

Community Engaging for Sustainable Development:
Insights from Buddhist Principles
In the ASEAN Context

¹Phrakhrudhammathorn Waradecha Aggatejo (Waradecha Phromsena)

¹Dhammaduta College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand

Corresponding Author's Email : wrdc_09@hotmail.com

Abstract

This academic article aims to study the people's involvement in their communities. to review the creation of the identity or characteristics of communities in ASEAN with different economic, social and environmental conditions. And to look at the backgrounds of communities and at the importance of issues related to community development and to analyze the ways of life according to the principles of different people in the communities by discussing issues according to a list of set topics. This is in order to learn and understand the possibilities and problems of each community, both in theoretical and behavioral terms, and will portray the identity that had been found the foundation of communities in the past and which is involved in the voluntary integration of communities into an ASEAN society.

This will be an alternative way to study issues in order to present ways to resolve problems relating to the communities and to other factors in order to develop them according to the circumstances of each community.

Keywords: The relation, communities, Buddhism sustainability development, ASEAN

Preface

This study involving communities looks at the lifestyles of people living there in order to learn about various problems and how they have come about in order to consider the issues and, with the co-operation of the communities, to observe the problems that have occurred in order to provide basic knowledge. This has been so as to be able to study the problems, step by step, and to look at their causes. Reviewing the problems in such a way will lead to creative ideas that will contribute to the process of finding ways to resolve the issues. This may require some time to study the problems and to find out more information about the causes and the consequences (Somkiat Nakatok, BE 2558 (2015): 57) based on the growth of the economy, society, technology and population growth. Today, natural resources are limited and if we cannot find a good solution to manage it, it may lead to environmental pollution or the degradation of natural resources.

Community issues that are due to economic reasons are related to the lives of people in communities that lack development while there are differences between the ways of life in communities that have already been developed.

When the economy is bad, problems will occur and in order to solve economic problems, they should be addressed at the community level (Pisan Pratanchawano, BE 2553 (2010): 2). The development of communities is based on fundamental principles to educate people so that they can support themselves in order that they may think, make decisions and implement solutions that meet their own needs.

Collective social problems are a serious issue that will affect the development of a small community and they will migrate to larger communities (Kamontip Khungtumneum, BE 2556 (2013): 66-72). "In order to manage a reduction in debt, dependency on external sources should be reduced and a focus be put on integrating thoughts while actions should be taken to take responsibility for the problem and to learn from all the parties involved."

Contribute to communities safely and in a drug-free way, and look beyond social problems that will lead to environmental problems (Patama Waiwutinant, and faculty. BE 2554 (2011): 576) that will lead to pollution. The environment is already degraded with the major causes being population expansion and inappropriate lifestyles.

Here are some definitions for the key words at the end of the abstract above:

"Involvement" refers to the status of everyone who lives in a community together who is involved in communal responsibilities, who takes care of things, is mindful, has rights and freedoms to express his or her ideas and views, and is in touch with agencies that help the community while performing other tasks together with helping with community development planning and to fix any problems that may occur.

"Community" means a village, a house, a place to live or where people work together in the same area whether they are located in a town or in a rural area.

"Sustainability" means developing people in the community to have good knowledge and good well-being of current and future generations.

"ASEAN" refers to 10 countries of which Thailand is one member, with the list of member countries being Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Indonesia and Brunei, although in this document the objective of the writer has been to only study communities in Thailand.

Getting involved with the community

A community is a group of people living together in the same area who have relationships with one another that are based on many factors, such as family ties, religion and traditions, but who are divided by geography, culture and social status (Nittha Kitreerawuttiwong, and faculty, 2557: 110-121). Communities sustain relationships and feelings of togetherness up to the point that inhabitants share the same religion, traditions, system of government and culture, communicating and learning together. To achieve common objectives, communities are able to form groups that are based on many characteristics including geography, culture and social status and by assigning these characteristics and this will help us to understand their lifestyles clearly (Naidoo & Willis, referring to Nittha Kitreerawuttiwong, BE 2557 (2014):111)

For example:

- 1) Grouped together according to geography, which refers to people gathered together with clear boundaries, such as people in a village who will have common interests;
- 2) Grouped by culture which refers to communities that are socially related and which share the same culture and traditions, such as Chinatown for Chinese people;
- 3) Grouped according to social status with castes and nobility and which share knowledge resources to help solve the problems of the community.

