

Social Changes and Their Effects on Community-based Organizations' Fundraising Efforts for Shan Displaced Communities in Thailand

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Abstract

Rapid social changes can significantly impact the fundraising efforts of community-based organizations (CBOs) by influencing donor priorities, shifting community needs, affecting social values, and increasing competition for limited resources. Forced displacement communities are particularly vulnerable to these challenges, as fundraising outcomes directly affect their livelihood security. This study explores the practical challenges faced by a CBO in Thailand as it fundraises for individuals from Shan state, Myanmar displaced by armed conflict. A deeper understanding of these challenges can help humanitarian aid agencies develop more effective strategies to support livelihood interventions for forced displacement communities. The thematic technique was employed to analyze qualitative data from seven in-depth interviews and direct participation in the fundraising. The study found that the CBO has been challenged by accusations of contributing to conflicts, ambiguous cross-border governance, and a rise in cyberattacks that disrupt funding sources and information flow. To address these issues, the study recommends fostering settings and conditions that build public trust and encourage technological collaboration to enhance fundraising success.

Keywords: community-based organization, fundraising, Myanmar displaced persons, ethnic conflicts, refugee, Shan

Introduction

Community-based organizations (CBOs), in many cases, are leading the charge to provide emergency assistance and secure livelihoods to those with forced displacement (Huq and Miraftab, 2020). Because of their grass-roots level involvement, CBOs are often in a better position to understand the needs of the population, develop a more tailored response, and quickly mobilize resources in an efficient and expeditious manner.

Funding has become a major hurdle for CBOs as the majority of their initiatives are carried out on a voluntary basis and thus depend heavily on donations, grants, or other forms of public funding. Recently, many CBOs have been left to rely on their own fundraising efforts in lieu of international humanitarian aid from organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), partly due to a reduction in donation funds. This difficulty is further exacerbated if the CBO is working to assist a group of forced displacements who do not have sufficient legal recognition from the

host country or international humanitarian organizations like the UNHCR (Goździak and Walter, 2012). In that case, the CBO may not be able to access essential funds, grants, or other resources from humanitarian agencies. In addition, these restrictions can limit the organization's capability to generate publicity and gain the local community's trust. As a result, it cannot effectively advocate on behalf of those communities.

Consequently, there is a need to identify and investigate possible solutions to CBOs' fundraising efforts in order to assist them in maximizing the desired outcomes. Nonetheless, despite the rising numbers of forced displacement coming from numerous conflicts, most studies of their interaction with host communities have been conducted in Europe and North America, with relatively few investigations in developing countries, particularly the global south, including Southeast Asia (Betts et al., 2018).

Hence, this article explores the challenges faced by CBOs in fundraising for assistance to displaced persons. It focuses on assistance efforts in support of people fleeing conflicts in Shan state, Myanmar to bridge the knowledge gap in the Southeast Asia context. This context is particularly important following the coup d'état in February 2021, which exacerbated political instability, human rights violations, and armed conflicts in Myanmar, especially in regions like Shan state. The resulting displacement crisis has placed immense pressure on community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide essential support to those fleeing violence. However, the volatile political climate, restricted access to international aid, and heightened scrutiny of fundraising activities have created significant challenges for CBOs in sustaining their efforts.

Through rigorous research, this case study can contribute systematic understanding of the problems faced by CBOs in fundraising, such as socio-political dynamics, donor behavior, and technological disruptions. By translating these findings into actionable recommendations, this study is expected to empower CBOs to navigate obstacles, optimize their fundraising outcomes, and ultimately enhance their ability to support vulnerable communities. Moreover, the results can be used by practitioners in other countries as examples of systematic understanding by those providing relief to displaced persons in response to potential challenges to their fundraising work.

Literature Review

The Contextualization of the CBO for Shan Displaced Communities

Since gaining independence from Britain in 1948, Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, has faced persistent political instability. Many ethnic groups began advocating for self-determination rather than remaining part of a unified nation, leading to prolonged conflicts with the Myanmar government. These tensions have escalated over time, resulting in widespread violence. As a consequence, many individuals, terrorized and persecuted, have sought refuge in shelters and camps along the Thai-Shan border. Displaced persons fleeing conflicts in Shan state, Myanmar were allowed to temporarily resettle in Thai territory in Chiang Mai province, thanks to humanitarian considerations. There is no exact number of those people living in Chiang Mai, but some live in the Koungror refugee camp, which includes approximately 400 residents (Hein, 2018). This displaced community is located in Piang Luang subdistrict of Wiang Haeng district, Chiang Mai province. It was founded in 2002 as a result of increasingly intense civil conflicts between ethnic groups in the Shan state and the Burmese military in the 1990s.

