

THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY LEADERS IN IMPLEMENTING
THE PROJECT OF VILLAGES OBSERVING THE FIVE PRECEPTS :
A CASE STUDY IN HUAYSAI SUB-DISTRICT, SANKAMPHAENG DISTRICT,
CHIANG MAI PROVINCE

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Abstract

This article was part of the research entitled “the Role of Community Leaders in Implementing the Project of Villages Observing the Five Precepts: A Case Study in Huaysai Sub-district, Sankamphaeng District, Chiang Mai Province.” The research found that the role of community leaders in creation of network was the organization of a system for the group of members to carry out their activities happily and successfully based on the moral principles of unity, intellect, and veneration. With regard to the support, the village leaders co-operated and well supported all the parties with Huaysai sub-district’s monk leader and community stores according to the principle of four acts of doing favors. Regarding the plan for observation, the members held the meetings by incorporating the Buddhist doctrines into a blended approach with the Buddhist principles of four paths to success. As for the monitoring and assessment of the project, there was a system of collecting and analyzing data and reporting the results to other agencies for improvement and solution to increase the quality and effectiveness of project implementation. With regard to the problem, there was the lack of understanding of the project and the committee explained it to every village. There was a suggestion from the community that the community should be informed in advance to be prepared for the event.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Buddhists believe that observing the precepts is the principle of good conduct for everyone because keeping the body, speech and mind to calm is a normative discipline and practice of abstaining from doing bad things (Ti.Pa. (Thai) 11/261/210). The essence of the precepts is the intention not to transgress against both oneself and others. Therefore, the "precepts" mean no intention of transgression and persecution (Ma.Ma. (Thai) 13/204/242). General precepts for laymen are known as Five Precepts, such as an intention of abstaining from killing and encroaching animals (Vi.Ma. (Thai) 4/106/168). Observing the Five Precepts is thus to control the physical and verbal behavior in a good and peaceful way. The precepts are prescribed according to the principle of natural law and serve as a basic practice with the mind determining the "intention." According to Sariputta mentioning in the Patisampidamagga Scripture, Yanakatha, "Intention is precepts. Cetasika is precepts. Composure is precepts. Non-encroachment is precepts. The precepts are a combination of composure, non-encroachment, and intention occurring at the time of such composure and non-encroachment" (Khu.Pa. (Thai) 31/39/60). Therefore, observing the precepts is a must for all human beings; however, the precepts are now often seriously observed by women and old people while those in working age often cite that they have no time. In addition, the Thai economy during this period is lean and the political leaders have no interest in the precepts leading to a lack of reconciliation and unity with chaos across the country. For this reason, the monks have realized the benefits and necessities of observing the Five Precepts that can help solve these problems and therefore agreed to implement the Project of Villages Observing the Five Precepts. According to Somdej Phramaharajmangalajarn's idea given on November 17, 2015, "Five Precepts are important to mankind. When all people have these precepts, the society, i.e. the people, will be happy, and such village will be named as the village observing the Five Precepts." This is in line with government policy assigning the government agencies to establish reconciliation among the people in the country by integrating the cooperation from the monks, government agencies, local government organizations, community leaders, private organizations, associations,

foundations, and people sector in the form of provincial, district, sub-district, and village committees.

The role of community leaders is like a mirror that can reflect the thoughts of the local people and these leaders are close to the people and very important to social mechanisms. Local community leaders are sub-district chiefs and village headmen (Sakcharoon Daosuk, 2001: 4). Community leaders are therefore important factors in influencing community management in terms of both behavioral creation and control. Sub-district chiefs and village headmen are intermediaries between the government and the people in preparing development and project plans, organizing conferences and seminars, performing procurements and constructions, and following up the implementation of various projects (Lakkana Luecha, 2010: 5). In addition, the abbots of the local temples also play an important role as a local leader and representative of the monks at the same time.

