Exploring the role of Buddhist monks/nuns' engagement in community development as catalysts for social change and sustainable development in Lao People's Democratic Republic

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A case study of Buddhism for Development Project at Ban Bungsanthueng, Nongbok District, Khammouane Province.

By

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Declaration

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This thesis entitled: "**Exploring the Role of Buddhist monks/nuns' engagement in community development as catalysts for social change and sustainable development in Lao People's Democratic Republic: A case study of the Buddhism for Development Project at Ban Bungsanthueng, Nongbok District, Khammouane Province***"* is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of **Master of International Communication**.

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I confirm that:

- This thesis represents my own work;
- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies;
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and as fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: **2017-1034**

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Abstract

The significance of local and traditional beliefs and culture has been seen as an obstacle to modernity. In Laos, religious communities have often been excluded from the development process and identified as hindrances to modernisation. The significances of Buddhist values and the role of *Sangha* (Buddhist monastic order) are not addressed in the development process, although Buddhism is the main religion of Laos. Buddhism is widely understood as a separate body from social affairs. Society tends to view *Sangha* members who are involved in secular affairs as violating monastic disciplines (*vinaya*) and precepts (*sila*). Within this context, the Lao Buddhist Fellowship Organisation has established the Buddhism for Development Project [BDP] to train the *Sangha*, as well as Buddhist followers, to play a greater role in social development and changes in the broader social perception of the roles of *Sangha* in the development process, with an emphasis on spiritual development and transformation.

This study, using a qualitative methodology, employed Buddhist development approaches [BA] as applied by the Buddhism for Development Project [BDP] (2012) and the Integrated Model of Communication for Social Change developed by Figueroa, Kincaid, Rani, and Lewis (2002) as a conceptual framework. It utilised participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups to explore the roles of Buddhist monks/nuns as catalysts for social change and sustainable development in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The research takes as a case study the Buddhism for Development Project [BDP] implemented at *Ban Bungsanthueng* (Nongbok District, Khammouane Province) by its Buddhist Volunteer Spirit for Community network [BVSC network]. The fieldwork took place at the BDP's training centre in Vientiane and the Buddhist initiatives at *Ban Bungsanthueng*.

The research indicates that BA aims at transforming villagers' spirituality in order to liberate them from suffering caused by various social issues. The research demonstrates how the BDP and its network apply participatory approaches through interpersonal communication, such as sermon delivery, *Dhamma* talk, and daily interaction with villagers and project members. The trained monk through his leadership role and earned social trust enables the community to reach its sustainability and self-reliance goals. However, there are some challenges that the trained monk and project members face, such as power relationships

with government and community officials. These challenges affect the free flow of information and group decision making.

The emerging integrated framework has created new contextualised indicators combining the values of BA and IMCFSC. The monk here is seen as a Buddhist catalyst by acting as an internal stimulus to community development through spiritual transformation and social trust. BDP and its BVSC network approaches are considered participatory and act as a catalyst for social change. Buddhist ethics, virtues and moral teaching, especially the concept of '*Paticcasamuppada*' (independence or inter-being), provide the stimulus for community dialogue and actions for change and spiritual transformation by having the *Sangha* as facilitators and transformers. The finding has demonstrated that BDP acts as the catalyst for change through educating the Buddhist community, changing the social perception of the social roles of the *Sangha*, facilitating a network of Buddhist volunteers, and mobilising funds to support grass-roots initiatives. The authoritative position, social respect, trust and faith in the *Sangha*, as well as the collective consciousness (ownership) of the *Wat* facilitate community responsibility, solidarity and harmony–significant social capital–that are the cohesive force for community participation in dialogue and concerted action. The *Sangha* thus acts as the stimulus for community participation and actions.

The combination of the two frameworks has contributed to a more holistic and participatory communication for social change and development approach that is more relevant to community development in Laos.

“To the spirit of my beloved father in heaven”

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ຂອບໃຈຫຼາຍໆ

(Thank you very much)

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List of Abbreviations

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
BDP	Buddhism for Development Project
LBFO	Lao Buddhist Fellowship Organisation
BVSC	Buddhist Volunteer Spirit for Community
BBT-WHI	Women Handicraft Initiative of Ban Bungsanthueng
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
ADB	Asian Development Bank

List of Buddhist Key Terms

Terms	**Meanings**
Paticcasamuppada	Interdependence, inter-being, dependent origination
Tri-sikkha	The Buddhist Threefold Training or Development
Sila [Sila-dhamma]	Buddhist morality or rules
Vinaya	Disciplines practiced by monks, nuns, and novices
Brahma-vihara	Buddhist social emotion, the divide abode
Dhamma	It is a Pali term refer to the term '*dharma'* in Sanskrit language means the teachings of the Buddha
Sangha	A Buddhist community incorporated by monks, novice, nuns, and white ascetics those who are ordained in Buddhist life.
Vipassana	A kind of Buddhist tradition or practice to cultivate insight and the truth through the nature of reality.
Dhura	A Pali term means duty, obligation or responsibility
Magga	The Noble Eightfold Path, a path way to end sufferings

Chapter One: Introduction

The evidence and empirical experience of the field of development communication since the 1950s has shown that the significance of local and traditional beliefs and culture, especially in developing countries, was neglected by the dominant paradigms. Innovation and new technology were introduced and promulgated as the only tool, replacing indigenous ones, with the aim of taking these countries into the state of "material well-being." Indigenous knowledge and practice were seen obsolete and an obstacle to the Third World country to step toward similarity with the West (Haider, Mcloughlin, & Scott, 2011).

Religion plays an influential role in society, and is a cornerstone of all cultures (King, 2009), but culture and traditional belief has often been seen as a barrier, and excluded from the development process. Vu, Bailey, and Chen (2016), who studied religious freedom in Vietnam and Laos, have found that religions in Laos are often considered to be in opposition to the direction of social development and the party's rules. Although Buddhism is the religion that Lao people believe in the most, it is always separated from secular affairs in wider society.

In Laos, Buddhism is a deeply embedded part of society and culture. Buddhist temple [*Wat*], for villagers, is symbolic and represents their civilisation, innovation and their community's prosperity (Boutsavath & Chapelier, 1973). *Wat* and monks/nuns are always firmly placed in a significant position in community development. In Laos, *Wat* is used in some urban and rural areas as a community school (Sengsoulin, 2014). Ladwig (2006) argues that although culture is considered an essential part of the development process, the potential for religion to play a positive role within the Lao development process has until now been overlooked. Buddhist clergy, or *Sangha*, have an obligation and responsibility to spread the Teaching of the Buddha (*Buddha-Dharma*) to others to help them to reduce and end their sufferings (*Dukkha*).

Lao *Sangha* (the Lao Buddhist Fellowship Organization) believes that they can make a significant contribution towards reducing existing social problems caused by the rapid changes and issues that directly and indirectly have affected the security of Lao people's lives, assets and mind. From a Buddhist perspective, human sufferings can result from ignorance and desire, but can be alleviated through seeking and obtaining wisdom (Holt, 2009). Buddhist teaching focuses on how to liberate oneself from these root causes of suffering. It aims at freeing oneself from the

desire for material well-being, using self-denial to develop spiritual well-being. Marinova, Hossain, and Hossain-Rhaman (2006) point out that most traditional community see their spirituality, such as mystical belief and religious scriptures, as a blueprint of their sustainability. Therefore, Buddhist clergy sees that developing people's morality and spirituality based on mindfulness will lead to the enrichment of knowledge or wisdom laying down a significant and firm step towards sustainable development.

The existing role but also the unrealized potential of the Buddhist *Sangha* to play a role in the development process in Laos and the current involvement of the *Sangha* in social development by Buddhist Development Project [BDP] requires further exploration. This study explores the role of Buddhist monks/nuns in community development as catalysts for social change and for sustainable development in Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic [Laos]. It takes a case study of the Buddhist Volunteer Spirit for Community *Ban Bungsanthueng* [the Buddhist Initiative] at *Ban*[1] *Bungsanthueng*, Nongbok District, Khammouane Province. This introductory chapter provides an overview of the development context of the Lao PDR; it presents the aims and objectives, research questions, and operational definitions that form this research; and it provides the profile of the community that is the focus of this study; and finally, it outlines the structure of this thesis.

1. Background and context of the Lao PDR

Laos is a landlocked country located in the Indo-China Peninsula in Southeast Asia sharing borders with Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam and China. In 1997, the country became a member of Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) which is considered significant to the cooperative aspects of foreign policy and international relations of the country. Laos is a one-party state, and the Lao People's Revolutionary Party [LPRP] leads the country. The country area covers 2,36,800 Sq. Km and its population is 6,492,22 people in total (Lao Statistic Bureau, 2015) of which 61% are farmers (World Bank, 2015). Buddhism is a significant part of Lao culture and Buddhists make up 64.7% of the total population of the Lao PDR, while other Lao people identify themselves as either Christian (1.7%) or other religions (33.6%) (Lao Statistic Bureau, 2015). However, the number of Buddhist followers is still unclear due to the integration

[1] '*Ban*' is a Lao term which refer 'village' in English

of beliefs in Buddhism and spirit (ancestors). Notably, many Lao people also believe in spirits or their ancestors' spirits (a belief known as 'animism'). Holt (2009) highlighted the belief of Lao indigenous peoples, mainly in rural areas, in cults of spirits (Lao: *phi*) and vital essences (Lao: *khwuan*). This creates an unclear and non-definitive number of Buddhist followers in the Lao PDR. Chamberlain (2007) point out that Laos is distinctly diverse in ethnicities, languages and cultures, which are unique and part of the nations' critical strength, but this diversity is often not seen as an asset but an impediment to development. The approaches to development and to the impacts of modernization among ethnic groups are tremendously varied due to this diversity. Further, the development process disregards the involvement of religious organizations.

