Development cooperation
– a case study on the effects on community committees’ role and legitimacy in Kayin State, Myanmar
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I sincerely hope that the findings of this study will in some way contribute to a greater understanding of how civil society organizations can, through community committees, further empower communities around Myanmar.
Abstract

A common discussion within the international development cooperation discourse is that of ownership and dependency. A discussion which has become of great significance within the context of Myanmar as more and more international and foreign development agencies and organizations have been aloud into the country during the major structural reform process Myanmar is currently undergoing. When the state, as a public service provider, is not able to supply what is needed within the villages around Myanmar these international and foreign organizations and agencies become of great importance as they have access to the necessary funds to provide these services. The support to the villages is often distributed through the most deeply rooted and inclusive forum there are within these villages, namely community committees.

This study investigates how the vertical relationship between the INGOs, their local partner NGOs and the community committees affect the role and possibly the legitimacy of the community committees.

This is done through a case study of a village that is currently provided support through its two community committees by two INGOs and their local partner NGO. To understand the role and legitimacy interviews have been conducted with the legitimizing environment of the community committees as well as with the community committees and the local NGO themselves to try to identify the affects of the aid on the perceived role and legitimacy of the community committees.

The study found that the relationship does have a significant affect on the role and legitimacy of the community committees. It seems that the relationship does, through a top-down approach, influence the community committees to monopolize the definition of development within their village. Due to this the community they are based within also considers the community committees legitimate.

Key words: Ownership, Community Committees, Legitimacy, Development Cooperation, Myanmar
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List of abbreviations

CBO – Community Based Organization
CRC – the Convention on the Rights of the Children
INGO – International Non-governmental organization
NGO – Non-governmental organization
RBA – Rights Based Approach
UN – the United Nations
1. Introduction

1.1 Topic and research problem
When Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar in 2008, thousands of people either died or went missing, while millions experienced food insecurity leading to a humanitarian disaster in the delta area of Myanmar. This was the beginning of significant international presence in Myanmar when particularly international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) but also foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international institutions were aloud to enter the country to provide assistance in the aftermath of the cyclone. (Sabandar, 2010:205) Today Myanmar is undergoing dramatic policy changes often resulting in ongoing processes of structural change. (Min Ko Naing, 2012:135) Within this process of structural change towards more democratic bottom-up structures, many additional international and foreign development agencies and organizations including INGOs and foreign NGOs have moved into the country to facilitate the process while also working with poverty reduction by providing support through resources and capacity building to union, state, township, tract, community and individual level actors, in accordance with the Myanmar Agenda 21, a document based on the United Nations (UN) Agenda 21, outlining a way towards sustainable development. (James, 2003:10)

In this study, INGOs are defined as NGOs that are not based in a particular country but are characterized by having an international base as an organization. Foreign NGOs are however defined by their ties to the specific country they originate from.

Within the development process in Myanmar, the international and foreign development agencies and organizations have become of great importance as they, as mentioned above, support almost all sectors and levels of Myanmar society in their development process. The acceptance and importance assigned to these development agencies and organizations has a lot to do with international pressure from the global community as well as that these agencies and organizations have access to large funding, funding which is not to the same extent available for Myanmar’s local civil society organizations. These local civil society organizations often instead become partners to the foreign and international agencies and organizations. The local civil society organization’s role as a local partner is then often to, in collaboration with their foreign or international counterpart, determine the needs, design the projects and finally be the implementer of the project. (Banks & Hulme, 2012:16)
The way the INGOs and foreign NGOs often work on a community level is to promote empowerment through already existing or created community structures. Historically there has always been some kind of community structure present in every village of Myanmar. Sometime it has taken the form of a village authority group and sometime a community committee. Today groups like village development committees are becoming more common, partly due to a need for bottom-up structures focused on development issues of the village and partly because the townships’ Plans’ Formulation and Implementation Committee’s and the various township departments needs a counterpart in the local communities to communicate with. (Larsson, 2013)

The Myanmar culture of consensus has also played a large role in the forming of various village structures to ensure inclusive decisions within a community. Aid and support from the INGOs and their local partner NGOs is therefore often distributed through these village structures as they are seen as the most inclusive, deeply rooted, and legitimate forum there is in a village. In some cases when the village lacks structures like this or the existing structures can simply not handle the support for various reasons, community based organizations (CBOs) are set up by the local NGO to receive and distribute the aid. (Merlin, 2009:5)

The relationship between INGOs and village structures take various forms and thus various dynamics between the INGO, the local NGO and the village structure may exist, particularly in the case when a separate CBO is formed within the village. Many INGOs claim to want to empower the community by supporting the most inclusive participatory forum there is within the community. (Atack, 1999:861) In the case of Myanmar, the already existing village structure or a CBO closely connected to this structure may be considered to be the most inclusive participatory forum within villages.

During the process of empowerment and a newly created relationship between the INGO and the village structure, the dynamic of the relationship may contribute to a changing role of the village structure as well as its legitimacy within its local context where it should be deeply rooted within the community it operates. The well-meant support from the INGO and its local partner can in certain cases become
overwhelming to the already existing village structure that has to focus all of their resources on adapting to the support from the INGO. For example if the village structure becomes the deciding forum for an initiated disaster risk reduction process where the INGO initiates a process which is to empower the community to prepare for future disasters together. In this way the role and thus in some cases the legitimacy of the village structure may change due to the changing context of its existence. In the case when a separate group, for example a CBO, is set up by the community, by the NGO, or in collaboration, the same concern occurs, especially since the created group do not have any previous structures connecting them to their own community.

The focus of the aid on existing committees, and particularly in the case when separate CBOs are created, do however need to consider the informal constellations of people and how these informal structures are affected by the changing role of the more formal village structure in the form of a committee or CBO. (Fowler, 2000)

1.2 Objective
The objective of this study is to better understand the role and legitimacy of a CBO through the perceptions of the legitimizing environment in the case when support is provided by INGOs and its local partner NGO through this CBO. By better understanding the role of a CBO within the vertical relationship with INGOs and their local partner NGO and how this possibly affects the role and legitimacy of that particular CBO I hope to be able to further provide a platform of knowledge on which further empowerment and development, through village structures such as CBOs, within the villages of Myanmar can take place.

1.3 Research question
From the topic and research problem described above a number of important questions arise. The study will focus on the following:

What happens to the role and legitimacy of a village’s community committees once they become recipients of aid from INGOs and their local partner NGO?

To answer the above question the following sub questions will also try to be answered:

- Within the dynamics of the relationship between the community committees, local NGO and its partner INGOs, what happens to the perceived role of the community committee according to the community itself?
- How does the potential change in perceived roles of the community committees affect the community’s perceived legitimacy of the village’s community committees?
- Why does the community consider the community committees legitimate or not?

2. Existing research and relevance

Previous research has to a large extent discussed the definition of civil society as well as the role of civil society in a democratization process. Sometimes the concept of democracy has been connected to empowerment. (Hadenius & Uggla, 1996:1621) Many studies have further focused on the issue of legitimacy per se but rather through a very technical approach focusing on operational legitimacy, particularly within development cooperation, which this study does as well. (Lister, 2006) The main difference is that this study is set in a case where the study tries to understand the normative framework and the legitimizing environment through analyzing the legitimizing environment’s reflections on the operations and role of the CBO to build knowledge for INGOs and their partners on how their methods and way of working is affecting the perception and legitimization of the village’s CBO.

In other case studies found, cases are analyzed through the technical approach Lister describes above where for example Kilby looks at one of the legitimizing aspects, accountability, and tries to find a relationship between the formality of accountability structures and the depth of accountability. (Kilby, 2005:960)

Furthermore various studies have focused on individual aspects of what this study considers to be part of the legitimacy of any civil society organization. For example empowerment and how international organizations define and work with the concept (Hennink, Kiitt, Pillinger & Jayakaran, 2012), the representiveness of shallow civil society organizations (Hudson, 2000, Edwards, Hulme & Wallace, 1999), the promoting of accountability (O’Dwyer & Unerman, 2010), and the questioning of the effectiveness of empowerment and participatory development (Mohan & Stokke, 2000).