Communities in these various aspects face many problems today but these problems may be resolved by studying information and through consultations and an exchange of knowledge about the community up to the point that it is a socially-connected community. Human society is based on relationships between community groups and it begins with the development of the well-being of the community that is relevant to the economy, society and environment in order for there to be harmony in the community. (Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vasina Chandrasiri, accessed on September 1, BE 2559 (2016)). The social landscape is the coexistence of human beings and the environment, according to the geographical relationship with each other, to achieve a balance of environmental, social and economic conditions, with, most importantly, the development of natural resources and conservation, coupled with the development of people.

Hence, the important problem is about the daily lives of a community's inhabitants and community development has a role to play with the issues being divided according to the situations outlined above. These are factors that will bring an approach to community management and can address problems for communities that have ethnic, religious and cultural issues which affect society and can create many more cultural problems of being together in

terms of language, clothing, eating and living including living a life without any clear objectives (Atchara Pothiyanon, refers to Nithra Kitreerawutiwong, BE 2557 (2014):111) By breaking down the community into various elements we can see how communities have important groupings. When there is a group of people there is territory, there are regulations based on culture, race and social relations with the purpose and objective of living together being to communicate and to learn from each other.

Community Identify Building

The causes or factors contributing to social problems can be categorized as follows:

1) **Social change**, especially concerning the structure and function of society, which impacts how people live and adapt, as well as how various institutions adjust to the changing environment. For instance, consider social change in terms of class structure. Previously, upward mobility into the upper class was solely determined by lineage, with the upper class providing protection to those of lower status. Today, everyone has the opportunity to become part of the upper or leadership class through education, perseverance, professional endeavor, diligence, and endurance. The old bonds are largely gone, as the lower class is no longer tied to the upper class by received wages. And the upper class no longer needs to provide protection to the lower class; if someone can't perform, they're out, or their salary or other agreed-upon benefits are withheld. Everyone lives independently, fending for themselves. There's an unprecedented level of freedom without strong ties, with neither protectors nor loyal subjects.

2) **Certain social environmental factors**, such as economic conditions, family structure, education, religion, various mass media, societal values, and the influence of Western culture.

3) **Social disorganization**. This refers to situations where certain individuals violate or refuse to conform to established norms and practices that society deems appropriate, or they don't adapt to new values widely accepted and considered suitable by the majority. This disrupts the social structure and leads to various problems. This disorganization often stems from changes in how we live and work. In the past, people's lives were centered around small-scale, family-based industries. Some families might have grown rice, raised animals, cultivated vegetables, or performed other trades like being a bricklayer, responsible for mixing cement, pouring foundations, plastering, and finishing houses. Today, work is highly specialized and fragmented. You have distinct roles: farmers, vegetable growers, livestock breeders, cement pourers, plasterers, finishers, and even door and window makers. The overall work is broken down into

many specialized parts. In the industrial sector, comfortable environments can lead to high productivity, yet they cannot resolve disputes between employers and employees. Similarly, while we can produce numerous, highly functional, and aesthetically pleasing automobiles that facilitate transportation, we cannot prevent or reduce car accidents. For every member of society to live peacefully, orderly, and with good relationships To live peacefully and help one another, individuals must adhere to the norms, statuses, and roles already established within every society. Relationships among people in society will encompass cooperation, competition, exploitation, compromise, and mutual benefit. (Natchalada Phichitbanchakan, BE 2530 (1987): 5-9).

Community Problems, Both Theoretical and Behavioral.

The nature and significance of community problems.

Theoretically the problems associated with engaging with community members, as their numbers increase when people on the community, lead various

1) Economic problems are extremely significant for community. If a community faces economic hardship, its way of life may not proceed, normally, leading to social unrest, confusion, and a lack of peace. This can result in social migration within the community, Households will migrate out of the community to seek employment elsewhere. This leads to instability within the community as people prioritize their own survival, abandoning their homes for other places in search of the comfortable living they desire, often referred to as “being well-off.” (Usanee Wanlai, as cited in Nitra Kitreerawutiwong, BE 2557 (2014): 114). In Thailand current economic structure and social conditions, encompassing both urban and rural societies, economic leaders have more opportunities, power, and involvement in decision-making, This has an influence on the community, evident in statements like, “I have to live hand-to-mouth; I don’t have time to participate in any village activities.” Therefore, community development to improve the living condition of this group of people is essential.

2) **Social problems** in communities are considered to be the most important issue. Society is not peaceful because of a lack of stability in the relationships between families, friends and neighbors. Life and work is restrained and people do not put their hearts into it. Most people have a high education but still find it hard to earn a living and there is not unity among people with there being frequent reports of corruption and bad news stories in newspapers and online media. (Borwornsak Uwanno, refers to this in a research paper by Jaruwan Sukumalpong, BE 2556 (2013): 2-20). Corruption in the public sector is destructive to society and causes much damage to Thailand. Although corruption is bad, it can be seen in society at all levels whether it be

government officials or politicians at the local or the national level. Currently, the issue of corruption has developed and expanded in all parts of the government and the private sectors.