Figure 1: Map of Lao People's Democratic Republic identified with the researched community
Source: Author adapted from United Nations, 2004

The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic or Laos [GoL] launched its open-door policy in 1986 under the New Economic Mechanism [NEM] in order to move from a centrally-planned towards a market-oriented economy (Leebouapao & Sayasenh, 2017; Oraboune, 2010; Phimphanthavong, 2012). NEM was a significant socio-economic and political transformation. As United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] (2007)point out, the reform led Laos to experience impressive economic growth. Over the past decade, the country has enjoyed rapid economic growth. According to World Bank (2018), the GDP of the country grew 7.8% to which natural resources, such as hydropower, mineral and forest resources, are the main contributors. This growth has made an impact on the impressive progress in poverty alleviation, the rate reducing from 46% in 1992 to 23% in 2015, and Lao PDR's Human Development Index [HDI] ranked 138th out of 188 countries in the same year (UNDP, 2017b). The achievement was the result of the intervention and support of international assistance including International Development Associations [IDA] and NGOs, such as Mekong River Commission, ASEAN, UNDP, World Bank, ADB, and JICA. These organisations have increasingly played a significant role as strategic development partnership to the GoL in the country's development (Phimphanthavong, 2012; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2007). These organisations have incorporated as powerful civic society organisations with approximately 160 INGOs and NGOs operating throughout the country (ADB, 2011). Their roles are essential for Lao economic development regarding foreign aid assistance (Phimphanthavong, 2012; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2007), and they mostly operate in community development and service delivery with a focus on agriculture, rural development, and education (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2011).

The GoL set goals towards escaping from its Least Development Countries (LDCs) status by 2020 (Oraboune, 2010). One of the biggest challenges and obstacles for Laos is geographical constraints. To reach its goals, GoL has introduced a number of policies and strategies, such as transforming the land-locked to the land-linked country (Nouansavanh, 2010), and the Three-Builds Policy [*Sam Sang*] (National Governance and Public Administration Reform Programme [NGPAR], United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], &United Nations Capital Development Fund [UNCDF], 2016).

In 2001, GoL introduced a new strategic development vision of transforming the landlocked country as part of turning geographical constraints to opportunities to welcome the ASEAN Economic Community [AEC]. This strategy aims at facilitating the flow of goods and services in the region (Nouansavanh, 2010).In this vision, many economic corridors have been developed, including the West corridor linking Vietnam to Thailand, and the North corridor linking China to Thailand, through which Laos expects to gain benefits as a transit corridor. However, Lindberg (2006), as cited in Nouansavanh (2010) argues that realising such a vision is challenging because it requires a huge budget, and being a transit country instead of a production base presents risks. Laos would gain fewer benefits from such a vision while China, Thailand and Vietnam would gain more due to their capability to export and exchange goods.

In 2012, the Central Party of LPRP introduced a new Three-Builds [*Sam Sang*] policy to improve and transform its administration and development directives. The policy encompasses three visions as the statement by the President of the Lao PDR addressed at the United Nations in 2015: 1) building province as a strategic body, 2) building district as a strong integrated body, and3) building village as development body. Under the umbrella of this policy, there are 943 pilot projects being implemented in 109 villages of 51 districts. One of the aims of the directive is to translate the LPRP and the GoL's guidance and implement policy at the local level through encouraging people to participate and take ownership of their community development (Government of Lao PDR, 2012). Thus, the policy is a tool of decentralisation (UNICEF, 2012) which seems one of dominant strategies and discourses in the Lao development history.

Nevertheless, there are some challenges that GoL requires to be addressed. According to a recent study by Lao-Australia Development Learning Facility [LADLF] (2015), a misunderstanding occurred in the practice of the *Sam-Sang* policy due to a limited level of understanding. LADLF (2015) point out that the political dimension was generally well-understood. The concept of administrative decentralization is understood only at the central level or line ministries, but the understanding of the functions devolution at the bottom level, such as districts and villages, is relatively limited. The understanding of the changes and delivery of development policy is poor indicating that its implementation was heavily driven by the political slogan instead of comprehension of the intended change and strategies responding to the local context and needs (LADLF, 2015). In other words, although the GoL has gained considerable success in the pilot phases of the policy contributing to the broader social and economic

development, there are some significant challenges which require addressing and improvement. UNICEF (2012) has suggested that various government bodies, particularly the Ministry of Home Affairs, need to facilitate the involvement of civil society organization, promote public participation, and address communities' concerns.

Although Laos has made advancement in reducing the poverty rate and developing the quality of its citizen, some significant challenges still exist, and impede the attainment of sustainable and inclusive growth of Laos. According to UNDP's Human Development Report 2015, the GoL must address issues of deprivation and inequality, such as the exclusion of women, rural or remote people, and ethnic groups; otherwise, they remain major barriers to the human development of Laos and the region (UNDP, 2017a). What's more, the marginalised groups lack opportunities to influence institutions and policies affecting their lives. (UNDP, 2017a) also examines the impacts of fast technological advancement, globalisation and environmental degradation on the working environment and society, and the way in which this imposed barriers for the majority of people (UNDP, 2016b). As a result, both the World Bank (2016) and UNDP (2017b) have raised the question of whether the development progress Laos has achieved is inclusive and sustainable.

Furthermore, the World Bank (2016) has also pointed out that although Laos has achieved an improvement in the human development index, the rate is still below average compared to other countries in the same middle group of human development. Additionally, UUNDP (2017a) indicates that approximately 37% of its population is multidimensional poor. UNDP (2017b) has pointed out that Laos still faces some significant challenges that need to be addressed. Laos has to ensure inclusiveness and sustainable development [SD] and address widening economic and social gaps including those between gender and ethnic groups which hinder the achievement of SD goals. Furthermore, the policy of foreign direct investment through the government should operate in an environmentally-friendly and sustainable manner, in which the revenues should benefit everyone (UNDP, 2017b). Based on these studies, inclusiveness and participation remain a challenge for Laos due to the country's social and economic diversity.

2. Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to explore the role of Buddhist monks or nuns as catalysts for social change and sustainable development in Laos. It takes a case study the Buddhism for

Development Project [BDP]. This study is expected to contribute to a better understanding of Buddhist approaches and the role of *Sangha* members, and the extent to which these approaches are useful as a catalyst for social change and sustainable development in Laos. This study examines how the Buddhist approaches to community development employ participatory communication, and how these aspects are manifesting in the implementation of the Buddhist Initiative by the trained monk, the level of achieved sustainability and self-reliance, as well as challenges and barriers. Significantly, it also attempted to integrate the aforementioned IMCFSC Model with BA framework, which may contribute to the improvement of both the Buddhist community development process in the Lao PDR and the field of participatory communication for development and social change.

2.1. Research Questions

The following central research question forms the focus of this research:

- **What role can the BDP's trained Buddhist monks/nuns play in community development as catalysts for social change and sustainable development in Laos?**

The followings are a set of sub-questions to answer the central main question above:

1. What aspects of participatory communication are manifesting in the community development initiatives implemented by the trained monk in *Ban Bungsanthueng*?
2. What sustainability and self-reliance goals has the community achieved as a result of the Buddhist development initiatives?
3. What challenges do the Buddhist monks/nuns experience in their community development practice in *Ban Bungsanthueng*?
4. How can the Integrated Model of Communication for Social Change [the Catalyst Model] be integrated with the Buddhist Approaches to Development?

2.2. Operational Definitions

- **Participatory Communication for Development [C4D].** C4D is a dialogical communication, by which stakeholders can express and share ideas and opinions to facilitate empowerment, especially of the most vulnerable people. It is not only the exchange of ideas or information but also an investigation and creation of a new body of knowledge to solve particular problems or situations (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). The idea of the participatory approach is to get all stakeholders involved in the development process and in determining the

development outcomes (Freire, 1970) in which dialogue and participation are the basis of participatory communication approaches (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006; Lennie & Tacchi, 2013; Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation [SDC], 2016; P. Thomas, 1994; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009; Waisbord, 2001). C4D facilitates access to information, stimulates participation, empowers people and influences policies for participation, political and social transformation (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation [SDC], 2016).

- **Communication for Social Change [CFSC].** CFSC refers to the coordinating process between "community dialogue" and "collective action" happening in a community to produce social change that solves common problems and improves the lives and well-being of all community members (Figueroa et al., 2002). Social change is a transformative process which distributes power inside the social and political institutions, in which the unit of changes are focused on the community (UNICEF, 2015).

- **Socially Engaged Buddhism/Buddhist Monks/nuns.** It is "a contemporary form of Buddhism that engages actively yet non-violently with the social, economic, political, social, and ecological problems of society" (King, 2009, p. 1).

- **Catalyst for change.** Catalyst, in its development communication context, is a driving force or stimulus that either already exists in the community or is an exogenous factor. It stimulates dialogue about the current common issues in the community with the aim of engendering collective action and participatory problem-solving (Figueroa et al., 2002). The catalyst can be internal stimulus, a change agent, policy, innovation, technology, and mass media (Figueroa et al., 2002).

- **Sustainable development [SD].** SD is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 54).