This study is relevant and significant due to the unexplored context it is set within as well as the holistic approach to the concept of legitimacy which is analyzed with the
help of the perceptions of the legitimizing environment through an analytical framework well based within the academic discourse on legitimacy and ownership. The study combines a quite technical approach while also taking into account the normative framework of the setting within which the study is conducted, enabling the findings to contribute to a greater understanding of the effects of the INGOs’ and local NGO’s ways of working.

3. Theoretical and analytical framework

The study will be based on Immanuel Kant’s idea of civil society as based on mutual respect and “moral concepts that guide and motivate conduct to treat others as ends.” (DeLue, 2006:117)

If civil society then is viewed through Kant’s idea to treat others as ends it should thus be possible to analyze the legitimacy of community committees in relation to INGOs and their local partner NGOs through the intentions of the different organizations within this relationship. (DeLue, 2006:117)

When civil society is then analyzed with its internal dynamics it may be needed to consider the ideas of Habermas. Habermas ideas states that civil society anchor communication structures of the public sphere. Here Habermas basically describes civil society as a tool for the state to anchor its legitimacy as civil society is to represent the people. (Kaldor, 2003:21) Habermas’ idea may also be applicable to the relationship between deep- and shallow civil society where shallow civil society tries to anchor, similarly to the state, its legitimacy through deep civil society. (ActionAid, 1999:2)

Deep civil society is in this study defined as groups within communities working mainly for their own common purpose, for example community committees when functioning as bottom-up structures. These often quite informal structures, forums or organizations are mainly characterized by being deeply rooted within the context they aim to work within and develop. Large international agencies or organizations are however often good examples of shallow civil society where the often very formal organizations do not originate within the communities they aim to develop. (Åkesson & Nilsson, 2006:62)
It is thus the vertical relationship between shallow- and deep civil society that is relevant to analyze to better understand the role and legitimacy of community committees when these receive external support through capacity building or resources to empower from for example INGOs.

The concepts crucial for the study consist of definitions of two different kinds of civil society organizations, deep- and shallow civil society, as well as the legitimacy of these. Within the relationship between deep and shallow civil society the question of legitimacy is also well connected to the concept of empowerment where shallow civil society represented by INGOs claim to empower deep civil society. If so deep civil society should be able to at least maintain or maybe even increase its legitimacy through its potentially new role within its community based on the below definition of legitimacy. The motivation, or the distinctive values, of the work of a shallow civil society is also what Atack claim to be one of four aspects that defines its and any other civil society organization’s legitimacy. *(1999:859)*

Atack further defines the intentions of a civil society organization as part of its distinctive values where the organization’s work for development must be characterized by solidarity. Any influences by for example market logic where one always have to adapt to opportunities to gain from ones actions may cloud the distinctive values of a civil society organization such as an INGO or community structure and thus decrease its legitimacy. Taking advantage of opportunities does however not per se cloud the distinctive values but when opportunities affect the priorities and values of the civil society organization it does. *(Atack, 1999:860)*

As very few INGOs within shallow civil society are member based, or at least do not have their member-base within the communities they aim to develop, they do thus not have their constituency within the communities they aim to promote development within. The INGOs do therefore need to be legitimate through other ways of being representative of the communities they work within, the second of the four aspects defining civil society organizations legitimacy according to Atack. The way to be representative is to be transparent, accountable and by acting in the spirit of genuine partnership with others. *(Atack, 1999:858 & DeLue, 2006:117)*

The INGO ActionAid describes very well how they view their role and relationship to deep civil society and the communities they aim to develop; “It is the understanding
and credibility that we gain from our grassroots-level work that will give us the strength to work with the poor to influence local and national government and international institutions to respond to their demands.” (1999:2) They clearly describe how they, within their rights based approach (RBA), need to anchor their legitimacy within the communities they work within to be able to create an enabling environment for these communities and in this way empower them.

Effectiveness is the third factor contributing to legitimacy. Effectiveness is particularly important if the surrounding society and state actors are to consider the ideas of civil society relevant. (Atack, 1999:861) The final and fourth factor is empowerment, which is whether the civil society organization is able to empower the target population where empowerment is defined as “a desired process by which individuals, typically including the poorest of the poor, are to take direct control over their lives”. (Atack, 1999:861) The question that has to be asked when civil society organizations say they want to empower is however who defines the needs and thus the ownership and effectiveness of the empowerment? (Friedmann, 1992:55) Empowerment is on the other hand a very contested term, by some considered a meaningless tool focusing on the individual’s possible actions to develop while maintaining and thus legitimizing the social structures that keep the individual from real development. (Moore, 2001:322)

Walker and McCarthy, however, question the effectiveness of community organizations for social change when in many cases direct political actions such as disruptive protests is more effective in promoting social change. By organizing yourself they argue that the communities play the elite’s games according to their rules. Movements and organizing of the poor and disempowered does however have one particular upside, which is that the survival of a movement, national or local, is prolonged and sustained when organized. (2010:319)

Due to the problem identification which focuses on the relationship between the different levels of civil society and the affects on community organizations’ role and legitimacy within its own context, Walker’s and McCarthy’s will only be regarded in terms of the potential disempowerment caused by the aid while the study will not question the actual organizing of the community studied.
Friedmann further describes how the state has been the prime guardian of the poor in modern discourse, which he argues, relieves the individual from responsibility as government professionals handles the issue of development. *(1992:56)* Friedmann further defines factors which he considers to be determining (dis)empowerment. The factors are defensible life space, surplus time, knowledge and skills, appropriate information, social organization, social networks, instruments of work and livelihood and financial resources. *(1992:67ff)* The factors mentioned above in different ways relate to how civil society organization can empower a community or an individual. Some of the factors are more closely connected to structural empowerment where an enabling environment is created while some are very individual, but all of them show the interconnectedness between the structural and the individual. For real empowerment to take place, according to Friedmann, one must not only provide leadership but also work for an enabling environment.

Attack further argues that shallow civil society organizations should empower by building capacity within deep civil society organizations and institutions for them to be able to empower their own constituency. *(1999:863)* An argument that still does only partly consider the social structures as Moore mentions above as capacity building of deep civil society may give deep civil society capacity to negotiate and challenge the structures maintaining the state of disempowerment.

There are of course also several ways of empowering an individual or a community. Kilby argues that it can be done in two ways, either by creating an enabling environment for the individual and/or community or by providing leadership. Empowerment by leading does however pose the difficulty of at the same time being accountable. As Kilby describes it; “the relationship between an NGO and its constituency in these transactions (power being bestowed to those without power) is itself a manifestation of power. […] Their interaction with the community is both empowering of that community at a certain level – but it can also lead to a disempowering ‘dependency’.” *(2006:955)* A dependency that often transfers ownership to the empowering organization and thus a decrease in needed accountability according to Kilby’s reasoning.

Lister further reviews the literature on civil society legitimacy and comes to the conclusion that the three aspects emphasized in the literature in regards to legitimacy
are accountability, representiveness and effectiveness. (2003:176) Atack’s perspective on legitimacy will however be this study’s point of departure as it holistically covers the factors of representiveness, distinctive values, effectiveness and empowerment. (1999) To broaden the analysis, within the social constructivist approach of the study, accountability will also be added as a factor as it should be considered important for the civil society organization, as it is a factor contributing to maintenance of representiveness and distinctive values and thus legitimacy. (Kilby, 2006:953)

Accountability is largely about power, authority and ownership, which is very related to the legitimacy of an organization as the organization has to find a source for its power, authority and ownership somewhere. (Kilby, 2005:953) According to the reasoning above, about shallow- and deep civil society, a CBO or any other community structure which per above definition should have its constituency within the community it is working should be legitimate in regards of the aspect of accountability as long as its power, authority and ownership is given and controlled by its constituents. The vertical relationship with shallow civil society can however affect the ownership of the development process and initiative where the community organization becomes a distributive forum following and adapting to whatever opportunities shallow civil society provides. The relationship should instead be focused on promoting local ownership while giving the community organization the tools to, in an inclusive and accountable manner, work together with its constituency towards developing their own community. (Gittell & Vidal, 1998:86)

Ownership is further also very related to the perceived representiveness of any organization. If the constituency feels ownership they will almost surely also feel that the organization is representative as they themselves to some extent feel they influence the objective and priorities of the organization.