3) Environmental problems in the community are very important to the economy and to society. If the environment is destroyed, for whatever reason, this will have an impact on people in all societies because the environment helps to filter the air and protects the condition of the atmosphere to enable human beings and other life forms to survive and be safe. Now the environment has been degraded by people in society seeking to benefit from the exploitation of natural resources, such as rivers and harvesting wood from trees in the jungle, up to the point of even killing mankind as a result of this (Nattawat Suntornwaritchoke, BE 2556 (2013):2). In the past the Thai Government focused on and gave priority to accelerating economic development from only one aspect. As a result natural resources and the environment have been dramatically and quickly broken down until there was a lack of balance causing environmental problems and pollution that occurs with greater severity and this has affected people both directly and indirectly.

Problems From Issues of Involvement

Various problems as outlined above are the main issues and they are important for communities in that they may not be able to avoid them. It is true to say that "wherever there is somebody, there is a problem." People create problems, planning them from the beginning. Everyone in the community is related to the economy, the way of life and livelihood. But they are not involved in the development, production, consumption and distribution. They are involved in the social aspects of the community but the people in society are not involved in the environment or in environmental protection.

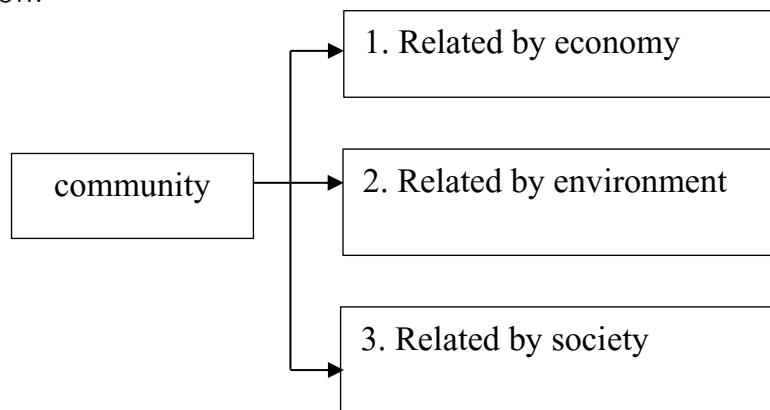
This is a problem of involvement without responsibility and leads to the following:

1) The cause of economic problems (Assoc. Prof. Dr.Sungsidh Piriyarangsan, BE 2556 (2013): 2-19) McMullan regards that corruption affects economic development and also affects the political stability of the country in many ways such as by creating injustices, inefficiencies and by creating a lack of public trust in government.

2) Causes of social problems (Jaruwan Sukumalpong, BE 2556 (2013): 2-20). Corruption slows down growth and social development due to the inappropriate allocation of budgets and resources for various development projects. In addition, this also makes foreign countries or international organizations unwilling or reluctant to help.

3) **The causes of environmental problems** (Nattawat Suntornwaritichoke, already quoted: The condition of natural resources and environmental problems, whether they be at a local level or the national level would be no different, and this results from forestry and jungle issues, soil problems, the invasion of public land problem, waste disposal and sewage problems, air pollution and waste water problems which are just the beginning.

So it had become as though the community has problems surrounding it as can be seen in the chart below:



The chart above portrays the issues regarding the problems relating to the community, the economy, society and the environment. The community is the center for the environment along with many problems. If we don't know how to administer the community many more problems will accumulate. The community will not develop in a good way if the people in the community lack a shared responsibility. The community is involved with society in very many ways, especially for those who live in the community themselves who will be responsible to look after and pay attention to resolving problems in the community and who may help develop the community to be in accordance with objectives laid down.

The Community and the Buddhist Concept of Sustainable of Development

Involvement brings sharing to the community (Asst.Prof.Dr.Orathai Kokpol, BE 2552 (2009):17). Community status means that local governments provide opportunities for citizens to participate in the establishment of rules and policies and in the decision-making processes of the local administration for the benefit of the public. This must be based on the fact that the public must have freedom of thought, be aware of the capabilities of their actions and be willing to participate (Community Standards Policy Division, BE 2555 (2012):5). Develop the quality of life

and community group. There should be participation by the people living in the community who come together to make joint decisions driven by the needs and activities of the community environment and with information processes such as by collecting information from surveys with questionnaires and then reviewing the data.