The CBOs that provide humanitarian aid to those displaced Shan consist mainly of local citizens living close to the displaced community who have been motivated to help because of their shared ethnic

background with the Shan population, both of whom are descendants of the Tai peoples (Ting, 2018). It has been observed that those active CBOs have faced numerous challenges to their existence and operations.

The first challenge is the lack of recognition of refugee status from Thailand (Pechdin and Ahmad, 2023a). The country is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which legally requires a country to protect and assist refugees coming to that country. Consequently, displaced persons in Thailand are only recognized as temporary residents under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defence. Any assistance campaigns or activities regarding them need to be authorized by these organizations and/or other authorization agencies (Chotinukul, 2020). In addition, those who settled in Koug Jor camp could not independently support themselves due to lack of land for plantation, restrictions on working, and physical conditions (Shan Women's Action Network, 2003). Therefore, donations or allocation from relevant agencies have covered the majority of their basic needs.

Therefore, the role of the CBO in this area has become increasingly vital in securing the livelihoods of the Koug Jor community. However, when the CBO desires to provide aid to this community, it is subjected to the demands of these agencies and to numerous bureaucratic procedures (Chotinukul, 2020). In addition, there is also a lack of awareness of the displaced people's situation among the general public in Thailand (Pechdin and Ahmad, 2023a). This is partly due to the fact that they are not allowed to go outside their camp and the camp is located in a remote area, making their plight not visible in society (Chotinukul, 2020; Pechdin and Ahmad, 2023a). As a result, it can be difficult to generate public support for them, which would ultimately have a negative impact on their overall security and well-being (Pechdin and Ahmad, 2023b).

Second, Chiang Mai is not among the locations that house displaced persons from Myanmar recognized by UNHCR in Thailand. As a result, these people's outreach to potential donors is severely affected as they do not receive any effective assistance from UNHCR (Hein, 2018).

Third, the CBOs working for Shan displacement have frequently been accused of supporting active ethnic armed groups in Shan state. There are two major militant groups in Shan state, namely, the Southern Shan State Army (S-SSA) and the United Wa State Army (UWSA), that have been active since the late 1990s (Yawnghwe, 2010). Their conflicts have added to the mounting political tensions between Thailand and Myanmar with the latter especially accusing the former of supplying food, finance, intelligence, and recruitments to the S-SSA (Pechdin and Ahmad, 2022; Yawnghwe, 2010). This accusation is believed to have developed simply because of the shared ethnic background by the displaced community and the S-SSA militants (Pechdin and Ahmad, 2022).

Furthermore, the challenges have been exacerbated by the coup d'état in Myanmar on February 1, 2021. The event has significantly impacted the ability of community-based organizations (CBOs) in Thailand to raise funds for the displaced Shan population along the Thailand-Myanmar border. Several geopolitical factors have been identified as significant in influencing fundraising efforts, including the disruption of aid access (Fumagalli and Kemmerling, 2024; Win and Zaw, 2024), limited cross-border cooperation and regional tensions (Haines and Buchanan, 2023; Idler and Tkacova, 2023), as well as shifting donor priorities (Fumagalli and Kemmerling, 2024). Despite these challenges, many CBOs working for displaced Shan people in Chiang Mai still play an essential role in supporting the camp residents by providing food and livelihood aid, as well as managing and developing the camp's infrastructure (Pechdin and Ahmad, 2022).

Relevant Studies: Key Factors Affecting Fundraising Outcomes

One of the biggest challenges in fundraising for humanitarian activities is the quest for trust (Anghel and Trandafoiu, 2022; Freier et al., 2021). Without an umbrella legal framework that recognizes a particular group such as displaced persons, a CBO cannot legally claim to offer assistance to them. Consequently, donors who wish to donate to this organization may question whether their donation will be used in a responsible and efficient manner, thereby preventing the CBO from raising enough financial capital to function effectively (Lemberg-Pedersen and Haioty, 2021). In fact, donors seek assurance that their contributions will be used effectively and efficiently to genuinely assist those who are most in need (Freier et al., 2021; Ghoorah et al., 2021). Existing studies have shown that donor trust is closely linked to transparency and accountability within organizations (BouChabke and Haddad, 2021), encompassing their practices, processes, and decision making. Other research has found that strong trust is fostered by providing clear information about financial operations, including how donations are used, who the recipients are, and the intended purpose of the funds (Dethier et al., 2021; Ghoorah et al., 2021).