- **Community development.** Community development refers to a process where members of a community hold hands to take collective action and find solutions to their common problems in their community (UNTERMS, n.d.).

- **Self-reliance**. Self-reliance refers to the dependence on the existing natural and human resources that individual, community and the country has and also the willingness to seek the

problem out, identify goals and strategies that perfectly accord with its cultural necessity (Dissanayake, 2010). The concept of self-reliance is an integral aspect of participation, both as an outcome and as a part of the process (Shirley A. White, 1994, as cited in Gumucio-Dagron &Tufte, 2006, p. 483). Self-reliance refers to simplicity, responsibility, respect, commitment and creativity (Marinova et al., 2006).

3. Background and Profiles of the Community

This research was conducted in two places related to the BDP including the BDP's training centre in Vientiane and *Ban Bungsanthueng* in Khammouane province of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR or Laos). This section provides the profile of the BDP community, the trained monk and BBT as a background and focus of this research.

3.1. The Buddhism for Development Project [BDP]

BDP was established in 2003 by the Lao Buddhist Fellowship Organisation [LBFO) for Development Project [BDP] under the supervision of the Lao Front for National Construction [LFNC] (Buddhism for Development Project [BDP], 2012; Ladwig, 2006). BDP is involved in many areas of development, addressing issues related to HIV/AIDs, drugs, poverty, human trafficking, and the environment in Lao society using Buddhist principles, values, and practices as a foundation.

The main aim of the project is "promoting Buddhist teaching (*Dhamma*) and *Sangha* to play more roles in community development" in which its first objective is training *Sangha* in all the required skills (Buddhism for Development Project [BDP], 2012). Thus, the main activity of the BDP is providing a training course on "Buddhist Volunteer Spirit for Community' or *jit-asa-sao-Buddha-phue-soumxon* [BVSC] to its *Sangha* community nationwide, including youth and other villagers. Aims of the BDP, according to the Buddhism for Development Project [BDP] (2012, 2016), include 1) producing adequate skilled *Vipassana* masters among both *Sangha* and Buddhist followers for social works; 2) promoting the roles and participation of Buddhist nuns and laity (especially teenagers) in activities; 3) strengthening cooperation with internal and external organisations; 4) building sustainably developed model communities; 5) creating supporting materials for teaching ethics and applied Dharma for social development; 6) receiving domestic and international fund to adequately support the programme's activities; and 7) producing volunteers for social development activities.

LBFO has expressed the view that monks and nuns should be first well trained to practice their spiritual and cultural foundation and get the gist of mundane (secular) and super-mundane (religious) knowledge before taking any development initiatives (Buddhism for Development Project [BDP], 2012; Ladwig, 2006; Participatory Development Training Centre [PADETC], 2010). The training centre is located at *Wat-pa-Nakhoun-noi Vipassana* Meditation Centre in Capital City of Vientiane, Laos. The training aims at empowering the community members to play a greater role in community development. The trainees have been taught, for instance, about organic farming and spiritual practice.

In addition to the above goal, BDP also has a goal of engagement in community development for its BVSC network. Its aims are, "motivating the villagers to produce sustainable agriculture of organic products and handicraft, while protecting the community environment and culture" (Buddhism for Development Project [BDP], 2012) and "strengthening community resilience and wellbeing through spiritual awareness and action" (Buddhism for Development Project [BDP], 2016). It aims at developing and building a society that is based on the Buddhist principles of morality, self-reliance and social harmony (Buddhism for Development Project [BDP], 2012).

Figure 2: BDP's development approaches
Source: Author adapted from Buddhism for Development Project [BDP] (2012)

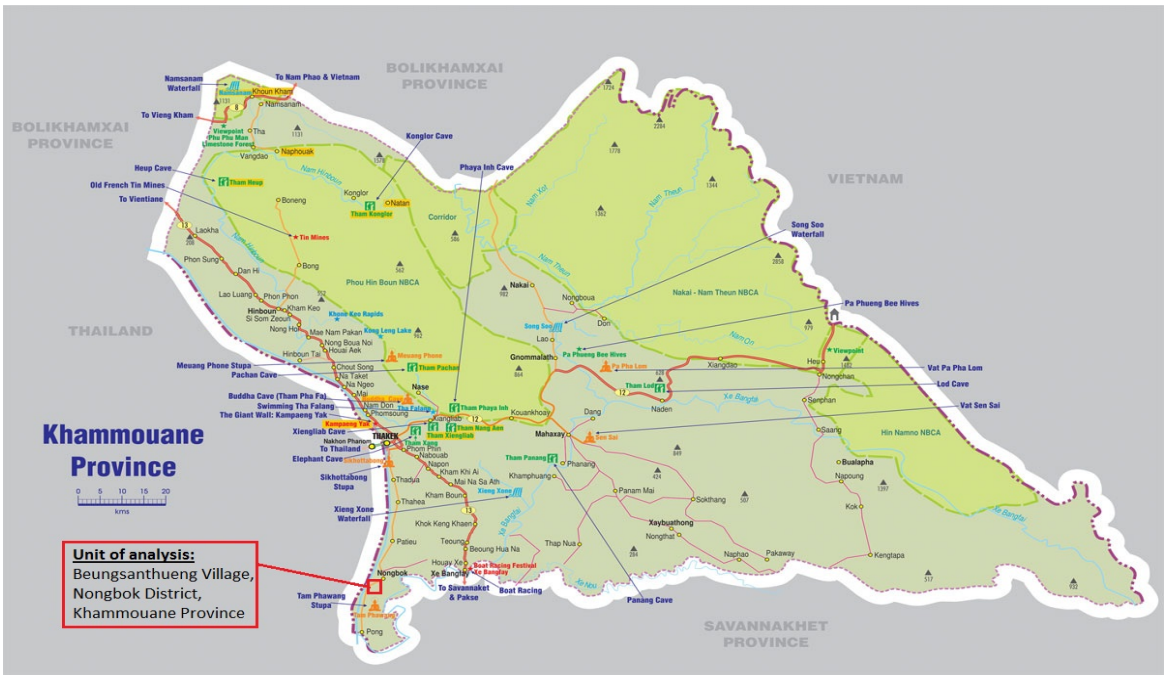
To achieve these goals, the BDP encourages monks and nuns to represent their provinces, districts, or communities in attendance at the training before taking development initiatives. The

training is not only aimed at monks and nuns, but also community leaders and youth members. The training was initially run for three years, but it was recently shortened to six months. After their training, the monks and nuns can return to their communities and initiate community development work. Some monks have already started to apply the skills gained from the BDP training in leading their community development work and in transferring those skills to their community members. One of the participating communities achieving a considerable success is *Ban Bungsanthueng*, in the Nongbok district of Khammouane province.

3.2. The *Ban Bungsanthueng* community

This research focuses on BDP's Buddhist alumni monk [the trained monk] implementing the Buddhist Initiative at *Ban Bungsanthueng*, Nongbok District, Khammouane Province. The trained monk is alumni and BVSC[2] network of BDP. He was trained in the fifth training course on BVSC at the training centre in Vientiane. The monk comes from the *Ban Bungsanthueng* and relates to the community through kinship. He represents the community in the BVSC training course.

Figure 3. Map of Khammouane Province
Source: Author adapted from Ecotourism Laos, 2005



[2]BVSC stands for Buddhist Volunteer Spirit for Community.

Ban Bungsanthueng is located in the South of Nongbok District. The village area covers 313sq.km and is approximately 47 Km from the capital city of Khammouane province and 400 kilometres from the Capital City of Vientiane. In 2017, according to the village head, the population of the village was 1,249 residents with 244 houses and 232 households. The two dominant ethnic groups in the district are Lao and Makong, and 98% of its population are Buddhist (Nongbok Administration Bureau, 2009).

The social life of the village is shaped by two dominant belief systems. The villagers describe themselves as Buddhist evidenced by the *Wat* which is located in the centre of the village (*see Figure 4*). It serves as a place for community religious functions. However, the village also practices traditional beliefs [animism] such as faith in the village protector spirit [the *Puta*] and spirit of their ancestors.

Figure 4. The access road and the Wat, and elder women are offering lunch to monks
Source: Author

Village life remains mainly dependent on nature on a daily basis. People, especially men, like going to the paddy field and wetland to catch fish and other animals for their daily living. Women also help their family by entering the forest to collect bamboo shoots, mushrooms, vegetables and other non-timber products for their daily consumption. However, there are a few

stores in the village where villagers can buy food and household belongings. These shops are more crowded in the morning and evening (*see Figure 5*). In the village, there is a primary school which provides education from kindergarten to the Fifth Grade.[3] After that, students have to travel to the centre of the region, approximately 8 Km by road from the village, for their secondary education.

Figure 5: Villagers are buying foods in the evening and students are playing at school
Source: Author

From a political perspective, the village has achieved some development progress as stipulated by the GoL, including becoming a criminal-free village, cultural village, and development village. This achievement is one that follows the Three-Builds [*Sam-Sang*] policy. A recent study by Sayarath and Saengsouliya (2009) indicates that the main income of the district, almost 98%, comes from agricultural products such as rice farming, pig raising and vegetable growing. With 641.3 hectares of agricultural land, the villagers produce and consume glutinous rice as the main source of food, with other types of crop and livestock culture as alternatives. As Nongbok Administration Bureau (2009) has pointed out, the district's economy mainly relies on agriculture, livestock and handicrafts.