When the constituency feels ownership of deep civil society organization the issue of distinctive values will most likely not be a problem in regards to the organizations legitimacy as the constituency then feel that they determine the agenda of the deep civil society organization. The distinctive value of the deep civil society organization may then purely be based on the constituency’s own needs, thus not influenced by any outside actor or factor. Ownership may also contribute to further empowerment as the organization’s focus and priorities is determined by the constituents whom are also
the beneficiaries within a community context. This means that the focus and priorities are most likely based on actual perceived needs of the beneficiaries. *(Gittell & Vidal, 1998)* Within the ownership discussion there is however always the question of power, as Hyden concludes in his analysis of the Paris declaration. The question of ownership by whom will have implications on the relationship between not only the community and civil society but also within civil society (deep- and shallow) as well as between the state and civil society. The changing power dynamics due to a transfer of ownership from shallow- to deep civil society will almost certainly also have affects on the role and potentially the legitimacy of a deep civil society organization. *(Hyden, 2008:273)*

Kilby further describes three different kind of accountability, all which should be directed downward to deep civil society’s constituency. He argues that accountability should be considered in relation to values, constituency and empowerment. Accountability to values is to be considered an internal matter where any organization should design its organization in a way that follows the values of the organization. An organization committed to inclusive community development should thus organize itself to be inclusive. Accountability towards constituency should enable the constituency of the community organization to influence the organization in such a way that it does what its constituents want it to do. Finally accountability to empowerment is a little more complex. Kilby argues that “the danger that NGOs face in facilitating empowerment, however, is that they may exert their power and influence to prescribe what they believe is empowering.” He continues by stating that the process of empowerment often consist of either creating an enabling environment or by leadership. *(2006:954f)* By then promoting empowerment within a village the community organization must make sure that this process of empowerment is accountable to its constituency and not influenced by the idea of empowerment of the shallow civil society organization providing the support.

Legitimacy can however also be viewed from other perspectives rather than the very technical perspective discussed above. Legitimacy can also be defined by the legitimizing environment where Edwards describes legitimacy as “[…]having the right to be and do something in society – a sense that an organization is lawful, proper, admissible and justified in doing what it does, and saying what it says, and that it continues to enjoy the support of an identifiable constituency.” *(1999:258)* The
The theories described above will enable the study to define and better understand the relationship between different levels of civil society and how this relationship can affect deep civil society within its local context. By choosing a very technical and operational framework based within Kant’s and Habermas’ theories on the dynamics of civil society the study is able to analyze the data consisting of reflections of the legitimizing environment through set variables defining legitimacy, thus giving meaning to the data, thereby giving the study an opportunity to try to answer the research question above.

4. Methodological framework

4.1 Methodology
The study will take the form of a qualitative hermeneutic interpretative study where the perceptions of the study’s subjects are the focus as these perceptions give meaning to events and behaviors within a given context. (Mikkelsen, 2012:126) The design and partly the objective of the study will however have influences of critical realism where the study also provides data and an analysis that can further be used to better understand the affects of the relation between deep- and shallow civil society on deep civil society’s legitimacy within its own context. (Mikkelsen, 2012:136)
As the research questions and the theoretical and analytical framework are formulated in such a way that the community members’ perceptions of the community committees and their legitimacy and roles are the focus the study has to follow the above research approach to fully align with its objective to be able to answer the research questions. The concept of legitimacy as discussed above is often approached in two different ways, a very technical approach where considerations of organizational operations are the focus or a normative one, where questions such as legitimacy to whom and for whom has to be considered. (Lister, 2003:189) This study will try to integrate the two perspectives but with a focus on the normative approach where the individual gives meaning and interprets the legitimacy of the community committee. The perceptions will however be analyzed through a quite technical analytical framework based on the five factors mentioned above contributing to civil society legitimacy. (Atack, 1999 & Kilby, 2005)

The theoretical and analytical framework in combination with the interpretative hermeneutic approach will also ensure that the role and legitimacy will be analyzed both in the local context within the community it operates but also within the vertical relationship with the INGO and local NGO providing support to the community through its committees. (Danermark, 2002:162)

4.2 Method
Through semi-structured interviews with both CBO members, authority group members, child club members and non-members within the community the role and legitimacy of the CBO and child club should be able to be better understood as it provides data based on the perceptions of the community itself. Observations of CBO- and child club meetings were then supposed to serve as a compliment to confirm particularly the role of the CBO and child club by analyzing what is being discussed, by whom and for what reason. The observations did however not take place after changes in schedules and the short timeframe for access to the village and the members of the CBO and child club.

To be able to answer the research questions the interviews focus on a historical narrative where the community members will be asked to share their view on the role of the community committees and what has happened since it was created, thus through the interviews gaining data in regards to changes in roles and legitimacy as the interpretative nature of the study views the data as individuals whom give
meaning to a phenomenon, in this case the community committees. *(Danermark, 2002:164)* The community members will be viewed as constituting the legitimizing environment according to Atacks reasoning, where the community must give consent or in some way approve the community committee in order for it to be legitimate. *(1999:857)*

The study will also take the form of a case study where the village chosen for the study is located in Kayin state, Myanmar. A village where two INGOs together with their common local partner NGO have and are currently running several projects through the village’s CBO and child club. The village is particularly suitable for the study due to the extent it has been exposed to external support from the INGOs and the local NGO while the community committees were created by the local NGO and the INGOs in collaboration with the community itself. Previous to the entry of the INGOs and their local partner NGO there was only the village authority group that was the main deciding forum within the village. The group is still also the group responsible for the communication with for example township authorities. The village is further suitable for the study as the relationship between a new and already existing village structure can also give indications to the role of the CBO and child club even if a village where the INGOs and its partner were working through an already existing village structure would have been more desirable to try to track the change from before and after the village received support from the INGOs and their partner. Changes in the role of the CBO and child club has still been identifiable where the current and past role of the authority group has also been determined to try to see how the relationship between the three groups have affected their respective roles within the community.

The reason for a case study is particularly the study’s hermeneutic interpretative nature where the data consists of interpretations of community members giving meaning to the phenomenon of the community committees and their role and legitimacy. To better understand the role and legitimacy through individual’s perceptions and interpretations the study must be set in a fixed context with norms and values that provides a framework to the perceptions and interpretations of the individuals, in this case, the village selected in Kayin State, Myanmar. *(Mikkelsen, 2012:125)*
The sampling will be of a purposive nature as the close cooperation with both village volunteers, CBO and the local NGO gives the study a broad and in-depth knowledge of whom within and outside the community committees may have varied perspectives of the community committees. *(Mikkelsen, 2012:193)*

Quotes from interviews will sometimes be presented slightly edited to a more correct English. As the interviews have almost all been completely dependent on a translator who was not capable of word-by-word translation the transcripts almost only show the translator’s description or summary of the interviewees’ answers. A few sentences are however direct translations and thus edited quotes and not only summaries will be presented in the findings. Generally summaries of answers will however be presented when the translation was not at any time a word-by-word translation. All quotes and summaries will however be referring to transcriptions of the interviews for the reader to check the original wording as translated during the interviews.

### 4.3 Limitations and delimitations

The main delimitations of the study will be the community studied. The study will focus on one case, that is one particular village in Kayin state, Myanmar, and the dynamics between the different civil society organizations connected to this particular village. The study will exclude other involved actors such as the township authorities whom will only be recognized as an actor who is a part of the village’s possible enabling environment with the potential difficulties and opportunities it provides to the community.