Cyberattacks are another key factor affecting fundraising outcomes. At present, increasingly numerous online scams and fraudulent activities have been attacking humanitarian agencies that support displaced communities (Lemberg-Pedersen and Haioty, 2021; Musila, 2019; Pasha, 2020). It been observed that such attacks are often carried out by groups with political or ideological motivations, such as far-right extremists or anti-immigrant groups (Gandhi et al., 2011; Kostyuk and Zhukov, 2019; Marelli, 2020). In some cases, these attacks may be motivated by the desire to exploit the vulnerabilities of displaced people for financial gain (Aboul-Enein, 2017). In particular, for small organizations that do not have the resources to quickly recover from an attack, these attacks can result in the loss of donor funds, temporary shutdowns of the organization's website, and the release of sensitive information (Gates, 2015; Mierzwa and Scott, 2017). These challenges stem from several factors, including insufficient funding, limited awareness of the importance of cybersecurity, and a shortage of skilled personnel (Mierzwa and Scott, 2017). Prioritizing cybersecurity, even within the constraints of their limited budgets, has been discussed (Mierzwa and Scott, 2017; Simko et al., 2018; Tartaro-Flowerday, 2021). It can be achieved by adopting cost-effective cybersecurity measures, such as encryption, two-factor authentication, and employee training on best practices. Collaboration with larger, more resource-rich organizations or partnerships with cybersecurity firms offering discounted or pro-bono services could also be beneficial.

Trust is essential for any organization seeking to fundraise for humanitarian activities. Existing literature suggests that they focus on being transparent about their work and are responsive to donor questions and concerns. In addition, in terms of associated cyberattack activities, several studies pointed out that cyberattacks can have a devastating impact on humanitarian organizations. They can also damage an organization's reputation and hinder its ability to perform humanitarian activities. It is therefore crucial that these organizations take steps to protect themselves from cyberattacks and associated threats.

Methodology

Theoretical Considerations

Fundraising outcomes for CBOs can vary depending on their ability to manage the challenges encountered during the event. In this study, we conceptualized our approach using two main theoretical frameworks. First, we integrated the framework of Mayer et al. (1995) regarding trust in organizations to examine how

it influences fundraising success. Trust, according to Mayer et al. (1995), is a function of the perceived ability, benevolence, and integrity of the trusted party. In the context of CBOs, donors are likely to trust these organizations based on their perception of transparency, accountability, and reliability in managing funds. The lack of cybersecurity knowledge could diminish donors' trust if sensitive information is compromised. This theory underscores the importance of organizations demonstrating their commitment to security to maintain donor confidence.

We also utilized the concept of social exchange, as introduced by Homans (1958), to explore the reciprocal dynamics between CBOs and their donors. Social exchange theory posits that interactions between organizations and donors are based on reciprocal exchanges. Donors (especially local people) provide resources (e.g., funds) in exchange for perceived benefits, such as trust and accountability. If an organization (CBO) fails to protect donor information due to cybersecurity lapses, this exchange can break down, undermining trust and potentially leading to a loss of support. This theory can help elucidate the relational dynamics between CBOs and donors and the importance of securing that relationship through fundraising practices.

Study Scope and Participants

In this study, we defined those people who fled from Shan state to Thailand as “displaced persons.” Since Thailand has not officially signed the Refugee Convention of 1951, officially, it has not acknowledged people who fled to Thailand induced by armed conflict as “refugees” even if they have been living at the shelter in Thailand for several decades. Those people are recognized as “displaced persons” because they need to return to their home country when the induced conflicts are dissolved. Therefore, those people are not allowed to settle permanently in Thailand. Coping with this context, a “displaced person” in this study is referred to as a person who fled to Thailand induced by armed conflicts and is allowed to settle temporarily in an allocated area of Thailand.

We designed our study to explore challenges influenced by external parties, rather than internal factors of a CBO, such as organizational capacity and human resources, which have already been extensively covered by other publications (Gonzalez Benson et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2022). We included a wide array of participants targeting the active CBOs working for Shan displaced communities in Chiang Mai province. In addition to the many letters/emails that were sent to the potential CBOs requesting their participation in this study, the snowball method was also adopted for recruiting them (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). Ultimately, we were able to reach one CBO that has been active in the border district of the province and expanded the number of our participants by including this CBO. In total, we were able to have seven informants in our study. They included representatives of CBOs working for Shan displaced communities in Chiang Mai province and representatives of the host community, NGO employees working in the Shan state, and local Thai government officials (Table 1). This breadth of participation helped prevent any misinterpretation and ensured that the data collected pertains to the current situation faced by the CBO.