[3]Fifth Grade is the highest class or grade in primary education in Laos

Figure 6. Nameplate of the village shows the achievements the village has made, such as the cultural village, criminal-free village, and development village.
Source: Author

With a favourable geographical location that is close to the Mekong River, the villagers previously used to grow tobacco on an island in the Mekong River to supply both Lao and Thai tobacco factories. This activity created attractive income for the villagers. However, the majority of people gave up the business due to erosion, which led to limiting the growing area. Nevertheless, some villagers still switch from growing vegetables to tobacco at their plot and paddy fields because of the attractive prices (Khammouane News, 2016). The impact of climate change has brought many problems to the community, such as migrant workers and environmental degradation. According to village head and the trained monk, the villagers make heavy use of chemical products in their agricultural production. Recently, the forest cover has been decreased as a result of land clearance for agricultural purposes.

Figure 7. A man is spraying the pesticide over his vegetable plot
Source: Author

Furthermore, as the map shown in Figure 3 demonstrates, the village is close to the Mekong River and Thailand, so young members and adults in the village like crossing the Mekong border to work in Thailand. Few of those work legally with a work permit. As the Asian Development Bank [ADB] (2016)study found, Nongbok is one of the targeted areas of human trafficking. World Vision (2008) has pointed out that there are approximately 95, 000 Laotian workers working in Thailand, the majority of which are young people aged between 14 and 18 years old, of which 60% are girls. The research conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] and Lao Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare [MoLSW] (2004) has indicated that girls aged between 12 and 18 years old are the most targeted victims of trafficking and 35% of those victims are forced into prostitution.

Given the aforesaid issues, the trained monk has taken development initiatives prioritising education in morality and spirituality and raising the villagers' awareness of current issues occurring in the community. His initiatives mainly focus on moral teachings, promoting environmental consciousness and generating income based on resources available in the village. These project initiatives also have many activities such as organic farming, youth volunteering, reforestation, and fishpond and tree management. Thus, the researcher focuses on these Buddhist project activities at *Ban Bungsanthueng* as a case study of exploring the role of Buddhist monks as a catalyst for social change in Lao PDR.

4. Thesis structure

This thesis contains six chapters. Chapter One presents the significant background of this research stating the research background, the aims, the research questions, operational definitions, and the community profile. Chapter Two provides a review of relevant literature in the field of development communication, participatory approaches, communication role in community development, Buddhist approaches to development and communication, and the Lao development context. Chapter Three explains the methodology and conceptual framework including methods, research procedures and data analysis used in this research. Chapter Four presents the findings of the research and Chapter-Five demonstrates the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of key findings supported by relevant literature and theories. The final Chapter Six summarises, concludes and recommends some directions for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This research aims to explore Buddhist monks or nuns as catalysts for social change in Lao People's Democratic Republic [Laos]. This chapter reviews the relevant literature on participatory communication for social change [CSC], community development approaches and Buddhist participatory approaches to development. The introductory section provides a brief history of development communication, before moving on to discuss participatory approaches to communication for social changes. The following two sections review the critical literature on the catalyst role in community development, and the integrated model of CSC developed by Figueroa et al. (2002). The final two parts introduce a Buddhist approach to communication and development, with Buddhist teachings and values for social development examined. Finally, this chapter highlights belief systems, the progress of community development research and the religious contribution to the national and community development in Laos.

1. Approaches to development communication and social change

There has been little consensus on theoretical concepts regarding development communication, and the discussion remains a current debate. Development communication [DC] has evolved through the convergence of different disciplines (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006), yet this merging leads back to the question of what DC theory is specifically, and what the basis of all communication for development and CSC doctrine is based on. It is crucial to look at the history of DC to understand its evolution and context better.

1.1. A brief history of development communication (DC)

DC emerged post-WW2 in respond to the need for transference of new knowledge to, and within, developing countries (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006; Melkote, 2012; Melkote & Steeves, 2001; Mody, 2003; Servaes, 2008; Srampickal, 2006; Waisbord, 2001). The DC communication model emerged in the 1960s when the United States used an information strategy to transfer knowledge and innovation to developing nations under the 'modernisation' paradigm (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006). Therefore, DC evolved through three main paradigms; modernisation, dependency and participatory approaches.

The dominant paradigm emphasises the transmission of new knowledge and technologies to transform behaviour in traditional societies and create a modernised setting resembling the

Western hemisphere (Haider et al., 2011). The industrialised countries in the West assumed that "information and knowledge generate development" (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006, p. xvi) and with this assumption, communication technologies and media were applied to ensure a free, smooth flow of information and innovation. The developed nations believed this approach would help the developing nations, particularly in Asia and Latin America, to transform and develop. Yet local culture and traditional practice needed to be compromised, or even eliminated, because it was seen as a barrier to the successful development of Third World nations.

The diffusion model, introduced by Everett Roger in 1962, was the most influential under this modernization paradigm (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). This model stemmed from the belief that mass media, such as television and radio, is a vehicle for carrying out information for change (Waisbord, 2001) and facilitates better quality of life to impoverished people in underdeveloped countries (Srampickal, 2006). The information is transferred through "large-scale media campaign, social marketing, entertainment-education and other forms of one-way transmission" (Haider et al., 2011, p. 7). These methods of transmission are strategic communication practices that are widely used in health communication such as family planning and HIV/AIDS campaigns (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). Both social marketing and entertainment-education aim to equip the individual with new knowledge, thus changing behaviours and values (Melkote, 2012), while annihilating indigenous knowledge in the process.

The diffusion model under the modernisation paradigm has been widely criticised, especially in Latin America since the 1950s, and mainly in the 1970s and 1980s. The critics focused on its vertical (one-way) communication approach and the Western ethnocentric perspective. Many development scholars from various regions criticised the effectiveness and efficiency of the top-down development communication programs under this paradigm because it ignored local communities, culture and knowledge (Dutta, 2011). Local culture and traditions were perceived as hindrances to development which obstructed the step towards modernity in developing countries (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006; Melkote, 2012). This paradigm viewed modern cultures and knowledge as superior, and developing countries were required to abandon their own. In short, the modernisation paradigm considered the top-down communication approach as a priority, but its concept of industrialisation and modernisation failed to meet the needs of the local communities in developing nations.

1.2. Communication for social change and development

The dependency theory emerged amidst widespread criticism against the dominant paradigm, by Latin American scholars under the Marxist and capitalist theories, in the 1960s and 1970s (Dutta, 2011; Waisbord, 2001). The communication in this paradigm attached more importance to social changes than individual behavioural changes (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006). The approach aimed to minimise development gaps between developed countries (the Centre) and developing countries (the Peripheral) caused by structural differences. Structural problems, as Waisbord (2001) argues, caused underdevelopment and poverty, as opposed to informational problems. Consequently, an alternative and participatory communication can emerge within marginalised communities if the communication involves political and social action (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006). There are many advocacy models used in this paradigm to empower individuals and communities in underdeveloped nations such as media advocacy, social mobilisation and participatory communication (Waisbord, 2001). In other words, this paradigm outlines the theoretical background for community participation and empowerment.

Participatory Approaches

The participatory communication approach was primarily inspired by Paulo Freire (1970), a Brazilian educator and scholar (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009; Waisbord, 2001). Freire's idea was to get all the stakeholders, including ordinary citizens such as peasants, involved in the development process to let them determine the outcome. This tactic is designed to empower impoverished farmers to express their needs for a better life, free of oppression (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). Dialogue and participation are crucial to Friere's notion of liberation (as cited in Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006; Waisbord, 2001). Dialogue, voice, liberating pedagogy and the action-reflection-action praxis encapsulate his liberating approach (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009; Waisbord, 2001). Most research and literature about DC (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006; Lennie & Tacchi, 2013; Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation [SDC], 2016; P. Thomas, 1994; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009; Waisbord, 2001), recognises dialogue and participation as the basis of participatory communication approaches.

The primary aim of DC is to promote and strengthen dialogue between all stakeholders, including beneficiaries, partners and authorities (Swiss Agency for Development and

Cooperation [SDC], 2016). Freire (1970) argues that love is the foundation of dialogue; dialogue cannot exist without profound love, humility and human faith. Friere refers to 'profound love' as love for the world and love for the people, so profound love is both a dialogical base and a dialogical process. According to Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation [SDC] (2016), dialogue is a form of horizontal communication which leads to more changes in behaviour and attitude, than top-down guidance and information. Free and open dialogue is the essence of participatory communication (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009).

Participatory approaches were used in research, problem identification and decision-making, and implementation and evaluation of change (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). According to Waisbord (2001), Freire suggests that development practitioners should attach more importance to interpersonal communication than national media and technologies. Meanwhile, they should also act as a dialogue facilitator. The development process should involve more local stakeholders in determining the process of development outcomes (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). In keeping with Dutta (2011) perspective, participatory development approaches result in grassroots involvement in the social change process. This, in turn, makes a participatory space and platform available for local communities to pursue changes in local, national and global politics. Freire (1970], (as cited in Waisbord, 2001) believed that equal distribution and active participation at grassroots level were the core of his "dialogic pedagogy" concept.

The later aim of DC has shifted to structural problems. It focuses more on eradicating barriers and promoting a more just, equal and participatory society (Waisbord, 2001). Most development scholars agree that social justice should underpin DC theory, and social justice should be the driving force behind the goal of social transformation in communities globally (Melkote, 2012). Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation [SDC] (2016) assert that DC is used for social and political transformation through the promotion of participation and social change. They suggest four areas that DC has an impact on include facilitating access to information, stimulating participation, empowering people and influencing public policies. Recent studies on participatory approaches to communication have been considering structural and social change at a profound level.