The study will also mainly focus on the population of the village and its committees as this is where the legitimacy and role is looked at but as it is within the context of a vertical relationship with an INGO and its local partner NGO these will also be considered in the study. The monk of the village who possesses great influence was however not interviewed as he was not available during the timeframe of the interviews, thus the study has not been able to include every important actor of the legitimizing environment of the CBO and child club.

The study will furthermore only use the legitimizing environment to collect data about the operational aspects of the legitimacy of the CBO and child club whereas no in-depth attempt will be made to understand the internal dynamics of the legitimizing environment except for the obvious role of other village structures, such as the village authority group and their roles in relationship to the CBO and child club.
Obvious limitations due to the analytical framework and delimitations such as that the study is not be able to include every influential factor are unavoidable. Two other major limitations of the study has been the limited time for interviews as Kayin state is a politically sensitive area to work in as well as the obvious language limitations where the study’s interviews will almost entirely be dependent on a translator. The timeframe, which was already very short due to the national holiday of Thingyan and the deadline for the submission of the thesis, was further compromised when the selected village were organizing nine weddings, occupying every single person in the village making it impossible to utilize all the few days set aside for interviews.

A major limitation of the study was also the purposive sampling, which in itself may have contributed to interesting data being excluded due to potential lack of knowledge of whom within the community would be of interest to interview. The fact that the CBO members took on the responsibility for me as a researcher when visiting the village resulted in that they were a little too active in the process of selecting interviewees. The CBO members’ involvement in the selection process may possibly contribute to a skewed selection where the selected interviewees may have all had some kind of relationship to CBO members. Another fact that may have contributed to unreliable data is that, as the CBO members were responsible for me, they were almost always present during interviews. This may have affected the interviewees’ answers in regards to the CBO but it did also provide an opportunity to observe how the CBO members acted in relation to non-members when these, in the opinion of the CBO members, described the role of the CBO incorrectly. The last days of interviews were however conducted without CBO members present and after comparing answers between when a CBO member was or wasn’t present during the interviews there does not seem to be any consistent patterns of different answers when the CBO members were present or when they weren’t.

4.4 Ethical considerations
The study does have three main ethical dilemmas to consider. I as a researcher have a previously history of working with another INGO and another local NGO in and around Hpa An in Kayin State, Myanmar. The INGO and local NGO I have previous been working with are however not the same as the organizations included in this study. My previous engagement should not influence the study in any significant way as my previous focus has been on just and accountable governance as well as sustainable livelihoods. Work that has only increased my pre-understanding of the
greater context the study is set within. As the study’s data is entirely based on villagers’ perceptions of their community committees my pre-understanding and possible prejudices will only have had the opportunity to influence the data through the questions asked during the interviews, either for the better or for worse. The theoretical framework will further provide a set framework that will define the analysis of the data, excluding my own opinion and prejudices from the analysis as much as possible.

The case selected for the study is also located in a sensitive region of Myanmar currently going through a ceasefire process set within a complex political dynamic making any mentioning of names an unnecessary risk as relations to the government have come up during interviews. The names of villagers, the village and organizations are further not relevant to the objective of the study. The names mentioned during interviews have thus been replaced by a description of whom is referred to within the transcriptions.

Finally the study has received some financial support from an INGO currently working with the local NGO studied. The INGO supporting the study is however not active in the specific village studied and have not in any way been involved in the study except by facilitating contact with the local NGO as well as providing background information on their relationship with the local NGO.

5. Background

The village chosen for the study is located in Kayin State, Myanmar. The only formal village structure existing within the village prior to the support from the local NGO and its two INGO partners was the village authority group consisting of for example the village head and the village security responsible person. The authority group acts to facilitate community decisions within the village while also representing the village towards the township authorities. The township authorities are the equivalent of a municipality council, a decentralized part of the state’s structure.

The two groups that were created in the village by, and in collaboration with, the local NGO and its INGO partners and the village authority group are a CBO and a
child club. A CBO is according to this study’s definition an independent organization based in a certain community working for that particular community. The child club was however set up to specifically engage children of the village in child rights work while also providing a base within which empowerment of these children can take place. The child club does however not only work with children but also adults who also are to learn about child rights.

The village has briefly come in contact with development agencies prior to that the local NGO and its partner approached the village. The development agencies have however only provided some educational material while not actively engaging with the village. The local NGO is based in Hpa An, the capital of the state of Kayin, Myanmar, but is working throughout large parts of the state in various villages. The two INGOs working in partnership with the local NGO in the particular village selected for this study do not only focus on Kayin state but work throughout the whole of Myanmar.

6. Findings

The data presented below has been collected throughout several interviews with members of the community, members of both the village’s CBO and child club, the authority group as well as the local implementing partner NGO of the INGOs who are involved within the particular community studied.

The way the local NGO works with the community and its committees as well as the perceptions of the role and legitimacy both committee members and non-committee members will be outlined below.

6.1 Findings in interviews with the local NGO staff

The local NGO describes their work in terms of building capacity of and providing knowledge to the community committees who are then to, through their new capacities and knowledge, develop their own village. One of the staff, staff number one of the local NGO further describes how they try to ensure that their support is focused on issues relevant in the village by consultations, surveys and discussions with the community on their challenges and needs which is then to provide the basis for what support the local NGO provides. (Appendix viii)
Staff number two of the local NGO further describes the process of village selection for projects, a description that does not completely correlate with the above information given staff number one. According to staff number two, the local NGO identifies a general need based on the local NGO’s mission and values as an organization after which they then conduct surveys in around thirty villages to identify the village with the greatest need for the particular project focus. (Appendix vii) This means that the focus of the project is already set before the consultations with or surveys of the villages. The project can however, to an unknown extent, be said to be based on a need of the selected village as the village is selected based on the self-expressed need for specific project by the village. The question is just whether the village’s self-expressed needs are affected by the perceived opportunity to receive aid from the local NGO and its partner INGOs.

The above description of how a village is selected for a project is descriptions of the general village selection process. It does therefore not necessarily apply to the village studied. When staff number one describes the specific process of the selection of the village selected for this particular study a few other important variables are added. The staff member describes how they chose the village as the community is already very active and that the community have the potential to serve as examples of communities that the local NGO works with to foreigners and government officials. (Appendix viii)

This indicates that it is not only the need in the village that matters in the selection process, at least not in the village studied, but also potential effectiveness of the project. It also seems like the potential gain for the local NGO is considered in the selection process when the possibility of the community to serve as examples or representatives of villages that the local NGO work with is considered. The aspect of sustainability and continuation of the development of the village is also mentioned in the last sentence. An important aspect that can either be interpreted as a strategic use of limited resources or a selection of a village that does not require too much resources or work for the development process to continue and be sustainable after the local NGO withdraws from the village.
The process of village selection for projects and the criteria for selection is to be, according to the theoretical framework related to the distinctive values of the local NGO towards the community they work with. The fact that the village itself does not determine the project focus may however also be related to the ownership of the activities, which in turn may affect the accountability aspect of the CBO and child club.

Another significant factor potentially affecting the aspect of accountability and particularly ownership is how communication and contact between the CBO and the local NGO is handled. In this case the local NGO mostly communicates with only the CBO head. *(Appendix viii)*

This way of working in itself does not necessarily mean that the ownership is transferred away from the CBO and its constituency but when compared with the perceptions by CBO members and non-committee members it may indicate if there is any problem of ownership allocation due to this communication structure.