Table 1 Details of participants in this study

Participant no.	Sector/stakeholder	Characteristics/profile
Participant 1	Members of the participating CBO	They have been working as CBO members for more than ten years and experienced the organization of fundraising activities for the Shan displaced community in Chiang Mai.
Participant 2		
Participant 3	Local people who had experience in fundraising for the Shan displaced community	They have participated in and have donated to fundraising activities which were organized by the participating CBO.
Participant 4		
Participant 5		
Participant 6	Members of a local NGO operating in the southern Shan state.	His/her organization aims to promote Shan livelihoods mostly related to healthcare services. Occasionally, there is a collaboration with INGOs based in Thailand.
Participant 7	Local Thai government employee	He/she is a representative of the local government organization in Chiang Mai province whose duties have involved members of the Shan displaced community.

Source: Summarized by the authors

Analytical Techniques

We conducted a thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke (2006), which consists of six steps. First, we contextualized information gathered from the interviewees regarding their experiences, the local context, and contributions to the CBO's fundraising efforts. Second, we generated codes to classify the observed data into related categories to form a structure for analysis. Third, we used the codes to look for themes in the data and how they relate to the challenges of the CBO's fundraising. Fourth, the themes were identified and labelled. Fifth, the results of the analysis were documented. Finally, we reported the findings according to the constructed themes. If there was an overlapping theme, we adjusted it to cohere around a single theme or concept to capture the majority of the information.

Data Collection

Two methods were adopted for collecting the primary data—semi-structured interviews and participating observations, both of which complied rigorously with ethical standards by the Research Ethics Review Committee (RERC) with which the authors were affiliated (Certification No. RERC 2021/013). The primary data collection took place from October 2021 to February 2022.

1. Key informant interviews

We conducted semi-structured, in-person interviews with key informants to encourage open communication and sharing of experiences. Prior to the interview, participants received materials, including questions and project details, via email or post. On the interview day, verbal consent was obtained and, to ensure confidentiality, no video or audio recordings were made. Participants' identities were not included in the written report. We maintained a neutral stance, focusing on listening without prejudice, and to foster a safe and friendly environment, we informed participants that they could decline to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable. The main trigger questions are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2 Trigger questions for the semi-structured interview

Sector/stakeholder	Main objective	Trigger questions
The CBO members	To investigate the existing conditions of local organizations and the challenges they have faced during fundraising activities	(1) What is your role in the organization?
Local NGO operating in southern Shan state		(2) How do you engage in community events when fundraising? (3) What are the challenges to your fundraising efforts? (4) How do you respond to the challenges? (5) How do local government and the local environment assist your activities?
Host community	To investigate local attitudes/ perceptions towards fundraising activities for this Shan displaced community	(1) Do you think fundraising activities could promote livelihoods of this Shan displaced community? (2) Have you participated in fundraising activities conducted by the organization? (3) Which challenges do you believe hinder the success of fundraising with communities?
Local Thai government	To investigate the existing conditions of the government office on considering approval for fundraising activities	(1) How do local government agencies respond to the CBO's fundraising campaign? (2) What are your thoughts on the challenges posed by the local government environment to the success of the fundraising campaign? (3) Are there any national security concerns presented by the fundraising activities? If so, what problems exist?

Note: All questions were forwarded to the informants for their consideration before the appointment date. Verbal consent was requested before starting the interview.

2. Participants' observations

In addition, to understand insights into fundraising challenges, we also used direct participation to observe and collect information that the informants of the semi-structured interview may not have presented. This was done to ensure that the data collected were holistic and comprehensive for the analysis.

We participated in the selected CBO's fundraising campaign, which was held from November 2021 to January 2022. The goal of this event was mainly to collect funds to buy rice for the Shan displaced community. We played the role of support staff from the planning process until fund utilization for buying rice for the displaced community.

Limitations

There are two major limitations to the scope of the study, namely limitations on data collection and limitations on analysis. Data limitations consist of three elements. The first is national security concerns, since in the area where we conducted the study, members of the displaced community had been involved with armed conflict in the Shan state and thus were influenced by the inter-government relationship. Some information needed to be approved by key stakeholders, such as CBO's staff, local government officials, and the head of the camp. Consequently, the degree of insight information is subject to those considerations. Second, the data collection is limited by safety reasons due to the existing armed conflict along the Chiang Mai-Shan state border. Crossing the border to obtain information in Shan state is not permitted.