In 1977, the Rockefellers Foundation initiated the debate on broad-based policy called the 'Communication for Social Change Consortium', which subsequently focused on structural

inequality and social change (Figueroa et al., 2002; Parks, Gray-Felder, Hunt, & Byrne, 2005; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). Later, CSC was defined "as a process of public and private dialogue through which people themselves define who they are, what they need and how to get what they need in order to improve their own lives. It utilises dialogue that leads to collective problem identification, decision making and community-based implementation of solutions to development issues" (Parks et al., 2005, p. 16).

2. Participatory approaches in community development

Communication is a powerful tool in helping communities to amplify their collective voice to achieve the ultimate goal of community well-being. Hanh (2017) argues that the terms 'community' and 'communication' share the same original meaning of the Latin word 'communicare', which means 'communicating'. Bacon (2009) validates this argument through his definition of community as a collection of human beings or animals interacting with each other in the same surroundings, sharing an ethos, opportunities and goals. These communities developed through the sharing of stories and experiences.

Community development aims predominantly to improve the lives and welfare of people in the community. The relationship between community well-being and community development has been examined by Lee, Kim, and Phillips (2014), who claim that a multifaceted approach to community development, including economic development, is a package that stimulates community well-being. To date, the evaluation of community well-being has been measured using social inclusion and participation as indicators(Lee et al., 2014).

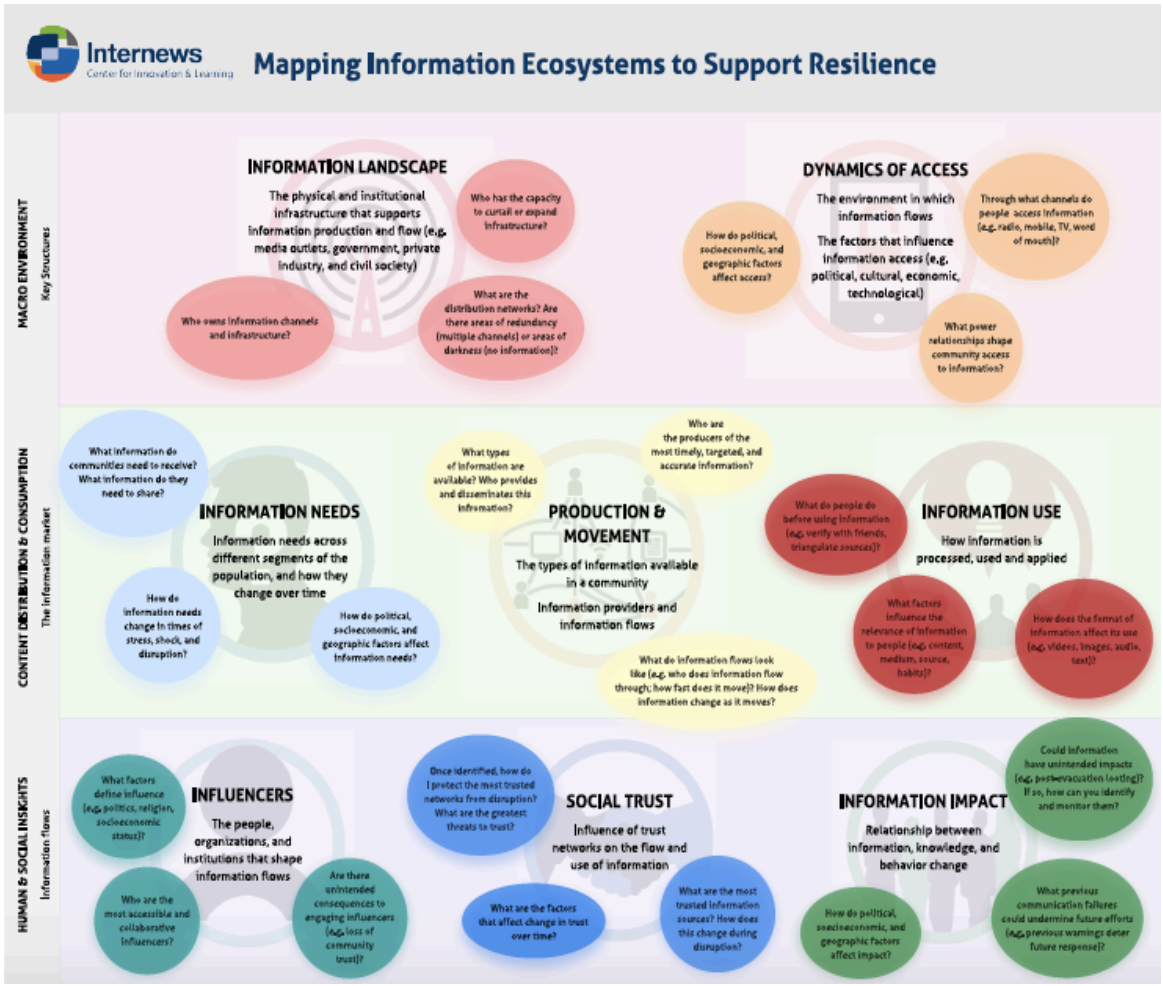
If 'community' refers to groups of people and their interactions, it also needs to address social capital. Social capital, as defined by Robinson, is the social network that facilitates the fluidity and effectiveness of the society, and the voluntary associations (including community groups) which promote community relationships and empowerment (Robinson, 1999). Social capital covers a range of social activities; it can be a human relationship (including kinship), working groups, religious communities, compassion and generosity, social obligation and solidarity, trust and reciprocity (Ife, 2002; Ladwig, 2006). These subtypes of social capital influence both individual and social relationships, both of which are collective assets for producing social well-being (Ladwig, 2006).

Deane and McCall (2006) investigate the approaches and application of communication for empowering powerless and voiceless people. They argue that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is possible by using Communication for Empowerment as a significant force for fostering participation, ownership and accountability. Media can play a central role in this approach; however, this is only possible if the media can communicate information and respond to the communication needs of the marginalised group.

Information is the cornerstone of resilient community building. Internews (n.d) has developed an information ecosystems mapping framework for understanding how information helps to create a more connected and resilient community (*See Figure 8*). The framework is divided into three main aspects - macro environment (key structure), content distribution and construction (information market), and human and social insights (information flow). These aspects are provided with eight subsets of analysis –1) information landscape, 2) dynamics of access, 3) information need, 4) production and movement, 5) information use, 6) influencers, 7) social trust and, 8) information impact. Fundamental to the various challenges are the individual's, communities' and system's ability to access critical information about the world, so the community can adapt accordingly to the changing environment and improve their lives (Internews, n.d).

Information influencers and social trust both play a vital role in community development. Influencers are those who design the flow of information, and social trust refers to the influence that the network has on information flow and use (Internews, n.d). (Chow & Chan, 2008) studied the impact of social capital on organizational knowledge sharing, and found that social networks and shared goals drive the individual commitment to knowledge sharing, while social trust does not have a direct impact on the attitude and norms of the sharing. Newton (2001) found there were three overlapping factors of trust; 1) social and political trust, 2) characteristics of trust and voluntary organization membership, 3) and the trusting and distrusting disposition of individuals.

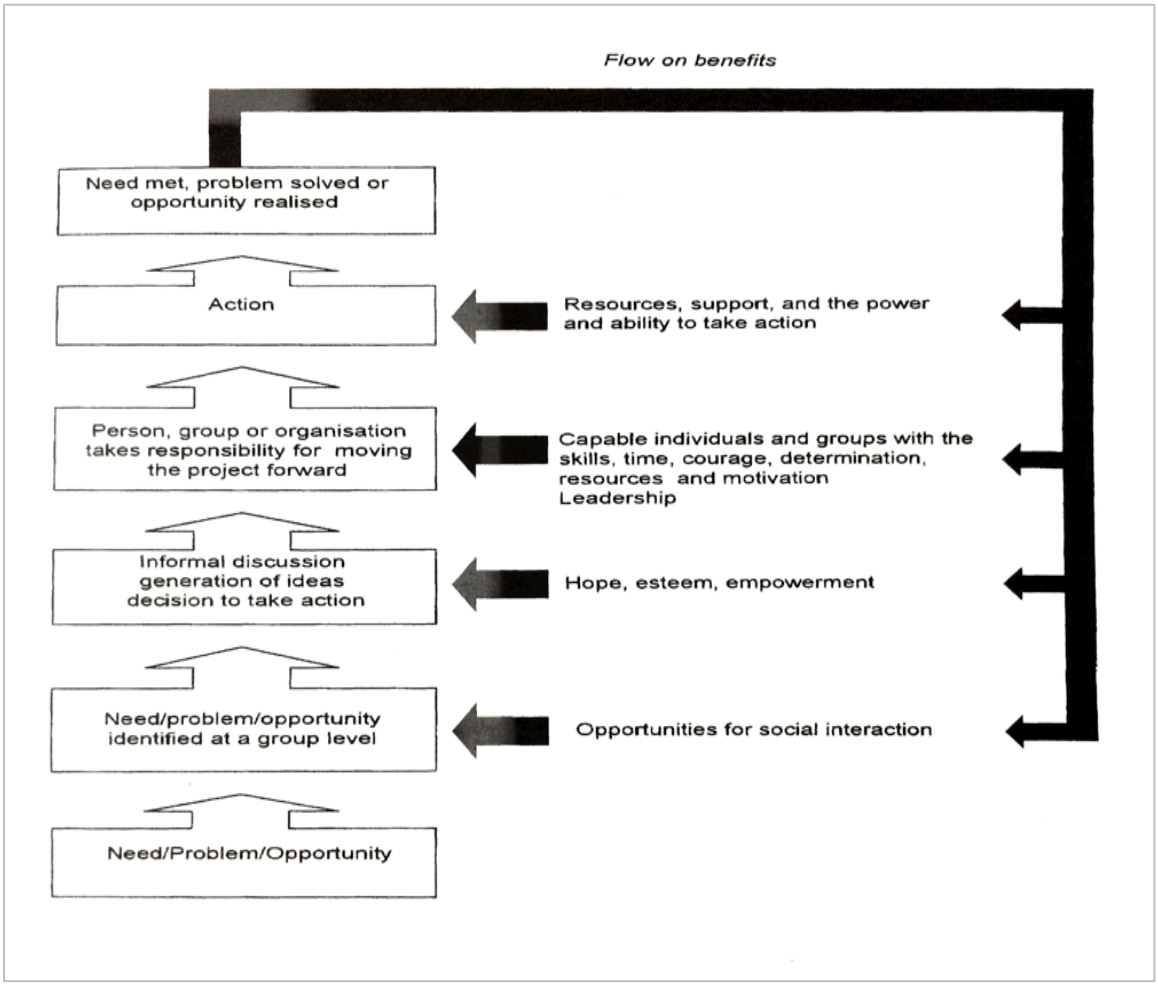
Figure 8: Mapping information ecosystems to support resilience
Source: Internews (n.d)