Staff number one further describes how the local NGO sees the village’s CBO and child club as a start to create groups that together will cover needs related to the community as a whole as opposed to only specific groups within the community as done in the initial process of setting up a CBO and child club. *(Appendix viii)*

Finally staff number one describes how their projects are always based on their mission as an organization and how funding opportunities only influence the priorities as long as they are within the core mission of the organization. *(Appendix vii)*

**6.2 Findings in interviews with the CBO and child club members**

When CBO members and child club members are then asked to describe the role of their respective committee the most common description is that the two committees work for the development of the village. When asked to specify what development means in this context the most common answer is for the children, but also for the whole community. *(Appendix i)*

In the interviews there was also a focus on the relationship between the local NGO and the CBO and child club. Many indicators are found of the dynamics of the relationship.
When the members are asked about how they decide what to work with and how they know what the village wants indicators describing the dynamics of the relationship between the CBO and the local NGO are found. One of the CBO members answered that the CBO does what the village needs. The CBO member further describes how they at first did not know what the village needed but after having received trainings from the local NGO they now know. *(Appendix i)*

When reviewing the transcriptions of the interviews it becomes quite obvious that the local NGO has chosen the method of leadership in their work to empower the community. The leadership is also very limited to a specific group of people within the community, namely the members of either the CBO or child club or both depending on the training or information provided. *(Appendix vi)* The CBO and child club members further describe how it is their role as members to share the information and knowledge with the rest of the village through mainly various meetings but also within more informal channels of communication. All of the CBO and child club members describe that these formal sharing sessions are very well attended, “Generally the whole community” *(Appendix vi)*, as one of the CBO members puts it.

When membership and how the CBO was set up is discussed a consistent story is revealed according to which the local NGO approached the village to recruit people for the new CBO together with the village head. One former CBO member describes how the local NGO together with its partner INGO had a criteria for recruiting people; everyone who was to become members had to have the ability read and write. Once the CBO was formed the CBO decided to lower the membership criteria and after a monk from Mawlamyine came to the village to visit the membership criteria was completely removed by the CBO making the CBO theoretically open to the whole community. When the former member is asked if she currently is a member she explains that she used to be, but she is currently too busy to be a member. *(Appendix v)*

The question of membership and how the CBO was formed may indicate that it was in the beginning a quite elitist group which was reformed and opened up to the whole community. But the former members explanation for not being a member anymore may indicate that there is still at least perceived demands for a membership. There
does not seem to be any kind of passive memberships as all members are very active in the work of the CBO possibly confirming that members have to give a lot of time to the CBO.

When the current CBO members are asked who can become a member and how becomes a member, one of the CBO members answer that they are not sure but think the CBO is open to everyone. *(Appendix vi)*

The current CBO members confirms, during a group interview, that membership is available for anyone in the village. But the discussion within the group leading up to the confirmation shows there is a lot of uncertainty within the group about the criteria for membership in the CBO. *(Appendix vi)*

The child club’s relationship to both the local NGO and INGO as well to the CBO is then discussed with both child club members and CBO members. The child club members themselves describe how they always have meetings with all the above three organizations and that they do things together with the CBO. One child club member describes that the CBO tells them what to do and they do it. *(Appendix xiii)*

The former CBO member and a current CBO member confirms what the child club member described as well as how the local NGO suggested that the CBO and particularly the child club should do activities for neighboring villages as well. *(Appendix v)* A CBO member further describes how they were instructed by one of the INGOs to conduct surveys but that they themselves formulate the questions. *(Appendix xi)*

Both CBO and child club members further describes why they think that their work might be considered important in the village and why anyone would like to be part of their work. The CBO head describes how the community saw the library and the nursery, which convinced them that the CBO can create development. *(Appendix i)* A CBO member then further describe how she thinks its because the children can gain knowledge through the library, something not possible for her as a child. *(Appendix iv)*
Another member of the CBO then describes how the CBO knows what the rest of the village wants it to do:

“I am one of the villager, and I also want to open the English course, so other people want the same.” (Appendix iii)

The CBO member then describes what has changed in the village since they received support from the local NGO and its partners:

“The change is just the building.” (Appendix iv)

Finally one of the child club members reflect on what has changed because of their work:

“In the past some parent beat their children, after they get the training they don’t beat their children.” (Appendix xii)

All of the CBO members describe in different ways how they think the community appreciate their work because of the building containing a library and a nursery school they have managed to build with the support from the local NGO and its partners. The first CBO members also describe the affect the library and nursery school might have on the population of the village but when asked what has really changed the CBO member just mention the building. (Appendix iv) The question is then if the access to a library and a nursery school really has helped the community in more ways than just providing a building. One child club member does however describe how people’s behavior and thus the well being of at least some of the children in the village have changed due to their work. (Appendix xii)

6.3 Findings in interviews with village authority group members
Another important group existing in the village is the village authority group, consisting of positions such as village head and the security responsible person. The whole village informally elects the authority group and particularly the village head where the approval of the village monk is also required. The village head’s role is to represent the village in relation to the township authorities as well as acting as a facilitating leader of the village. (Appendix vi) The legitimacy of the villages’ committees may very much be dependent on the approval of this group as they
traditionally have a very strong position within the village. The village head and the
security responsible person were therefore interviewed about their view on the CBO
and child club in relation to both the community as a whole but also in relation to the
authority group.

When the village head is asked about the role of the CBO and child club in the village
he answers, after the CBO head has interrupted and told him what to say:

“The village have difficulties and we have to help. The CBO lead the children to go
the right way.” (Appendix ix)

To begin with, he only answers about the CBO, something that most likely has to do
with what the CBO head told him to say. He also describes the role as only working
with the children, which is incorrect as the CBO also has activities related to women’s
empowerment and livelihoods. (Appendix vi)

When further asked what has changed in the village since the child club and CBO was
formed the village head answers that the children are now gaining new knowledge
thanks to the trainings and how this has contributed to that the children now
participate in meetings. (Appendix ix)

His answer describes a real change in the behavior of the children, something that can
be interpreted as a very positive effect in the context when he compares to the change
to his own youth. The security responsible person’s answers to the same questions do
not vary a whole lot but when asked if he considered these values of child rights
important before the community received support from the local NGO and its partners
he answers that he did not but that he is now aware due to the training he has
received. (Appendix x)

Generally it seems, not only within the authority group but also within the CBO and
child club, that they after they received trainings from the local NGO perceive
themselves as enlightened. This new enlightenment also seems to be directly related
to why they all value the change within the village. The security responsible person
further describes another factor that contributes to his appreciation of the local NGO
and its partners, namely that they are no longer dependent on the budget of the
government now that they receive support from the INGOs and the local NGO. *(Appendix x)*

The effectiveness of the support provided by the local NGO and its partners through the CBO and child club seems to be of great importance for the security responsible persons approval of the committees.

The village head then describes the initial contact between the local NGO and the community and how the local NGO suggested that they should build a library after they had explained to him why a library is important. *(Appendix ix)*

The initial contact between the local NGO and the village as described the village head above seems to be a very top-down process where the local NGO comes to the village to, according to their need identification, teach the villagers what they need. When the role of the authority group is then discussed the village head describes how “*In the meeting most people agree with my talk. In our village if we want to do something we all do. If we don’t want to do, then nobody do. We are united.*” *(Appendix ix)* He further describes how the CBO, after they received money from the donors, approached him with the plan to build a library, a plan which he facilitated consensus for within the community. *(Appendix ix)*

The above answer clearly illustrates how, at least in the beginning, the village head and the authority group had a consensus-facilitating role while the CBO was the driving force for development within the village.

Finally during the interview with the security responsible person of the authority group a CBO member interrupts the interview when the security responsible person hesitates in his answer and says; “*He might not know because he is from authority group, not CBO*” *(Appendix x)* A comment that seems to indicate a very distinct separation and difference between the CBO and authority group, even as they have regular common meetings, according to the CBO head. *(Appendix i)*

**6.4 Findings from interviews with non-members**

Thirteen people in the village who are not members of any of the existing groups, constituting the largest part of the legitimizing environment, were interviewed in the study. Many expressed quite different opinions but many answers describing the way
they look at both the CBO and child club were quite similar. When three of the non-members were asked about the role and meaning of the CBO and child club within the context of their own village one non-member answered;

“Whatever the CBO does it is for the development.” (Appendix xxi)

The other two non-members both describe how the CBO is consist of community members who work for their community’s development and therefore the rest of the community need to help the CBO when needed. (Appendix xxi) & (Appendix xviii)

None of the above non-members describe specifically what the CBO or child club does or the effects of their activities so far. The first non-member simply states that their role is to contribute to the development of the village. The second non-member describes how the CBO unites the community while the third simply says that it must be good since the CBO members are also community members. All of the above three answers have one thing in common, namely that they highlight the value of the CBO’s intensions. It is almost like they blindly trust that whatever the CBO does is for the best of the village. When the second non-member mentions unity it also seems like the non-member may indicate an appreciation for the value of representiveness. If the CBO manages to unite the community the CBO has to in some way be representative of the whole communities values. The three non-members further only replies regarding the CBO and does not mention the child club, a fact that may indicate that they either think that the child club is in some way part of the CBO or they may just value the work of the CBO more.