Conducting a survey and analyzing the data uses statistics in order to learn how to prepare for various development projects for healthy communities by setting guidelines that are clear and this includes major development projects for improving the capabilities of the community and important development projects that are related to the locality. The people in the community must be involved in its development which will help it to grow and be better than before, to be in a better condition and to provide benefits while the development must be in a positive way and not cause harm to individuals or to the community. It must gain the trust or satisfaction from the majority of the people. (Pisan , from the same book, BE 2553 (2010):2). Development means to change something for the better and improve it until there is satisfaction.

Community Development (The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, 1982: 111). Community development is a process in which many people come together with government officials to make the state of the economy, society and the culture of their community better. Development is a function of planning and management. [Development = Function (Planning + Management)]. This is giving importance to people in the community who are at the center of the development and who are those who receive the benefits from development.

The Philosophy of Community Development is

- 1) Every human being has personal dignity;
- 2) Every human being has the ability or potential;
- 3) Human capabilities can be improved;
- 4) The focus is on participation, knowledge and experience for all; and
- 5) Empowerment is at the individual level and community progress can be achieved through education, the development of skills, the exchange of knowledge and by working together according to the philosophy to develop Buddhist communities.

Table 1 the development philosophy and plans to develop Buddhist communities.

The philosophy of community development	Plans to develop Buddhist communities
1) Every human being has personal dignity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development is achieved by sharing kindness and friendship, by willingly providing materials as appropriate and by respecting one another with a primary focus on human development
2) Every human being has ability or potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development should be conducted with support, encouragement and providing opportunities to enable people to show their knowledge and skills
3) Human capabilities can be improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development should be with support and help in education that will improve self-confidence in each individual
4) The focus is on participation, knowledge and experience for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development should be carried out consistently while providing an opportunity for members of the community to participate by expressing their opinions in an ongoing way
5) Empowerment at the individual level and community progress can be achieved through education, the development of skills, the exchange of knowledge and by working together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development should be conducted with honesty and sincerity and with people who have ideas, brains and experiences along with knowledge and capabilities in

The philosophy of community development	Plans to develop Buddhist communities
	planning and developing the community to enable it to progress towards prosperity in a moral and ethical way

Communities in ASEAN

The table that shows the involvement of communities and the philosophy of development in communities lets us know the roles of communities together in terms of the development of ASEAN communities, namely communities in Thailand that have joined together with communities in ASEAN, such as in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, that have many cultural similarities but which differ in two aspects:

1) Hearts and minds. People in different communities have hearts and minds that are different because they have been raised in different circumstances in terms of religion, cultural beliefs and traditions, including the social values in the localities where they live, and changing the hearts and minds of those people is very difficult if not impossible.

2) Behavior. Normally, actions stem from beliefs and, for most people, if they believe in something, that is how they act, it is in their character, and if we recommend, teach or order them to do otherwise it will not be possible to change this.

Different traditions are important factors that force communities to comply with their own social identity which is unique to each community. This is both a strength and a weakness of a community which can be updated or modified as appropriate.

However, ASEAN communities which have ties between groups of people based on their geographical environments become more prosperous communities and begin to develop livelihoods based on societies that have a balanced way of life in terms of the economy, society and the environment. They hold meetings to consider, plan and take actions regarding what is necessary to do to improve the productivity and wellbeing of the community. Serious problems that communities regularly encounter are:

1) Economic problems. Issues on unplanned in living one's life, Struggling for a living, borrowing money to sustain one's livelihood. leads to subsequent problems, such as debt problems, family problems, and so on.

2) Social problems. These stem from the fact that communities are not properly taken care of and that external organizations such as capitalists and monetary authorities are taking advantage of them by using their power incorrectly, creating false values such as corruption, for example, in the community.

3) Environmental problems. Being uninterested, indifferent or simply ignoring the conservation of natural resources and the environment which benefits the community. These problems will be a lesson for people in the community by awakening them to seek relevant solutions for the community.

Being involved with the community is an identity which means participation in the community which can be looked at in many ways, such as having a way of life according to the geographical conditions where it is possible to clearly differentiate the boundaries of the community. Another way to look at a community is by its culture which describes a relationship between communities that have a shared cultural heritage.

Looking at communities by breaking them down into groups is a way of assigning social classes or castes according to their status in life. Not that everyone will have this status, but if they can help each other to solve economic, social and environmental problems the community will develop in a positive way and will be a strong and high-quality community that is safe from external threats and capable of withstanding various dangers and will not come under the influence of powerful forces or become a tool of capitalists or influential persons and will make plans, administer and manage activities for the internal development of the community by itself.