Social capital is full of potentialities that, as Witten-Hannah (1999) indicates, can help the community or individual society members meet their physical, social and moral needs. Social capital can be compared to glue, which joins people, bridges gaps in society (Ife, 2002; Witten-Hannah, 1999) and enables cooperative action (Figueroa et al., 2002). Witten-Hannah (1999) argues that the most productive means of developing social capital is to establish community initiatives. Similarly, Ife (2002) claims that civil society needs to be strengthened in order to develop social capital, because the civil society voluntarily establish their initiatives with less reliance on a government directive. As a result, a high level of trust is key to building social capital; trust allows opportunities for various associations or groups to discuss community accounts (Robinson, 1999). Those who are in power are required to trust local groups, support

them with necessary resources for local initiatives and give them the power to control matters in their own lives (Witten-Hannah, 1999).

Figure 9: Community Initiatives Process Model
Source: Witten-Hannah, 1999. p. 27



The government needs to play the role of a facilitator to keep the local initiatives flowing and promoting growth (Witten-Hannah, 1999). These local initiatives will lead to change at a grassroots level, the hearth of community development, thus signalling a significant change that comes from below (bottom-up) rather than top-down (Ife, 2002; Witten-Hannah, 1999). However, change requires mutual trust because, as Bacon (2009) argues, trust is central to the enabler.

Empowerment is a dominant discourse in the field of community DC. However, most researchers and development practitioners are unlikely to be familiar with the use of

communication as an empowerment tool, rather they use communication as a tool for delivering messages (Bessette, 2004). Waisbord (2001) acknowledges that community empowerment predominantly contributes to participatory theories and approaches to the field of participatory communication for development. Ife (2002) accepts that empowerment is central to social justice, whereas Minkler (1990, as cited in Waisbord (2001), supports that empowerment is at the heart of social mobilisation intervention.

The aim of the empowerment model is varied. Waisbord (2001) asserts that the definition of the empowerment model is not isolated because it can mean different things in a different context, depending on how it is being used. Whereas, Ife (2002) claims that empowerment is at risk of losing its substantive meaning. The aim of the empowerment model, according to (Servaes & Malikhao, 2007), is to provide individuals and groups with the knowledge, skills and values needed for facilitating development action efficiently. By this account, Waisbord (2001) advises that the intervention outcome aims should focus on community empowerment. Empowerment aims at empowering the marginalised individuals or groups.

Ife (2002) highlights the word 'empowerment' that contains two underpinning meanings; power and the disadvantaged. Empowerment helps to redistribute power from the dominant to the oppressed, what Ife (2002) refers to as 'the have' and 'the have-not'. Waisbord (2001) confirms that empowerment, when used in participatory or advocacy approaches, can involve power redistribution. On the other hand, social marketing advocates would argue that their form of marketing also empowers, with information for the public's well-being.

2.1. Catalyst role in community development

The shift from behavioural change communication to structural change communication highlights a human emphasis is central to development. The shift in CSC has taken into account holistic and participatory approaches. The term 'community' has been redefined in order to align with the approach. The Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation [PME] of CSC is in fashion. Community, in this context, refers those who are involved in CSC dialogue (Parks et al., 2005). Dialogue and participation are both encapsulated by the framework inspired by Freire (1970), who felt that dialogue and participation are ways to create a cultural identity, and build trust, ownership and empowerment (Kincaid & Figueroa, 2009). The framework helps to ensure that the perspectives and voices of all stakeholders are heard. According to Bacon (2009), "the

greatest gift you can offer to a community is the willingness to listen" (p. 189), as when the community voice is being heard, the community feels engaged. CSC can be a public or private dialogue that allows members of the community to acknowledge their own identity, needs and ways of achieving these needs (Kincaid & Figueroa, 2009; Parks et al., 2005). This process involves problem identification, decision-making and implementation which eventually helps to improve lives (Figueroa et al., 2002).

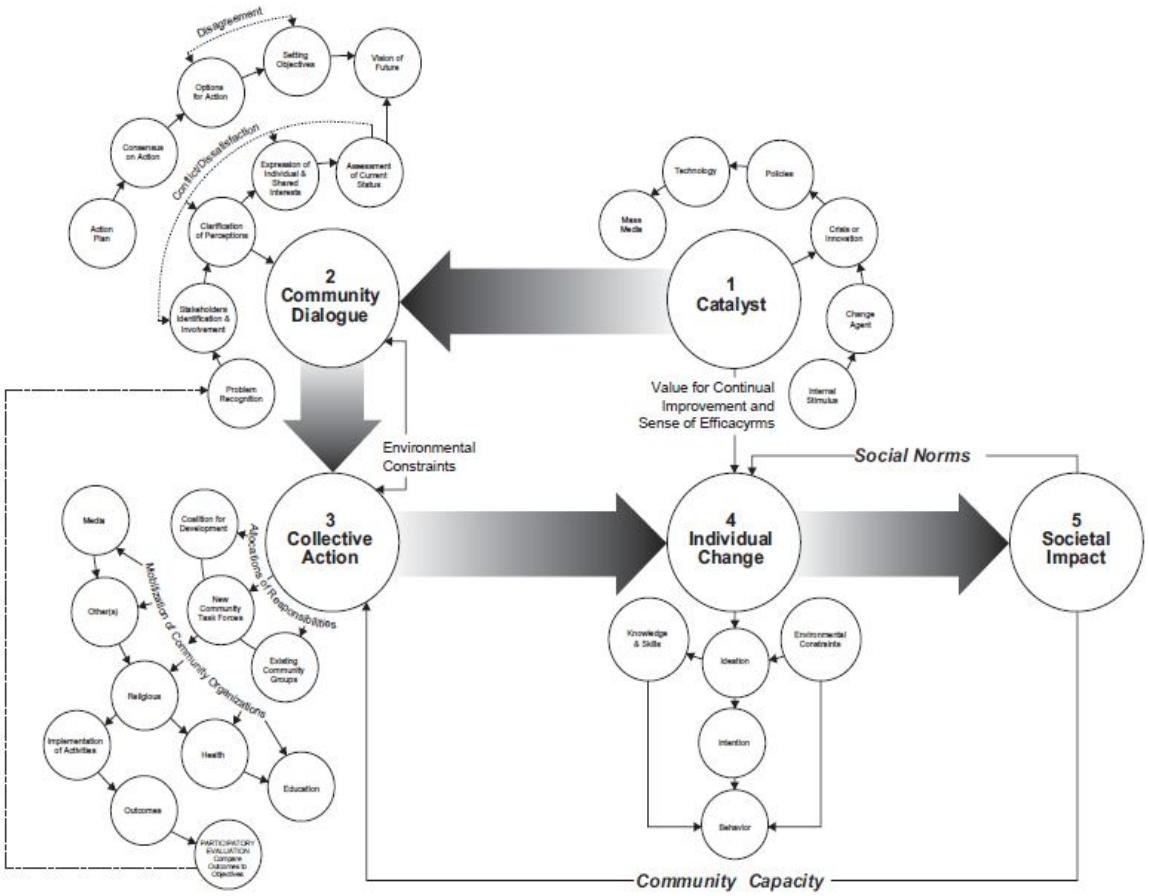
Participation plays a crucial role of generating community dialogue. As Parks et al. (2005) argue, "Communication is participation"(p. 3), and community participation is a valuable outcome, giving meaning to better community life (Figueroa et al., 2002). Broad community participation is needed to mobilise members and to inform a sense of ownership and innovation produced from inside the community, rather than pre-determined by the outside (Waisbord, 2001). This approach is a subset of CSC, which is known as social mobilisation. However, as Bessette (2004) stresses, change and participation take time and also relate to culture, so participation, with its drive towards empowerment, does not automatically or immediately take place. Many studies failed because the researchers and practitioners used participatory techniques, such as participatory rural appraisal, and accelerated the recruitment process of members of a community too quickly to gather the maximum amount of information and data (Bessette, 2004).

