမိတ်ဆက်ပြီး၊ တစ်ဦးချင်းသဘောတူညီမှုများကိုလည်း ပြုလုပ်သွားမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

သို့ဖြစ်ပါ၍ အောက်တွင်ဖော်ပြထားသော ကလျာဏမိတ္တဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးဖောင်ဒေးရှင်းမှ ဝန်ထမ်းများအားအင်တာဗျူးနိုင်ရန်အတွက် ခွင့်ပြုပေးပါရန် လေးစားစွာ တောင်းဆိုအပ်ပါသည်။

- (၁)
- (၂)
- (၃)
- (၄)
- (၅)

အင်တာဗျူးကာလ။ ။ ဇူလိုင်လ (၁၀)ရက် မှ (၁၂)ရက် ၂၀၁၈။

မှတ်ချက်။ ။အင်တာဗျူးပါဝင်သူ၏ ကူညီနိုင်သော အချိန်ပေါ်မူတည်ပြီး အင်တာဗျူးကာလအပြောင်းအလဲရှိနိုင်ပါသည်။

လေးစားစွာဖြင့်

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Appendix 5.2 Information sheet and request letter for the interview participants from the ACGs' partner organizations (Burmese translation)



ရက်စွဲ။ ။ ()ရက် ။ လ ၂၀၁၈။

သို့

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အကြောင်းအရာ။ ။ အင်တာဗျူး (အမေးအဖြေကဏ္ဍ) ပြုလုပ်နိုင်ရန်အတွက် ခွင့်ပြုပေးပါရန်နှင့် ပါဝင် ကူညီပေးပါရန် တောင်းဆို အကြောင်းကြားခြင်း။

သုတေသီ။ ။ သုမောင်စိုး၊ School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington.

သုတေသနခေါင်းစဉ်။ ။ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံမှလူငယ်များဦးဆောင်သော စွမ်းရည်မြှင့်အစီအစဉ်နှင့် ရပ်ကျေးလူထု ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးလုပ်ငန်းစဉ်များ၏ အရေးပါမှုနှင့် သက်ရောက်မှုများ

သုတေသနအကျဉ်းချုပ်။ ။ ဤသုတေသနသည် မြန်မာနိုင်ငံတွင်းမှလူငယ်များနှင့် လူငယ်စွမ်းရည်မြှင့် အစီအစဉ်ကို အဓိကထားလေ့လာသော သုတေသနဖြစ်ပါသည်။ အထူးသဖြင့် လူငယ်များဦးစီးပြီး၊ ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးလုပ်ငန်း များကိုလုပ်ဆောင်နေသည့် အဖွဲ့အစည်းတစ်ခုဖြစ်သော ကလျာဏမိတ္တဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးဖောင်ဒေးရှင်း (KMF) ၏ ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေး လုပ်ဆောင်ချက်များနှင့် (KMF) သင်တန်းသားဟောင်းများ၏ လူမှုရေးရာပါဝင်ဆောင်ရွက်မှုများပေါ်တွင် အခြေပြု လေ့လာမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ရည်ရွယ်ချက်မှာ (KMF) ၏ ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးအစီအစဉ်များသည် သင်တန်းသားဟောင်းများနှင့် ရပ်ကျေးလူထုအပေါ် မည်သို့သက်ရောက်မှုရှိသည်ကို လေ့လာဆန်းစစ်ရန်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ဤမျှမက (KMF) သင်တန်းသားဟောင်းအမာခံအဖွဲ့များ (ACG) ၏ စွမ်းဆောင်ရည်များ၊ အထူးသဖြင့် လူမှုအပြောင်းအလဲအတွက် စီမံကိန်းများနှင့် ရပ်ကျေးလူထုဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးလုပ်ဆောင်ချက်များတွင် ပါဝင်ဆောင်ရွက်လာခြင်းများအပေါ် လေ့လာရန် ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ထို့အပြင် လူမှုအကျိုးပြုဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာ (SEB) ၏ အခြေခံသဘောတရားများနှင့် လက်တွေ့ကျင့်စဉ်များသည် သင်တန်းသားဟောင်း ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာဝင်လူငယ်များ၏ လူမှုအကျိုးပြုလုပ်ငန်းများတွင် ပါဝင်ပေးဆပ်နေမှုများအပေါ် မည်သို့အထောက်အပံ့ဖြစ်ကြောင်း လေ့လာရန်လည်းဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ဤသုတေသနလုပ်ငန်းကို အကောင်အထည်ဖော် လုပ်ဆောင်နိုင်ရန်အတွက် (KMF) မှဝန်ထမ်းအချို့၊ သင်တန်းသားဟောင်းများနှင့် (ACG) များ၏ မိတ်ဖက်အဖွဲ့ များမှ အချို့ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်များကို တွေ့ဆုံကာ အင်တာဗျူးမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

ဤသုတေသနသည် ကျွန်ုပ်၏ မဟာဘွဲ့ကျမ်းပြုစုခြင်းအတွက်ဖြစ်ပြီး၊ Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee မှ ခွင့်ပြုနံပါတ် (Ethics Approval: 25969) ဖြင့် ခွင့်ပြုချက်ရရှိပြီးသားဖြစ်ပါသည်။ အားလုံးသောအချက်အလက်များကို ကျွန်ုပ်၏ မဟာဘွဲ့သုတေသနကျမ်းပြုစုခြင်းအတွက်နှင့် စာတမ်းများတင်သွင်းခြင်း၊ ဖတ်ကြားခြင်းများအတွက်သာလျှင် အသုံးပြုသွားမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