In order to mitigate these limitations, after the completion of an interview, we validated the data's reliability by employing methodological triangulation (Bekhet and Zauszniewski, 2012). The interview reports were reviewed and cross-checked with data from direct observations. The completed reports were returned to the informants for review or re-interviewing (in some cases) to verify their intent, consistency, and adequacy before analysis.

Results

Overview of Fundraising Activities

With reference to the CBO that participated the fundraising campaign, we found that the fundraising events for the Shan displaced community by this CBO were mostly organized as ad-hoc activities, such as low financial balance status or the need for major infrastructure improvement in the camp. All the work is pro-bono and staff members rarely converge except for fundraising events and Buddhist ceremonies.

The fundraising event can be organized as a charitable concert or a Buddhist merit-making ceremony. Before organizing the event, the CBO had to get authorization from the relevant Thai authorities. Documents describing the objectives of fund utilization, the event procedures, and donor involvement were mandatory. When the event was arranged, the CBO informed the donors about the event's details with the support of local NGOs. At the same time, the event was promoted through poster/leaflet distribution and community radio in surrounding communities, as well as through personal message applications. After the completion of the event, the summary report of total fund collection and plans for fund utilization had to be provided to the Thai authorities for safe keeping. If the amount of funds collected was substantial, the government might take a more active role in monitoring the fund utilization.

Emerging Issues of Concern to the Community-based Organization

The adoption of the thematic technique generated three themes of emerging issues of concern faced by the CBO fundraising activities for the Shan displaced community in Chiang Mai: 1) the accusation of supporting ethnic arms, 2) conflict-led concerns of border politics, and 3) cyberattacks to manipulate information sharing.

1. The accusation of supporting ethnic arms

As the Thailand-Shan state border is a site where several ethnic arms and militia are active, we observed that the ongoing conflicts challenge the CBO donors regarding utilization of financial support. This situation arose mostly from news published inside Myanmar asserting that the funds were potentially allocated to strengthen ethnic arms capacity, in particular for the southern-Shan state army (S-SSA), which is based along this border. This perspective was shared by Participant 1 who was a CBO member:

We observed that donors' concerns are formed by news reported in Myanmar. Some of the news was published by the official media. Even though the reported information did not mention us directly, it inferred that we were involved. Such news stated that *ethnic militias X (for example) along the Thailand-Shan border have much increased armed power due to local support*. The statement did not identify us, but those mentioned militias are based on the opposite of our community. As a result, it misleads the public to suspecting us (K1 [Pseudonym], 2021).

This experience was also shared by Participant 6:

Some donors perceived that some support, particularly related to food security assistance, possibly incurs accusations of support for ethnic armies in this area. It is challenging for us to explain to the donors that sources of the news are rumors and have been typically shared inside the personal message application. As a result, those accusations have become out of control (K6 [Pseudonym], 2021).

This accusation of empowering the capacity of the ethnic armed forces has discouraged potential donors from financially supporting the operations of local organizations on both sides of the border. It was observed that this accusation directly affected public trust in the donations by raising the questions of financial utilization. As expected, donor confusion over financial support for CBO activities remained as the conflicts were ongoing. In light of this concern, they might come up with redundant or excessive requests, especially concerning details of financial planning and utilization.

2. Conflict-led concerns of border politics

As mentioned above, Thailand's government only acknowledged people in this camp as displaced people and subjected them to close supervision by the local government/authorized office. As reported by a CBO member, the CBO had to spend an excessive amount of time on document preparation to obtain government permission, largely due to the repetitive nature of the process.

In doing some activities, we found obstructions in obtaining permission from the local government as most of the focal points or government officials have different perspectives of the border conflicts in this area. This case contributed to excessive and repeated document work prepared by different officials/agencies. In some cases, we spent more time asking for permission than we spent on planning and doing activities (K2 [Pseudonym], 2021).

Since there are no national guidelines regarding the procedures to provide permission to displaced persons' related activities, the Thai government allows local officials to design their own, which may be based on the individual's judgement. It can be understood from the perspectives of the local government that the excessive paperwork functioned as a way to secure inter-governmental relationships with Myanmar because uninformed decisions may create serious tensions on the border area, as addressed by Participant 7:

Since the displaced persons are allowed to have temporary resettlement in Thai territory for humanitarian reasons, there is no direct law or regulation for outlining procedures for consideration. This motivates some officials to be very careful to comply with the document and take time to consult with relevant agencies case by case, as some issues are new for them. An uninformed decision might be sensitive on the government-to-government level (K7 [Pseudonym], 2021).