The dialogic and participative CSC requires an active agent who should work as a facilitator of change. A number of nongovernmental organisations largely uses change agents in their community interventions (Figueroa et al., 2002). The catalyst can be either an internal or external stimulus (Figueroa et al., 2002). In participatory DC, communication is used to facilitate community participation in a development initiative, and the researchers and practitioners function as facilitators of the exchanges between different stakeholders to address the shared problem (Bessette, 2004). Similarly, Bacon (2009) supports that the government need to engage with people because they are representative of the people.

The catalyst is a communicator and facilitator of community dialogue and participation for social change. Drawing from Freire's work, external change agents can play a facilitator or catalyst role based on community-based inspiration and leadership(as cited in Kincaid & Figueroa, 2009). Figueroa et al. (2002) posit that a catalyst is not necessarily only an internal

resource, but can also be an external resource to the community. The catalyst roles listed by Figueroa et al. (2002) include internal stimuli, change agents, innovations, policies, technologies, and mass media. A change agent, among these potential catalysts, is likely to be widely used in community interventions by NGOs (Figueroa et al., 2002). A 'change agent' refers to those who enter a community in order to initiate a discussion about a particular problem occurring in the community, and to encourage the community into taking collective action (Figueroa et al., 2002). The catalyst may be a trigger for community dialogue about the community's specific concern or interest.

Figure 10: The adaptive integrated model of communication for social change
Source: Reardon, 2003



2.2. Community Development in South Asia

With the introduction of significant technology, growth accelerated in rural Asia in the 1960s (Van De Fliert, 2007), similarly to when DC emerged. Poor farmers were targeted for disseminating information and promoting innovation in a top-down and coercive manner (Van

De Fliert, 207). However, a later shift in method gradually changed to a more participatory approach. Colchester (1992), discussing forest sustainability, argues that community-based development in Asia and Southeast Asia demonstrate how to address social and economic challenges; whenever the community believes that a successful future is tied to the land, the sustainable use of the resources can be achieved (Colchester, 1992).

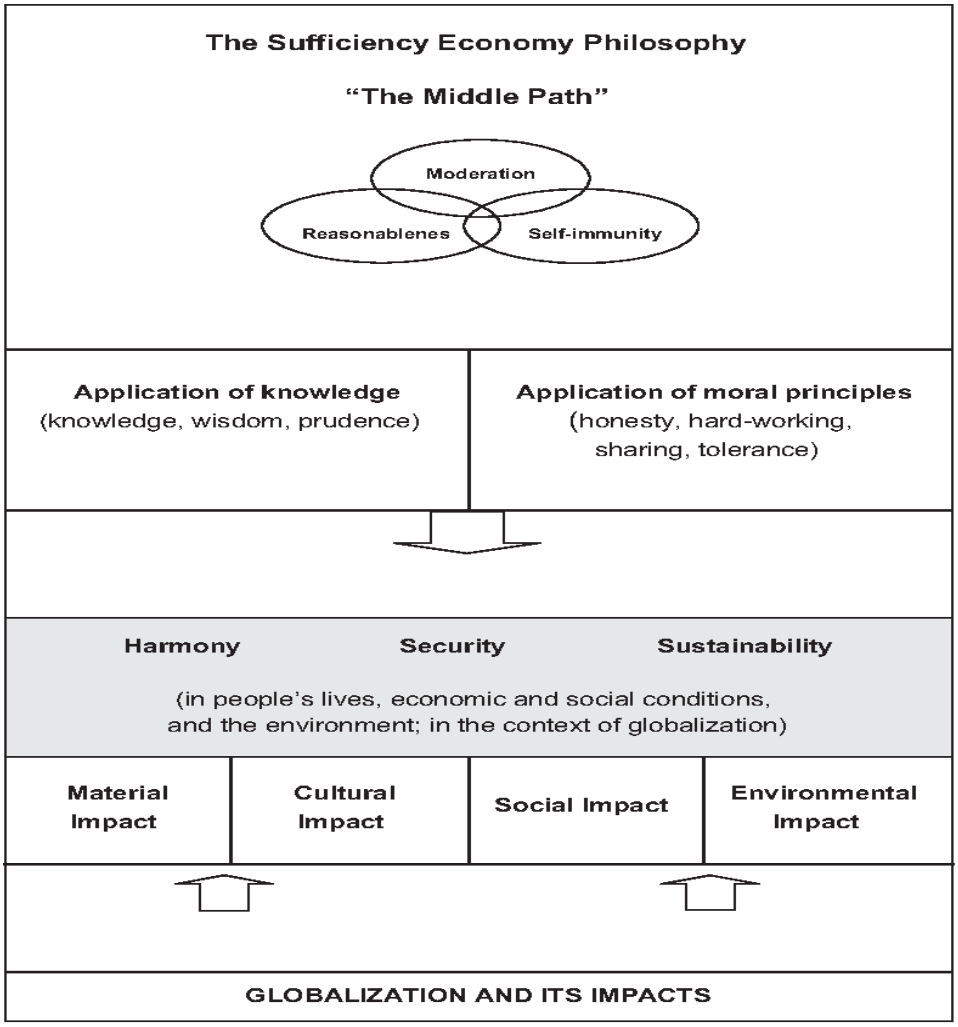
In Thailand, DC has been widely applied to community development. Chuengsatiansup (2016), a researcher and director at a Thai health ministry, has developed tools for community study. These tools include geo-social mapping, genogram (genealogical diagram), community organisations, local health systems, community calendars, local histories and life stories. With these tools, the researcher will be able to gather information, which illustrates a comprehensive vision of community life, community history and culture. Chuengsatiansup (2016) suggests that these tools benefit both the community and the researcher because it introduces change to the community, whilst the researcher and practitioner can also learn and transform themselves.

Chuengsatiansup (2016) also suggests four fallacies (Thai: *mitcha-dhitthi*) in current approaches to community development. These fallacies are concerned with the pre-determination of attitudes before entering the community. Most researchers and community practitioners presume that community is a vertical, disconnected and empty-handed organization, and every community is the same (Chuengsatiansup, 2016). These fallacies maintain barriers to a holistic view and understanding of community life, human dimensions and social capital, and such work lacks comprehension of the connection between various community dimensions. Similar, as Thomas, Eggins, and Papoutsaki (2016)suggest that researchers should consider a holistic approach which also incorporates the natural environment, respect, reciprocity, beliefs and spirituality when working in communities so as to gain relational accountability because it requires a continuing process of relationship negotiation.

There is an emerging alternative approach to community development which is mainly practiced in Asia; the Buddhist concept of self-reliance is contributing to the current research. The concept uses the prominent Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy developed by the late King Rama 9, Bhumiphol Adulyadej, of Thailand (The Chaipattana Foundation, 2016). The philosophy has been widely practised throughout Asia and is a dominant discourse in Asia. The philosophy comprises of three pillars including moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity,

and has two conditions: knowledge and virtue. Mongsawad (2010) claims that the philosophy of sufficiency economy is a new theory and new paradigm of development that aims to address current development challenges and improve human welfare as its ultimate goal.

Figure 11: The philosophy of sufficiency economy framework
Source: Thongpakde, 2005, as cited in Mongsawad, 2010



Servaes and Malikhao (2007) studied the community development model for Thailand developed by Sanyaviwat (2003) called the 'TERMS Model'. The 'TERMS' refers to Technology, Economic, Resources, Mind and Society. In this model, self-reliance is a community goal where its process is based on balance, ability and networking [BAN] (Servaes & Malikhao, 2007). Research has found that the concept of re-socialisation and conscientisation (Thai: *kit pen*) inspires the pride in Thai identity, culture, and folk wisdom that benefit Thai ways of living (Servaes & Malikhao, 2007).

Table 1: Table of TERMS model of community development indicators
Source: Sanyaviwat (2003), as cited in Servaes & Malikhao, 2007

Self-reliance	Technology	Economic	Resource	Mental	Socio-Cultural
Technology	- Appropriate in the rural environment - Modern & controllable - Researched and developed indigenously	- Production base - Factor of production - Increase competency in competition - Firm development base	- Add value to resources - Conserve environment - Revive resources	- Build up scientific consciousness - Increase quality of human resource in science & technology	- Social development base - Balance of social change factor & social stability - Preserve social stability & solidarity
Economic	- Choice of technology - Support technology - Support self-reliance in technology - Distribution of technology	- Create an equilibrium state - Continuous development - Ability to compete with outsiders - Able to save and invest - Cooperate in production & marketing	- Use of local resources - Increase value added to resources - Use resources efficiently and in balance - Revive and recycle	- Create consciousness in ecological balance - Create consciousness in economic development - Support quality of life	- Create jobs & incomes - Solidarity & social balance base - Create stable & fair economy - Integrate economy profits
Resource	- Technological development base - Create multiplicity in the use of technology - Create technological intervention	- Production & appropriate entrepreneurship base - Factors of production - Sustainable development base	- Ecology - Recyclable & reviving resources	- Create consciousness in ecological balance - Create consciousness in economic development - Support quality of life	- Create social groups - Preserve and inherit tradition & cultural base - Create disciplines in resource allocation - Social solidarity base
Mind	- Create capability of using technology - Control & monitor the use of technology	- Labour production factor - Entrepreneurs - Consumers know how to economic products - Use economic opportunities - Creator of economic organisations	- Understand & know how to use resources - Know how to conserve resources - Capable of reviving resources - Nature-loving consciousness	- Consciousness in self-reliance - Have capacity to develop oneself - Knowledge-able & capable to apply - Possess quality - Not involve in intoxicants & gambling - Diligence	- Consciousness of membership - Participate in social activities - Motivate oneself to progress - Creator of social organisations - Unitedness
Society	- Assess need of technology - Support & develop appropriate technology - Determine type and form of technology	- Create: *Demands for products & services *Social organizations *Values & economical norms for economic self-reliance - Administrate production & marketing	- Help share & conserve resources - Help revive resources - Help conserve environment, communities & the peripheries	- Create: * Orders & disciplines * Consciousness of unitedness *People who aim at social benefits -Hold on to disciplines & social rules	- High level of leadership - Social solidarity - Social organization - Knowledge & up-to-date information