အင်တာဗျူးပုံစံ။ ။အင်တာဗျူးသည် တစ်ဦးချင်းစီပြုလုပ်မည်ဖြစ်ကာ၊ တစ်ဦးလျှင်ပျမ်းမျှ (၃၀ မှ ၆၀) မိနစ်ခန့် ကြာမြင့်မည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ကျွန်ုပ်သည် အင်တာဗျူးပါဝင်သူ၏ ခွင့်ပြုချက်ဖြင့် အသံသွင်းခြင်းကိုပြုလုပ်မည်ဖြစ်ပြီး၊ အင်တာဗျူးအနှစ်ချုပ် ရေးမည်ဖြစ်သည်။ အင်တာဗျူးတွင်ပါဝင်သူများအား သီးသန့်တွေ့ဆုံပြီး သုတေသနဆိုင်ရာသတင်းအချက်အလက်များနှင့် အင်တာဗျူးအစီအစဉ်များအား ရှင်းလင်းမိတ်ဆက်ပြီး၊ တစ်ဦးချင်းသဘောတူညီမှုများကိုလည်း ပြုလုပ်သွားမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

သို့ဖြစ်ပါ၍ အား ရက်တွင် အင်တာဗျူးနိုင်ရန် အတွက် ခွင့်ပြုပေးပါရန် လေးစားစွာ တောင်းဆိုအပ်ပါသည်။

လေးစားစွာဖြင့်

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The significance and impacts of a youth-led empowerment program and youth-led community development interventions in Myanmar.

Interview Guide

The semi-structured interview will cover the following themes:

- Alumni perspectives on Kalyana Mitta Development Foundation's (KMF) program interventions and the impact of them,
- Alumni's social engagement and participation in the field of community development,
- Youth perceptions of Socially Engagement Buddhism (SEB), and
- Stakeholders' perspectives on the importance of youth empowerment and community development in Myanmar,

The example questions are as follow:

Please tell me about yourself and your background.

Section (1): Questions that focus on KMF

1. How did you get involved in KMF youth program or the ACG youth-led empowerment program? What motivated you to participate them?
2. What kind of KMF program (training/ workshop/ other activities) were you involved in and when did you join it? How long did it run and where did it take place?
3. In that program, which part (subject/ concept/ practice) stimulated or inspired you most to change your attitude and to participate in social activities and community development?

4. After the program how did KMF undertake follow-up activities in personal, interest-based group or ACG levels? What were those follow-up activities? Were the follow-up activities relevant to your personal life and applicable in community development work?
5. What are the challenges and/or limitations of KMF's program interventions that you have found? How can KMF address those challenges and/or limitations? Can you suggest any appropriate solutions to tackle them?
6. Do you have any extra recommendations or suggestions to KMF and/or KMF interventions?

Section (2): Questions that focus on Alumni Core Group (ACG)

1. What is the name of your ACG or (community/ institution/ organization)? When was it founded and by whom?
2. What are the objectives and goals of your ACG?
3. What are the activities of your ACG? How well are they operating?
4. What is your main role and responsibility in your ACG?
5. How do you feel when you were working together with your friends/ colleagues and community members? And why?
6. What are the successful social or community development activities that yourself and/or your ACG have contributed in your community or elsewhere?
7. What are the barriers or limitations of your ACG when doing development work in your areas?
8. How is your ACG relationship with KMF and its program interventions?
9. Are there any collaboration community development activities with different ACGs and other religious associations?
10. What are the collaboration activities with local government departments and development agencies? How are your ACG relationships with them?
11. What are the communication channels that your ACG have used to contact development agencies and other ACGs? Are there any potential methods for a better communication system?

Section (3): Questions focus on Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB)

1. Are there any differences between SEB and traditional Buddhism? What are they?
2. How do you perceive/ distinguish SEB? And where did you hear about it? From whom?
3. How does SEB stimulate your commitment for the sake of others?
4. What SEB concept and practices are relevant to your daily life and your social engagement? How do you apply it?
5. How does SEB link to sustainable community development?
6. Which are some of your ACG activities based on SEB concepts?
7. Do you have any opinion on whether the SEB concepts are suitable or not for youth empowerment in Myanmar, especially in diverse social and religious settings? And why?
8. Do you think SEB can be one of the principles or a guideline for sustainable development? And why?

General questions about Religion and religious teaching

1. How do you perceive/ distinguish religious teaching? And where did you hear about it? From whom?
2. How does religion/ religious teaching stimulate your commitment for the sake of others?
3. What religious practices are relevant to your daily life and your social engagement? How do you apply it?
4. How does religious philosophy and practices link to sustainable community development?
5. Which are some of your social change activities based on religious philosophy and practices?
6. Do you have any opinion on whether the religious philosophy and practices are suitable or not for youth empowerment in Myanmar, especially in diverse social and religious settings? And why?
7. Do you think religious philosophy and practices can be one of the principles or a guideline for sustainable development? And why?

Section (4): Questions that focus on Youth empowerment and community development in Myanmar

1. How do you identify youth empowerment and community development in general?
2. What is the importance of youth empowerment for personal and community levels?
3. Have you ever seen youth empowerment program or activities in your village/ city/ region? What are they? Who conducted them?
4. What is the role of young Buddhists in their communities? What are their roles in social and community development activities?
5. Are there any changes in their roles nowadays if it is compared to the past? What are the significant changes in youth roles in any areas?
6. What is your opinion on youth empowerment and community development in Myanmar?
7. What are the barriers to youth empowerment, which undermine community development program and activities? Do you suggest any solutions to overcome those obstacles?