In this study, the researchers selected Huaysai Sub-district, Sankamphaeng District, Chiang Mai Province, because the role of its community leaders in implementing the Project of Villages Observing the Five Precepts is still facing problems of group or network communication, communication with communities and other agencies, planning to support the successful implementation of the project, actual implementation, and monitoring and reporting of the project implementation to the relevant government agencies. Since, in Huaysai Sub-district, there are eight villages, temples and primary and secondary schools together with a higher economic and social development than those of other sub-districts, its sub-district chiefs and village headmen are likely to receive different information from other sub-districts, including different situations and environments. For this reason, it was interesting to see how much the role of community leaders in implementing the project. In addition, this research could provide information on the project documentation to those who are interested in further research and utilization according to the intention of the monks and the government.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the role of community leaders in implementing the Project of Villages Observing the Five Precepts in Huaysai Sub-district, Sankamphaeng District, Chiang Mai Province;

2. To examine the problems in implementing the Project of Villages Observing the Five Precepts in Huaysai Sub-district, Sankamphaeng District, Chiang Mai Province; and
3. To seek a way to improve the implementation of the Project of Villages Observing the Five Precepts based on the role of community leaders in Huaysai Sub-district, Sankamphaeng District, Chiang Mai Province.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was a qualitative research based on relevant documents and actual data obtained from interviews with the following details:

1. Target population

The target population was 30 community leaders in Huaysai Sub-district, Sankamphaeng District, Chiang Mai Province, including authoritative monks, sub-district chiefs, village headmen, assistant village headmen, and leaders from the Huaysai Municipality Office.

The researchers selected the samples through a simple sampling specifically based on the number of committee and gathered the data through interviews, group discussions, and observations until the research process in each village had been completed.

2. Research instruments

The instruments used to collect data were interviews, group discussions, and observations based on the research objectives. The steps to create and find the quality of these instruments were as follows:

1. Relevant documents and studies were examined.
2. An interview form was drafted to cover and meet the research objectives and checked by three experts for verifying its validity based on the research content and objectives.
3. The draft interview form checked and suggested by experts was revised based on the research content and objectives.
4. It was then used to collect actual data with community leaders in each target group.

3. Data collection

The data collection from three target groups was planned as follows:

1. Permission to collect data would be asked from ten target leaders attached with a structured in-depth interview form in order to get prepared and schedule their interviews.

2. The researchers would collect the data at the scheduled date and time using interview equipment, such as tape recorder and notebook.

3. The group discussions would be held one week after the interviews.

4. The observations would be done throughout the duration of the project and individuals in each village had been specified.

Secondary data collection was involved with examining relevant documents, research papers, books, academic articles, textbooks, and publications.

4. Data analysis

A descriptive analysis of data was conducted to see the different relationships and the data were categorized according to the established research objectives.

5. Data verification

The researchers verified all the data.

6. Data presentation

The researchers presented the descriptive data in the sequence of the interviews as variables to be investigated.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

The study found that data from interviews, group discussions, and observations were consistent with a few differences and can be summarized as follows:

1. Role of community leaders in implementing the Project of Villages

Observing the Five Precepts: Leaders played a role in managing the network and organizing the groups of people in each village to carry out their activities happily and achieve their objectives under three moral principles of unity, intellect, and veneration. Once the mission of the project was accomplished, the network might be abolished. However, if there was a need or a new mission, the network members might gather again. As for the support, the village leaders jointly organized the project with all parties led by Luangphor Phrakru

Theerasad Sunthorn, abbot of Wat Mae Tat, and integrated with the principles of Four Bases of Social Solidarity. As for the planning of observing the Five Precepts,

the leaders played a role in attending the planning meetings by applying modern concepts and Buddhist doctrines in a mixed way so the project could be smoothly implemented. Finally, the monitoring and evaluation of the project were:

- 1) Systematically made to obtain reliable information;
- 2) Conducted for increasing efficiency and effectiveness;
- 3) Conducted for finding information to improve the operations;
- 4) Conducted for finding information that shows the success and failure of the project; and
- 5) Conducted for finding information that shows the effectiveness of the project.

It can be discussed that good community leaders must do their jobs well, that is, they must be able to work in accordance with the laws, and exhibit community leadership in various forms by acting or playing a role in line with their assigned tasks based on their potential. Concrete roles can be seen from the following three aspects of acts:

1. Ideal role is a role expected by general people in society as a perfect guideline for actions.
2. Perceived role is a role expected by oneself on how it should be and depends on the attitude, value, personality, and experience of each individual.
3. Actual role is an actual act of the persons and depends on the current events at that time, which causes different role plays.

The roles of a good leader include:

- 1) Networking role;
- 2) Supporting role; and
- 3) Monitoring role.