Many non-members also express how the CBO is important because of the change it has managed to create in the village. A change that seems to mostly be manifested by the physical building of the library and the nursery school. (Appendix xviii) & (Appendix xvii)

When further asked how community development issues were dealt with within the village before the CBO and child club existed one non-member answers that they could not deal with development issues before. (Appendix xvii) Another non-member describes how the villagers often spoke to each other about how they wanted to develop their village but nothing happened. Now that there is a donor involved they
can develop but the villager’s don’t discuss how they want to develop their village anymore. *(Appendix xxii)*

It seems according to these two non-members that nothing could be done to develop the village prior to the creation of the CBO and child club. The second non-member clearly describes how before the CBO everything was just talk, but the non-member also describes how the development of the community is dependent on external donors, meaning that the existence of the CBO is not necessarily enough.

When the non-members were then asked if they value what the CBO and child club has accomplished almost all of them express some kind of appreciation. *(Appendix xxiii)* But when asked if they always thought that these kind of results would have been good for the village many of the non-members expresses how they only became aware of the value of the results after someone from the CBO told them how for example the library and the nursery school were important to the village. *(Appendix xxii) & (Appendix xxiii)*

The non-members were then asked to describe the relationship between the CBO and the community. When discussing this particular topic there were some variations in the answers. One of the non-members for example described how the CBO, when they have a plan, announce it to the whole village first to see if someone doesn’t agree with it, and if someone don’t they won’t pursue their plan. *(Appendix xxvi)*

Common to all the answer is how the non-members describe that the plan or objective is already formulated when they hear about it from the CBO. No non-member except one describes that they have been part of formulating the objective or plan.

Many non-members also describe how they think that if they do give a suggestion to the CBO or child club that they won’t listen and how this really discourages the non-member from ever giving a suggestion. *(Appendix xxii)* Others say they might listen *(Appendix xx)* while some think that the committees will only listen if they manage to mobilize a large part of the village around one particular issue. *(Appendix xxiii)*

When asked about the most important issue or problem in the village most of the non-members list the lack of electricity access is the main problem of the village. When asked if English classes are important as well they all say yes, indicating that the future plan of introducing English classes by the CBO may be considered important in
the village but it is far from the most urgent need identified by the non-members. *(Appendix xxi)* When one of the non-members is then asked why she does not think the CBO works to get electricity in the village she replies that it is probably because the CBO does not have budget for that. *(Appendix xxiii)*

The non-member seems to indicate that the CBO is dependent on external funding for anything they want to do as a reason for not being able to work with what the non-members interviewed lists as the most important problem in the village.

The non-members also describe how they dealt with the issues that the CBO and child club now works with before the CBO and child club existed by speaking to the village head. One of the non-members describes how he now instead would speak to all of the different groups within the village. *(Appendix xxv)*

While other non-members describe how they no longer speak to the villagers or the village head as there now is a CBO and child club in the village to deal with these issues. *(Appendix xviii)* Another way to influence the CBO could be to become member of the CBO but many of the non-members give varying reasons for not being members, the most common being that they don’t have time. *(Appendix v)* One non-member say that; “*I am not sure if I am a member or not.*” *(Appendix xxvii)* Another issue may be that the non-members almost all describe a lack of information of what the CBO and child club does. The few that has heard information on future plans of the CBO or whatever else is currently being discussed is through friends. *(Appendix xxv)* Very few describe that they have gotten information from the meetings that the CBO themselves say they organize for the community. *(Appendix xxvii)* Many of the non-members also describe how the village cannot be developed if the CBO and child club does not exist because they were dependent on government funds, how without the groups the children would not know about their rights. *(Appendix xviii)*, *(Appendix xxv)* & *(Appendix xxi)*

Another non-members describes how the effectiveness of the CBO is determined by the support they are provided with externally. *(Appendix xviii)*
Finally a non-member further describes how the CBO’s role is to share knowledge to the community and the village leader’s role is to gather the village for these sharing sessions. *(Appendix xxvi)*

The non-members, similarly to the security responsible and village head, seems to recognize two different roles of the CBO and the village head where the village head is still facilitating consensus building while the CBO is the empowering group sharing knowledge to the village.

### 7. Analysis

This analysis will be based on the theoretical framework as described above, which will be applied to the data collected and presented in the findings above. Through applying the theoretical framework the study hopes to be able to find answers to the research question to fulfill the study’s objective.

#### 7.1 Distinctive values

One of the first concepts that define a civil society organization’s legitimacy is, according to the theoretical framework, the organizations distinctive values. *(Attack, 1999:859)* When the data above is considered it becomes quite clear that both the non-members and the village authority group members all consider both the CBO and child club legitimate in this regard. The two members of the village authority both describe how good the CBO and child club is as they are working for the good of, particularly the children of the village, but also the community as a whole. *(Appendix ix & x)* The same goes for almost all the non-members who without even describing why the work of the CBO and child club is good for their themselves and their community, state that the CBO and child club is very good for the village as they work for the development of the village. A question that has to be answered is however who has determined what development means in this context. In almost all cases non-members and village authority group members as well as CBO and child club members say that they were not aware of what is needed to happen in their village for it to develop before the support, training and information from the local NGO and the INGOs and therefore could not develop. The definition of development does therefore seem to be defined by the local NGO and its partners. This would also explain why the community considers the work of both the CBO and child club
important while rarely describing how their work is important. Many non-members explicitly say that they did not consider for example child rights important before they were told it was important. The aspect of distinctive values does therefore contribute to the CBO and child club’s legitimacy within the village, but only due to the fact that they have been able to persuade the community that what they do is important. The legitimacy of the CBO and child club based on distinctive values does therefore not seem to be based on a bottom-up process originally based on perceived needs of the community itself. This could indicate that development and possibly empowerment is viewed by the community as something one can only learn through knowledge, which in this case is provided by the local NGO and its partners.

7.2 Representiveness
When representiveness, as the second factor for a civil society organization’s legitimacy, is considered, it seems that the community does consider the CBO and child club representative and thus legitimate. This could, once again, potentially have something to do with the fact that development is defined by the local NGO and its partners and then assimilated by both the community as a whole but also the CBO and child club. When the CBO and child club then works for the objectives set up, often by, or in collaboration with the local NGO, they thus represent what the community wants to achieve in terms of development, as this is what they have been told is development.

When the ways decisions are made within the CBO and child club is considered it is hard to see how this could in any way contribute to if the CBO and child club is considered representative. Most of the non-members have not considered the possibility or feel they have no or little ways of influencing the CBO and child club while many also describe how they only learn of the plans of the CBO once they are presented for the approval of the village. But while the non-members considers the CBO and child club to be working for the good of the village while also being representative the fact that they cannot influence the CBO or child club is not of great importance for the legitimacy of these at the moment. The lack of community participation in decisions can however, if the CBO or child club in the future start working on an issue that the community does not consider to be representative of the needs of the village, be a complication for the legitimacy of the CBO or child club. But as the community is told what is important by the CBO and the local NGO this is
unlikely to happen at the moment. Especially considering that the CBO does consult the community for approval of their plans.