The fact that communities are capable of making plans, conducting activities and carrying out self-development is because they have people who are involved with others in the community. Today, the ASEAN Community has very many activities that are conducted together. For example, there is the conference to exchange mutual knowledge in research and academic studies which is a way to develop the foundations of thought that will bring about other benefits. Yet another is the bonding of relations within the ASEAN Community to enhance mutual understanding, familiarity, friendship and co-operation.

Thus, community involvement means participation in the development of the community in an enduring way according to the philosophy of community development that says that human beings, no matter of what race or which language they speak, love and honor being human. Every person has the capability or potential to have a career and earn a living or, even if they work in other ways, they should have the capability of developing themselves. Everyone will have importance by participating in knowledge and experience and everyone should receive

the creation of strength in an attractive way while communities should receive educational development, the development of skills and there should be an exchange of knowledge along with benefits from work so that there is peace within the community.

Conclusion

The problems with involvement for communities stem from economic problems, Development should follow the Buddhist community development plan by sharing kindness and goodwill, willingly offering material things, and showing mutual respect with honor and dignity. Initially, human development should be emphasized through encouragement, knowledge and providing social, and environmental problems, along with the identify of the diverse ASEAN community issues both theoretically and behaviorally, will lead to development.

Social problems and environmental problems should be addressed through community development according to Buddhist philosophy. This should also be by sharing kindness and friendship while willingly providing materials and showing mutual respect with honor and dignity. The development of human beings first should be emphasized along with providing moral support by supporting and providing an opportunity to show knowledge and capabilities by helping to consistently provide education that will help with self-development along with boosting self-confidence. Opportunities should also be provided for people to express themselves and to have an ongoing role to play in community activities in a sincere and honest way.

To summarize, it deems beneficial to combine thinking, the brain and experience together with knowledge and capabilities in the planning, development and progress for the advancement of the community in a moral and ethical way. Community problems are important national problems and everyone will have a part in their continuing development while communities have an involvement in ASEAN.

Recommendation

Stakeholders should thoroughly study community involvement to help shape the identity of the ASEAN community, which is characterized by diverse economic, social, and environmental factors. It is important to understand the dynamics of community issues from both theoretical and behavioral perspectives, as well as the background and significance of these, issues in the context of development. Academic study and analysis of lifestyles and social

dynamics can help reveal the differences among individuals within the community, laying the foundation for future improvements and sustainable and development.

References

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vasina Chandrasiri. and faculty. "The Philosophy of the Sufficiency Economy and Lifestyle". Online source: <http://stouonline.stou.ac.th/courseware/ourses/ecology/content/modules/ecologymodule6.pdf> (accessed on September 1, BE 2559 (2016))

Asst.Prof.Dr.Orathai Kokpol. BE 2552 (2009) "A Guide to Participation by the People for Local Administrators".

Jaruwan Sukumalpong. BE 2556 (2013) "The Trend of Corruption in Thailand".

Kamontip Khungtumneam. BE 2556 (2013) "The Use of Social Capital for Taking Care of the Health of Communities" The journal of the Phrapokkla Nursing College, Chanthaburi, Year 24, Issue 1 September BE 2555 – February.

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. BE 2539 (1996) The Tripitaka (Thai language), a publication of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Bangkok : Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University printing press.

Nattawat Suntornwaritichoke. BE 2556 (2013) "A Study of Environmental Problems in Tambon Sam Bandit" (in Phra Nakorn Si Ayutthaya Province): a case study of factors affecting the development of natural resources and the environment for the people.

Natchalada Phichitbanchakan, Social Problems (2 nd ed., Bangkok: Ramkhamhaeng University Press, 1987.

Nitra Kitreerawutiwong. BE 2557 (2014). "Community Development to Promote Health": A case study by the Health Promotion Hospital in Tambon Nong Khaem in Saraburi Province from the Journal of Public Health, Year 28, issue 2 May-August.

Patama Waiwutinant. - and faculty. BE 2554 (2011) "The Participation of People in Waste Disposal in the municipality of Tambon Esarn, Amphoe Muang, Buri Ram Province."

Pisan Pratanchawano BE 2553 (2010) "Community Development". Documents describing the academic community organizations. February 16.

Somkiat Nakatok. BE 2558 (2015) "Participation in Natural Resource Management in the draft Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand" (temporary document) BE 2557 (2014) Rights issues in the establishment of a business. The private sector could affect the lives and

well-being of the community. The Office of the Ombudsman, Thailand, the 8th year, Issue No. 2, July - December.