In other words, leaders should have the following four main duties:

- 1) Duty to their organization;
- 2) Duty as a supervisor to their subordinates;
- 3) Duty to other agencies in the same organization; and
- 4) Duty to themselves or good demeanor.

2. Problem of network management: All three groups of the population provided the same information that community leaders encountered several problems in implementing the project, but they could have solved these problems

successfully. The biggest problem was about their gathering due to their different workloads, times, and assignments from higher authorities, although they got an appointment in advance. As for the support, there were only a few problems and the basic problem was involved with less budget financing to support the project. For this reason, since every aspect of the project implementation, such as travelling and contacting, required money, the project sometimes needed to be stalled or postponed. The next problem was a question why it must be organized as a project rather than observing the precepts as conducted in the past. Community leaders were therefore required to meet several times to find out how to make a plan and follow it. Once the project had been implemented for a certain period, it must be checked or a preliminary report must be prepared, and at the end of the project, the report must be submitted to the government agencies. Thus, as an initial planning, the key members must be called to attend a planning meeting and they questioned and discussed the process of the plan extensively. Finally, the plan was successfully understood. Although some people did not fully understand or agree, everybody was required to follow the resolution of the majority. The last problem was about finding persons from each village to learn how to make a report. Community leaders played a role in monitoring the project implementation and a change in some activities as well as in following up the progress and quality of operations. They tried to solve the problems successfully.

3. Guidelines for improving the project implementation: As for the guidelines for improving the network management, the committee attempted to solve the problems by planning to set up a network without timelines and giving phone numbers and Facebook accounts to all members to contact each other at any time with no commitment or obligation to work together. In addition, the committee sought the trainers by asking both authoritative monks to lead and contact senior monks in the district and the province to serve as advisors. As for the guidelines for improving the training support, the less financial budget was managed in the most cost-effective way, such as making a phone call in some cases only. In the case of problem in contacting trainers and trainees, the committee could have solved the problem by trying to communicate clearly and consistently before going to meet or pick up the trainers or speakers to participate in the events. As a suggestion, the project should be organized during the school holidays or after the

harvests because villagers in the community have a lot of free time. In addition, both the government agencies and community leaders should find available and eloquent people to practice as a sub-district trainer for the project. As for the guidelines for improving the observance of the Five Precepts, the traditional practices needed not to be reported, checked, and planned; however, in this project the committee planned to arrange several meetings so that the same purpose and appropriate actions could be understood. In addition, once the project had been implemented for a certain period of time, it must be periodically reviewed and reported. Finally, as for the guidelines for improving the project monitoring, the committee jointly set up a personal development plan. Everyone was trained to follow the plan and the data collection and report writing must be conducted by local people. For this reason, the committee determined the process of improving and monitoring the project by:

- 1) Assigning one responsible person for each village;
- 2) Observing the operations in all phases and recording such observations;
- 3) Defining the working procedures for each village;
- 4) Training on how to write a formal report; and
- 5) Writing a formal report.

The data obtained from all three groups of the population were consistent indicating that the project was periodically improved. This means that the community leaders in this sub-district have a good vision and role in their operations with high responsibility and sacrifice. The leaders must perform the following five main duties:

- 1) They are responsible for the work under their responsibilities;
- 2) They help to maximize the quantity and quality of the work;
- 3) They give working instructions and advices to their subordinates;
- 4) They contact and coordinate within the organization to achieve efficiency; and
- 5) They direct and control the work.

Sub-district chiefs and village headmen are an important part of the government to help accomplish the regional and national government work and purposes successfully. However, because most leaders have little education or knowledge, it is not possible to develop the locality in their own duties as good as it should be.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

There are two levels of recommendations as follows:

1) Policy recommendations

- (1) Committee of the community leaders should have a clear policy to promote the persons observing the Five Precepts.
- (2) There should be channels to listen to the issues from members of each village.
- (3) Community leaders should clarify to the people to understand the principles of observing the Five Precepts properly.
- (4) Members in each village should be trained to write a report to the government.
- (5) There should be a team to visit and consult with other networks.

2) Research recommendations

- (1) There should be further research on the peace obtained from the Project of Villages Observing the Five Precepts among the people in Huaysai Sub-district, Sankamphaeng District, Chiang Mai Province.
- (2) There should be further research on the factors that contribute to the sustainable success of the project.

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