When non-members are asked what they think is the most important or pressing issue or problem in the village a majority mention the lack of access to a power grid that could provide reliable access to electricity. This is however not an issue that the CBO works with and when non-members are asked why they think that the CBO doesn’t work for the village to get access to the electricity grid they think it’s because the CBO does not have funds for it. This could indicate that non-members do consider the CBO representative even if they don’t work with the most important issues of the village as the non-members perceive that the opportunities that the CBO has defines what they are able to work with. The mentality that awareness is needed to know what is best for the development of the village may also contribute to that the non-members do not consider that the self-perceived needs should be the basis for the development of the village.

One non-member also mentions that the CBO connects the whole village and unites it in the path to development. How they unite the village is however not specified while at the same time it seems to be quite clear that the role of the CBO is very limited to developing the village while many non-members describe how the village head still possess the traditional role as the consensus facilitating person within the village. The collaboration of the CBO as an efficient mean to create development together with the consensus facilitating village head may then create a kind of representiveness of the CBO and its actions.

7.3 Efficiency
Efficiency seems to be one of the most important factors contributing to the legitimacy of the CBO and child club. When both the village authority group members and non-members describe why they think the CBO and child club are important they all in some way refer to the change the CBO and child club has managed to create within the village. Most simply refer to the physical change manifested by the building of the library and nursery school while some also describe the actual benefits for particularly the children but also other specific groups of the village, such as mothers and grandmothers. The fact that many non-members consider the effects to be only the building may indicate that they, considering the top-down approach to the concept of development, have still not been told why the building is
good, only that it is good, thus confirming that the definition of development is done by the CBO and child club who in turn are told what development is by the local NGO and its partners.

Other possible effects of the support of the CBO are rarely or never mentioned. Some of the youth interviewed describe how nutrition has been given to children around the village and that they now know their rights. However no one speaks of the potential effects of the women empowerment trainings or vocational trainings that CBO members have received. This could possibly indicate that only direct or indirect beneficiaries are aware of the effects of the non-physical effects of the CBO’s and child club’s work. Thus the sharing of information and knowledge by the CBO to the rest of the village could be questioned. By sharing information and knowledge about the activities and efficiency of these, the CBO and child club could further legitimize themselves.

When the changes are discussed many non-members also describe how they dealt with the issue of development before. They would simply speak to the other villagers and the village head about their perceived problems, which, according to most, did not lead to any improvements. When the CBO and child club manages to build both a library, nursery and playground, with funds from the local NGO and its partner the efficiency is regarded as incredible. The same thing is true when the state is considered. One of the non-members mention how the community wanted to build a nursery school and how they negotiated with the township to get a nursery school without success due to the lack of funds of the government. For the community to then have ways of accessing funds previously not available is a big change contributing to the perceived efficiency and thus legitimacy of the CBO and child club. The question is just how this efficiency can be sustained to maintain legitimacy for the CBO and child club if the local NGO and its partners withdraw from the village. The resources in the form of a nursery school and library will still be there providing opportunities for the children to learn but the question is what the role of the CBO and child club will be when the community mostly sees the results of the CBO’s and child club’s work as represented by a building which was dependent on external funds.
The fact that the CBO also works with women’s empowerment and vocational training has not been mentioned by a single non-member. This may be due to that only CBO members have attended the women’s empowerment- and vocational training sessions organized by the local NGO and its partners. When the CBO members in a group are asked to list their activities they themselves forget to mention that they also work with women’s empowerment.

7.4 Empowerment
The theoretical framework discusses empowerment particularly from two perspectives, empowering through leadership or by creating an enabling environment. According to the theoretical framework both are important and it also recognizes that empowerment by leadership must take place as a bottom-up process where the active participation and problem-identification of the community itself is of extreme importance. (Kilby, 2006:955)

In the village studied there are lots of examples of empowerment through leadership where most of the local NGO’s activities focus on educating and training the CBO and child club so that they then can spread the knowledge to the rest of the village. The community itself has few ways of participating as they have barely any direct contact with the local NGO and the most of the non-members interviewed feel they have little or no opportunities to influence the CBO or child club. Less seems to be done in regard to creating an enabling environment. The local NGO, when asked to describe with whom they work to help the community, do not mention anything about creating an enabling environment. The CBO does, based on the definition of development provided by the local NGO, provide a kind of enabling environment. Partly through the existence of the library and nursery school which provides opportunities for the children to develop as well for the children’s parents to have more free time to allocate on whatever need they have as they no longer have to take care of the children. In this way the parents are able to try to better their situation in accordance with Friedmann’s (dis)empowerment model. (1992:67) The existence of the CBO can also be seen as an enabling factor contributing to long-term empowerment. As discussed in the theoretical framework, organizing for a cause may not be immediately effective in regards to a RBA approach, demanding the community’s rights from the township and state authorities, but it does have the potential to sustain the work for development within the village. (Walker & McCarthy, 2010:319) One prominent example could be how the CBO members are
almost exclusively women, thus the CBO could be said to in practice empower these women within their own community through the organizing of the CBO while also creating a new norm that women can also be leaders. If the CBO and child club is then proven to be efficient it may also legitimize its existence in relation to the township and state authorities. *(Atack, 1999:861)* This could potentially lead to that the township and state authorities listen more to the call of the community or they may see that their role as public service providers is not as needed anymore, legitimizing their absence in the process of development, as development is created anyway with the help of INGOs and local NGOs. Thus possibly empowering or disempowering the community depending on how the CBO and child club act as well as how the township and state authorities react to their existence, in accordance with Moore’s reasoning. *(2001:322)*

When Atacks definition of empowerment is considered *(1999:861)* the community can be said to experience real empowerment, at least for the children and to some extent a few women, particularly those members of the CBO, as they do have more opportunities to take more direct control over their own lives. The perceptions of the community does seem to correlate to this definition of empowerment where the non-members only mentioning of any kind of empowering process is closely connected to the efficiency of the CBO and child club. Many non-members describe how the children now have the opportunity to learn, thanks to the library and nursery school, to become more aware and gain greater knowledge to possibly have better opportunities in the future.

The access to funds also seems to be considered as empowerment as the results and effects are dependent on these funds, thus legitimizing the role of the CBO as many non-members describe how no development and as a result no empowerment would be possible without the CBO. Many non-members further describe how the CBO is not able to work on certain issues due to the lack of funds, thus the role and one of the main functions of the CBO may be interpreted as being a link between the community and the available funds from the INGOs and their local partner NGO. Thus a disempowering dependency on the INGOs and their local partner NGO may exist, as described by Kilby. *(2006:955)*
7.5 Accountability
The aspect of accountability for a civil society organization is, as mentioned in the theoretical framework, largely about power, authority and ownership. (Kilby, 2005:953) The question is then if it is the constituents of the CBO and child club that provides the power, authority and ownership to the CBO and child club.

When considering the fact that it seems to be the local NGO and its partners who ultimately define development and what it constitutes, it is hard to say that the constituents of the CBO and child club has the ownership. When many non-members as well as committee members very clearly say that it is the local NGO that determines the priorities of the CBO and child club this seems to be confirmed. It is however hard to tell if the CBO’s and child club’s activities are determined by what the local NGO defines as development or what the local NGO has funds for or a combination of the two. Either way it is hard to say that the CBO has the ownership. The local NGO does however say that their projects are in accordance with the mission of their organization, which is focused on particularly women’s empowerment. This seems to be quite true where the INGOs do fund projects that are very related to the core mission of the local NGO meaning that the INGOs do not seem to have a significant effect on the priorities of the local NGO. This does however only mean that ownership is not located within the INGOs but rather within the local NGO.

The efficiency and possibly the perceived representiveness and distinctive values of the CBO and child club may however contribute to that the community gives authority and power to the CBO and child club. This may partly be due to that development is seen and defined as a process of gaining knowledge and awareness where the CBO’s and child club’s activities are in line with what they say is development. When development is defined, as a top-down process like this and the definition constitutes that the only way to empowerment and development is through knowledge, ownership by the community becomes impossible. This definition of empowerment and development legitimizes the top-down delivery of knowledge contributing to that the community accept and legitimize the CBO and child club without having to question their priorities or distinctive values as so clearly shown in the interviews of the non-members who just say that whatever the CBO and child club does is for the best of the community. The attitude manifested in one of the CBO members comments that she is a villager, thus she knows what the village wants,
seems therefore also be accepted by the community as valid, thus contributing to the CBO and child club’s legitimacy rather than decreasing it. This legitimacy is largely built upon the fact that the CBO is made up of community members, and therefore part of the deep civil society according to the theoretical framework.