A similar situation was also found when the CBO worked with its sponsors. Participant 1 claimed that they were often delayed in executing activities as they had to wait for sponsors to make their decision. Some of them requested an excessive number of documents which were not practical in the Shan displacement context. This circumstance arose especially when the fundraising activities involved international donors.

When organizing big charity events which require sponsorship from various international donors, we often face circumstances that lack flexibility in decision making. Occasionally, we (CBO) have to deliver many documents, such as government approval for organizing an event, and wait for our partners to reach a decision. It results in a number of pending decision schedules. This contributes to ineffective management in particular activities which demand prompt response and decision making (K1 [Pseudonym], 2021).

As ethnic conflicts and the disparity of related publicly available information continues to intensify, it is understandable that international donors need to be careful and certain in their decision making, particularly in dealing with financial support. This is undertaken to protect them from the eyes of the international community and the accusations made against them by the authorities of Myanmar for contributing to the upsurge in ethnic conflicts.

3. Cyberattacks for manipulating information sharing

We generated this theme of cyberattacks as we witnessed the observed CBO's fundraising activities being disturbed by data hacking and network strikes, which refer to efforts to cause trouble or dysfunction to the data stored in an online system or computer by using unauthorized access. This unprecedented situation has been acknowledged as a contemporary issue for the CBO since they had less sufficient IT infrastructure and technological knowledge, as addressed by Participant 2:

Various unauthorized accesses tended to trouble or impede our internet system, e.g., websites, social media platforms, when we organized fundraising activities. For example, in 2019, our organization arranged a charity concert seeking funds to buy rice for the Shan displacement. The event had to deal with some hackers from the first day of ticket selling until the end of the concert. We could not respond to them effectively because we have few technological skills. Although this action did not directly damage the fundraising activities, we saw that they displayed an opposing view of assisting those displaced (K2 [Pseudonym], 2021).

In addition, the CBOs viewed that this interruption by their opponents aimed to impede dissemination of critical information, such as current conflict situations or the movement of stakeholders in the border area, rather than financial striking. Participants 3, 4, and 5 who participated in the CBO fundraising activities also agreed.

In 2019, the big charity concert drew great attention in our community. We faced several obstacles to share the event's details in online media, particularly from the CBO web page/platform (K4 [Pseudonym], 2021).

I was not surprised. We were sure that the occurrence of the obstacles did not intend to freeze donation activities (K3 [Pseudonym], 2021).

It was only to reveal that the CBO's opponents kept looking for our activities and probably motivated us to be concerned about safety. If they want to hack donation funds, it is not worth doing as the funds are not sufficient enough to compensate for the cost of the attack (K5 [Pseudonym], 2021).

Disrupting the CBO's cyberspace during the event was ultimately seen as a strategy to warn the CBO and local members who participated in fundraising activities about the dangers of broadcasting local

information. We were informed that there were notable similarities between the situation described above with that in community-based activities in the inner part of Shan state. Numerous online communication platforms were frequently troubled by unauthorized access, as noted by Participant 6:

Our online platforms have been often troubled with unauthorized or invisible access. Most unauthorized access manipulated our platform to disseminate fake news, such as claims that donations will support ethnic arms, be used for producing drugs, or buying weapons. Such misinformation mainly aims to confuse the donors' perceptions and accuse us of supporting ethnic insurgencies (K6 [Pseudonym], 2021).

In summary, the current issue posed a formidable challenge to not only CBOs in southern Shan state but also to the CBO for Shan displacement in Chiang Mai. This manipulation has the potential to distort the perceptions of donors. It may prevent such CBOs from fully embracing the internet for public interaction, and therefore, may slow the spread of timely information as a result.

Discussion

The political sensitivity of cross-border aid complicates relationships between Thailand and Myanmar, especially when it comes to funding. Myanmar border control and humanitarian restrictions are linked to diplomatic pressure, as also found in Haines and Buchanan (2023) and Idler and Tkacova (2023). Thailand's border with Myanmar has been a focal point of tension, with authorities periodically tightening restrictions on the movement of people and aid. These restrictions, often driven by national security concerns, complicate fundraising strategies for CBOs, as they struggle to navigate bureaucratic and diplomatic hurdles while trying to deliver aid.

In aftermath of the Myanmar coup d'état in February 2021, the Thai government's stance on providing support to any Myanmar displaced communities has fluctuated due to its own political and diplomatic considerations, which further limit CBOs' access to necessary resources. In line with observations from existing studies (Haines and Buchanan, 2023; Idler and Tkacova, 2023), military control and restrictions on humanitarian organizations operating within Myanmar have made it difficult for CBOs in Thailand to coordinate relief efforts, thereby affecting fundraising and resource allocation. This might be an effort to suppress ethnic resistance. In fact, many aid-receiving areas, such as Shan state, are home to ethnic groups involved in long-standing conflicts with the military. By limiting humanitarian aid, the military seeks to weaken these communities, reducing their capacity to resist military control or support armed ethnic organizations. Consequently, several CBOs as well as humanitarian aid agencies along the border face delays and logistical barriers in providing assistance to those displaced by conflicts.

Additionally, the geopolitical situation also affects donor priorities. Many international donors align their funding with the political objectives of their governments. In the aftermath of Myanmar's coup, certain countries or international organizations may choose to restrict funding to any effort that could be perceived as supporting the Myanmar military, including humanitarian assistance for those fleeing conflict. These restrictions or hesitations may impact CBOs' ability to raise the necessary funds for their operations.

Moreover, our analysis identified structural challenges and processes that influence the fundraising outcomes of CBOs in this region. These findings contribute to bridging the knowledge gap related to the systemic root causes affecting humanitarian fundraising efforts and are discussed below.

Quests for Trust

The development of activities that are designed to bolster the livelihoods of displaced communities is wholly dependent upon the effective and meaningful collaboration of key individuals (Moreno-Serna et al., 2020). Unfortunately, such collaboration is significantly problematic in the context of our case study. Any fundraising activities that involved ethnic groups from southern Shan state were frequently accused of supporting armed conflicts in that region and exacerbating the already considerably high anxiety within border communities. As a result, the trust issue was exceptionally damaging to the operation of the CBO that works for Shan displaced persons whose recognitions of their status are insufficient. Besides being detrimental to this CBO's relationship with potential donors, it also affects relationships among Thai agencies that work with displaced persons in Thailand.

In term of relationships with potential donors, because this CBO cannot claim to work directly with legally recognized refugees, it had to go above and beyond to build a trusting connection with its potential donors. Public trust plays an important role when it comes to donations, in particular organizational transparency (Dethier et al., 2021; George et al., 2020). Fundraising for humanitarian activities hardly compromises an organizer's credibility especially when new donors are involved (George et al., 2020). As a result, the quest for trusts has increased towards this CBO when trustworthiness was not well established due to the legal status of their clients (Dethier et al., 2021).

Moreover, we found that trust issues have also been formed among Thai agencies regarding management of forced displacement communities. There were two key contributing elements. The first was the consequence of the growing Myanmar ethnic politics along the Thai border (Yawngghwe, 2010). Myanmar ethnic and ethnic-related issues have been sensitive issues for border politics between Thailand and Myanmar for a long time. Previously, Thai actions involved with Myanmar's ethnic armed groups or ethnic conflict-related issues frequently harmed their relationship (Pechdin and Ahmad, 2022; Yawngghwe, 2010). Thai authorities in the border area are expected to be mindful of their decisions, particularly those regarding displaced persons from Shan state who share a common ethnicity with the active ethnic armed group (Pechdin and Ahmad, 2022). Second, because the displaced Shan people are only recognized as displaced persons, there are no official laws or procedures in place to assist them. This inadequacy empowers the individual authorities in the border area who make the decisions. Due to the political sensitivity of the border situation and the lack of formal guidelines, local authorities tend to rely on their own judgment and justify their decisions based on personal interpretations of their responsibilities. Over time, this has led to internal distrust, as individual actions vary and are not necessarily aligned with past practices or broader policy consistency.

In short, it is essential to acknowledge that trust difficulties pose a significant challenge to the CBO's operation in the absence of international public recognition and domestic rules and regulations. These issues continue to undermine their success in fundraising activities. As public trust and an effective governance system have not been established in such cases, the repeated and excessive requests from donors and delays in government decision-making for the fundraising activities are anticipated to remain.

Cybersecurity as Critical Emergence of Concerns

It is essential to highlight the development of cybersecurity. Our key findings indicate that cybersecurity is the upcoming threat to fundraising activities. In our case study, cyberspace can trigger confusion by simply providing misinformation (Gandhi et al., 2011) and it was found to be strongly related to political,

ethical, and cultural conflicts (Gandhi et al., 2011; Kostyuk and Zhukov, 2019). In fact, cyberspace benefits the conflict contributors by concealing their identity (Gurdgiev and Fleming, 2021), which strategically produces uneasiness among participants engaging in fundraising activities by manipulating information sharing (Panzica, 2020). Moreover, the dearth of technological recognition among the CBO staff adds to the difficulty in response to preventing the invasion, hampering the effectiveness of organizing an event.