Small tendencies that the ownership is slowly being transferred to the CBO itself has however been observed where for example the nursery school was an idea which originated within the village in collaboration with the local NGO. The future plan of the CBO to introduce English classes in the village is however an initiative completely based within the CBO, approved by the community after consultations. These consultation efforts seem, however, to be mostly directed towards the direct and indirect beneficiaries even if they are open to the whole community. The question is however if and how funding opportunities and actual perceived needs played into the decision to introduce English classes. The non-members still seem to have little perceived opportunities to influence the CBO or child club but as ownership is slowly transferred from the local NGO to the CBO there may be more opportunities for the non-members to influence in the future. Just as the membership criteria were reformed once the CBO became more independent and stable and more ownership was transferred from the local NGO to the CBO.

One way for the CBO and child club to become more accountable to their constituency is to better utilize a bottom-up structure according to the theoretical framework. (Potapchuk, 1996:54) One factor restricting this at the moment seems to be the perceived lack of opportunity to participate and influence by the non-members, which seems to be based in a question of membership demands at the moment. Many non-members describe how they think they are not able to influence the CBO or child club because they have no position in the village or that they have to gather a large group as well as the village head behind an idea to be able give suggestions or input. Even if the CBO and child club is open to everyone there seem to be an expectation of a member to give lots of her or his time to the CBO, something not possible for many as the community members needs to earn their own livelihoods. To lower the actual and perceived, formal and informal, demands for membership while also involving the community in the planning process would then contribute to more accountability towards the CBO’s and child club’s constituency where authority, power and ownership would be transferred to the constituency.
The child club can however almost entirely be seen as being controlled by the CBO in collaboration with the local NGO and the INGO supporting the child club. No own initiatives have been taken within the child club but rather suggested by the CBO and/or the local NGO and its partner INGO.

When it comes to accountability to values, where the internal organizing is considered as an aspect of legitimacy it is quite clear that the CBO and child club are in some ways organized according to their values, in some ways not. The CBO and child club is organized in a quite top-down manner, as this is their view on development and empowerment given to them by the local NGO. The CBO and child club do however say that they are working for the best of the whole village, something not reflected in their organizations structure. Almost all of the CBO members are women and the demands to become a member, a sometime perceived must to be able to influence, are perceived as quite high. The collaboration with the village head, does however manage to legitimize the CBO in this respect as the village head manages facilitates consensus within the village to back the CBO’s and child club’s plans. If the collaboration with the village head did not exist the situation may have been completely different where the CBO and child club may have experienced a significant decrease in legitimacy if people did not feel united by their work, thus losing representativeness.

8. Conclusion

This study set out to answer questions regarding how community committees’, in this case in the form of a CBO and a child club, role and legitimacy is affected when support is received from a local NGO and its partner INGOs. The study has found that the relationship between the community committee and the INGOs and its local partner NGO has had a significant impact on the role and legitimacy of both the CBO and the child club.

The fact that the CBO and child club was originally set up by the local NGO and its partner INGOs in collaboration with the community seems to have further defined the role and thus in some ways the legitimacy of the CBO and child club. The CBO and child club has almost monopolized the issue of development as the community views
the respective organizations as having the best opportunities to create and contribute
to what the community defines as development and empowerment.

As the definition of development and empowerment is to a large extent determined by
the local NGO and its partners the issue of representiveness is however barely
relevant as the CBO and child club will always be representative as long as it provides
the definition of what development is and thus what the community needs. As long as
the CBO and child club also works on the issues defined as important to the
development of the village, the community will always consider the intentions and
thus the distinctive values of both the CBO and child club as very legitimate.

The perceived efficiency of the CBO and child club does also very much contribute to
the legitimacy of the CBO and child club within the community. The community has
previously been dependent on the state as a public service provider without sufficient
budget to provide what the community has a right to. When new access to funds from
the local NGO and its partner INGOs through the CBO and child club is experienced
the CBO and child club becomes of great importance to the community as
development and empowerment according to the definition of the local NGO is
enabled. So as long as the CBO can function as a link to funds from the INGOs and
their local partner NGO to the community, the CBO will also always be legitimate
due to its role which enables perceived efficiency. The question is then if the CBO
always can be the link to funds from NGOs and INGOs. If not, then the CBO needs to
find a new role where the efficiency within the community is not dependent on
external funds but on internal empowerment and the creation of an enabling
environment for the community.

Empowerment at the moment is almost entirely provided through leadership. In the
case studied the CBO and child club acts as a link to the knowledge which is
considered, by community, to be the key to empowerment and development, much
tanks to that the definition of development is provided by the local NGO through the
CBO and child club to the community. But again, what will happen when leadership
by the local NGO is no longer there? The knowledge can possibly to some extent be
preserved within the organization of the CBO and child club for them to maintain a
significant and legitimate empowering role within the community through leadership
but in the long run, the CBO and child club must find other ways to empower its
community. Both by leadership but also by creating an enabling environment as discussed above.

Finally, the aspect of accountability is the aspect of the CBO and child club’s legitimacy that is the most vulnerable at the moment and also completely dependent on the monopolization of the definition of development by the local NGO, CBO and child club. The power and authority of the CBO and child club in particular, has so far been based in the role as a link to resources and a gatekeeper to those resources. When that role no longer exists due to a withdrawal of the local NGO and its partner INGOs, the CBO and child club must find a way to at least have the ownership within their own groups but eventually also transfer the ownership to their constituency. A transfer process which will force the CBO and child club structure to adapt to their respective internal values in accordance to a bottom-up structure where representiveness is based in the participation of the community who then defines the needs and thus development. Ownership as well as the power and authority will then also lie within and be given by the constituency of the CBO and child club where development is then defined by the constituency itself.

The answer to the research question is then that the dynamics of the relationship between the local NGO, its INGO partners and the CBO and child club has contributed to that the primary perceived role of the CBO and child club has become that of a link between the INGOs and their local partner NGO and the community itself. This particular role of both the CBO and child club contributes to that the community legitimizes the CBO and child club due to the perceived representiveness, distinctive values, efficiency and empowerment of the CBO and child club while accountability is not regarded as important due to the CBO’s and child clubs representiveness and distinctive values.

The CBO and child club are however in themselves groups that empower its members, a role which has not been found to, at the moment, contribute to the legitimacy of the CBO as it is not mentioned a single time in the interviews of the legitimizing environment. It is found that this particular role does however contribute to the child club’s legitimacy as the empowerment of the village’s children is recognized by the community as an important aspect of the child club’s exisstance.
For now the CBO and child club will remain legitimate in the eyes of the legitimizing environment as they fulfill all the requirements of being legitimate according to the theoretical framework, but this legitimacy is completely based on their status of being part of deep civil society and the current dependency on the resources from shallow civil society. When those resources then disappear the CBO and child club must utilize the opportunity to find a new role within the community that would legitimize their respective organization within their own context. The CBO will lose a large part of its source of power and authority which it then has to find a new source for. To be a sustainable deep civil society organization the source for its power and authority must then come from its constituents, meaning both community committee groups have to become more accountable to their respective constituents as well as their values. This accountability can possibly be created through a transfer of ownership within a participatory bottom-up structure enabling representiveness, distinctive values and hopefully efficiency as well as empowerment.

The current organization is a good start to build a sustainable accountable bottom-up structure. Due to its previous efficiency, it has the potential to work to create an enabling environment for the community, not only providing leadership.
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**9.3 Appendices**

**Appendix I** - Transcription of interview with CBO head

**Appendix ii**- Transcription of interview with CBO member

**Appendix iii**- Transcription of interview with CBO member
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