The lack of technological literacy contributes to ineffective responses to cyberattacks (Mierzwa and Scott, 2017; Panzica, 2020). The restrictions on using donor funds for overhead projects, such as cybersecurity, rather than programmatic efforts that contribute to the core value they provide to their donors and constituents further hinder the progress to improve their technological sophistication (Mierzwa and Scott, 2017). As a result, as presented by our case study, the CBO was unable to adequately prepare for the cyberattack due to concerns over fund utilizations, thereby discouraging them from pursuing opportunities for training to get technical recognition or to outsource technicians to maintain their platform.

However, with contemporary globalization, technical recognitions of cybersecurity are crucial requirement for non-profit organizations (Gates, 2015; Mierzwa and Scott, 2017). Non-profit organizations have to increase security in their cyberspace (Gurdgiev and Fleming, 2021; Panzica, 2020). Nonetheless, considering the intention of cost minimization, a strategic partnership may be a feasible alternative. Establishing a strategic collaboration with a potential organization, especially one with a good grounding in cybersecurity management, would result in capacity building in the organization by sharing experience among practitioners through engagement (George et al., 2020). This provides an opportunity for the CBO to collaborate on technological support in response to the ransomware invasion.

Contributions to Academic Knowledge

The disruption of aid access in forced displaced communities and political-conflict affected areas can be analyzed through the concepts of trust (Mayer et al., 1995) and social exchange theory (Homans, 1958), both of which show the formation of the challenges faced by community-based organizations (CBOs) and humanitarian agencies. As demonstrated in the Koung Jor case, Mayer et al. (1995) show that trust is built on the perceived ability, benevolence, and integrity of an organization, all of which were undermined when the fundraising event was disrupted. When the event struggled considerably, donors may have perceived that CBOs lacked the ability to fulfil their mission effectively, leading to doubts about their capacity to manage resources and deliver outcomes. Furthermore, such disruptions hinder CBOs' ability to demonstrate benevolence and integrity, as they may struggle to meet the needs of displaced populations and face accusations of mismanagement or inefficiency. This erosion of trust not only discourages donor contributions but also weakens the confidence of displaced communities in the organizations meant to support them.

In accordance with the perspective of social exchange, which emphasizes reciprocal relationships based on trust and mutual benefit, disruptions in aid access destabilize the critical exchanges among donors, CBOs, and beneficiaries. Donors contribute funds with the expectation that their resources will be used to achieve meaningful outcomes. When aid is blocked or delayed, the failure to fulfil this expectation undermines the reciprocal relationship, leading to donor disengagement. Similarly, displaced populations depend on CBOs for essential resources and services. If they face serious concerns over their life security, they may feel neglected or abandoned, which erodes their trust and willingness to cooperate with CBOs, as presented by our case study.

Conclusion

Activities in the conflict-affected area are foreseen to be influenced by the political climate. Our case study on fundraising for arm-conflict-induced Shan displaced communities in Thailand identified emerging challenges that are presumably exposed as psychological warfare i.e., trusts and concerns, rather than physical assaults. Quests for trust and protection against cyberspace attacks were considered as significant upcoming threats. This is useful information for CBO or practitioners who work in conflict-affected areas, in particular those involving fundraising for Myanmar displaced communities.

One way to overcome the challenge of trust issues is to build relationships with donors who are willing to provide long-term support. These relationships can be cultivated through regular communication and updates on the work of the organization. In addition to preventing cyberattacks, forming strategic partnerships with other organizations that have experienced cyberattacks while raising funds is recommended. These organizations can provide advice and assistance with planning and carrying out fundraising activities. Moreover, they may offer the potential to CBO to improve their credibility, opportunities for human capital training, and technological support, which would be beneficial to the efforts of breaking restrictions on its ability to respond to the cyberattacks.

Additionally, future research is encouraged to discover how CBOs could strategically plan for diversifying their funding uses to generate income. In our case study, the donation fund is used solely for one-time expenditures such as buying rice or maintaining camp infrastructure. This situation contributes to a CBO's vulnerability to unfavorable financial events such as financial crises. Therefore, increasing income by investing the fund in potential activities should be explored to diversify financial risks.

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