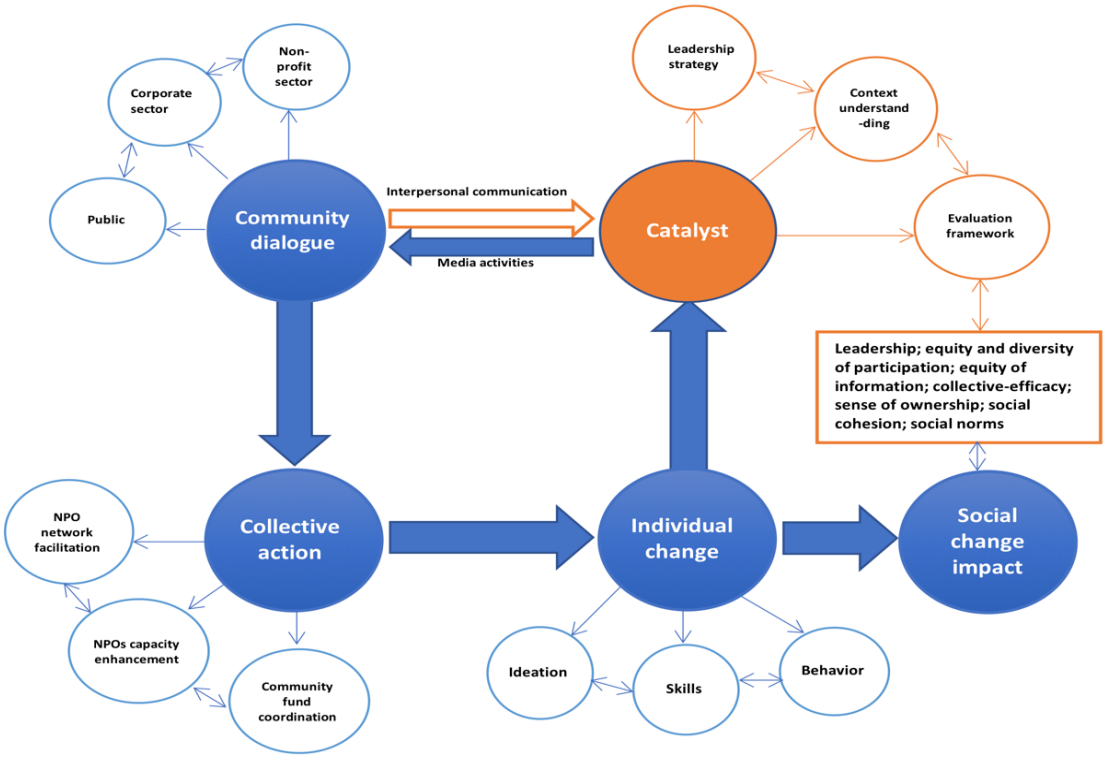
3. An application of integrated model of communication for social change

The catalyst performs an influential communication role in facilitating the flow of information in the community development process. A catalyst may oversee many roles, such as community insider and outsider, agent of policies and change (Figueroa et al., 2002), community workers or practitioners. Mokoena and Moeti (2017) argue that community development workers can be a participatory change agent for community development as they facilitate community participation in community development plans and in policymaking and implementation. In this regard, catalysts play a vital role in CSC in communities because they stimulate dialogue within the community and facilitate cooperative action and eventual solutions (Doan-Bao, Papoutsaki, & Dodson, 2018; Figueroa et al., 2002).

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD] (2015) suggested that women can be catalysts for rural transformation provided that gender-based constraints are effectively eliminated. Women farmers play a vital role in environmental conservation by using stability and resilience for crop biodiversity, which both challenges and adapts to climate change and market volatility (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], 2015).

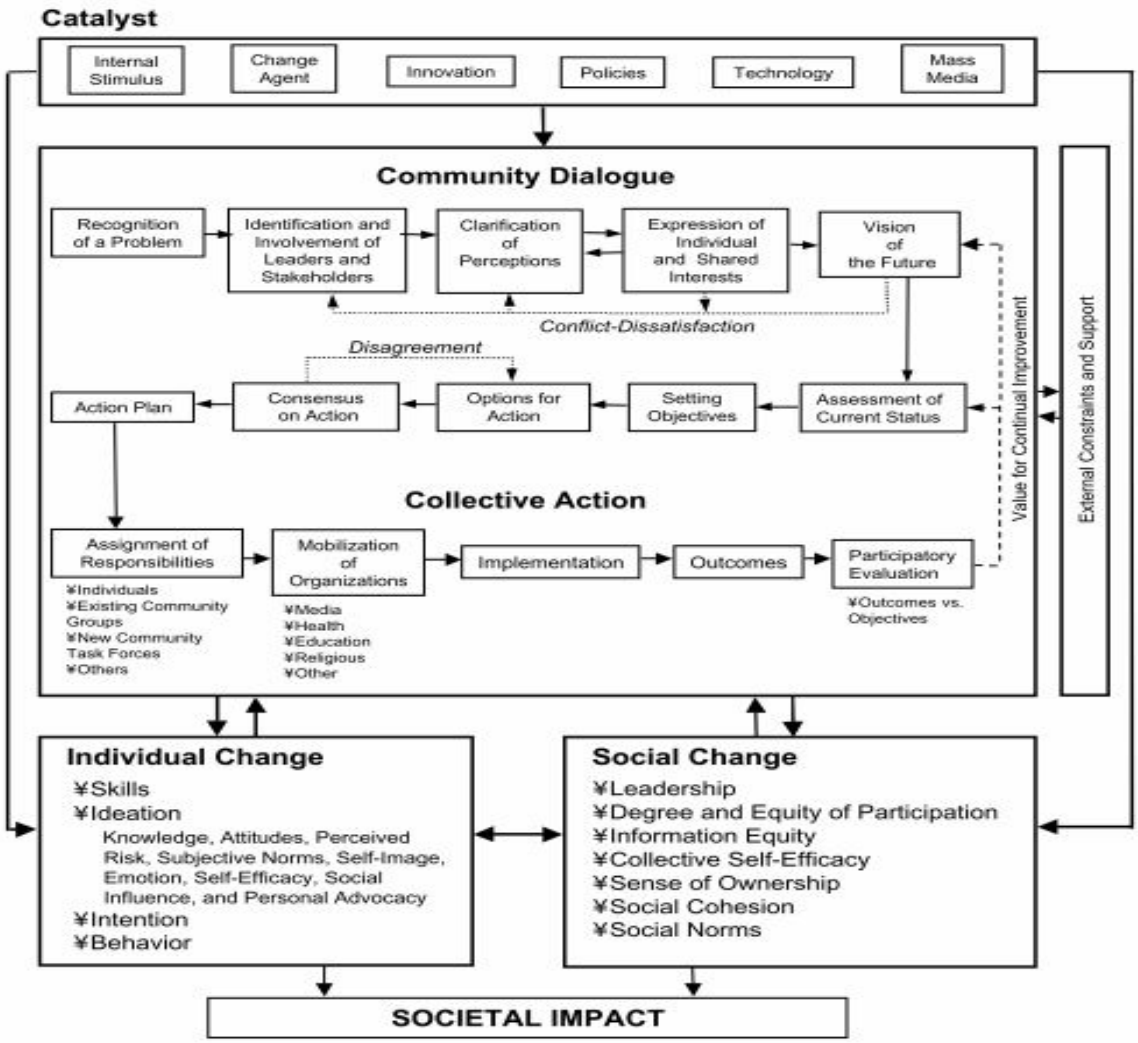
Doan-Bao et al. (2018) have contextualised the catalyst role in the model of LIN Centre for Community Development in the context of Vietnam. The evidence from their research found that social trust and networks among non-profit organization staff shaped LIN as a catalyst for community development in Ho Chi Minh City. However, their research pointed out the challenges of the model in applying the "Western concepts of community development and tenets of participatory social change in the Vietnamese context"(p. 1). Their research emphasises the need to appropriately adapt various communication approaches to local contexts.

Figure 12: Suggested revised catalyst model for community development in Vietnam
Source: Doan-Bao et al., 2018



Figueroa et al. (2002) have developed an integrated model for either measuring the process and outcomes of CSC, or a catalyst model of CSC. This model emphasises community dialogue and collective action (Figueroa et al., 2002; Parks et al., 2005). Participation is essential to the model (Figueroa et al., 2002), and uses a horizontal approach (bottom-up) through the transference of ownership, direct communication and control to the relevant community (Parks et al., 2005). The model was used to measure individual and social change through communication dialogue and collective action, which lead to a resolution of common problems. This model can also be regarded as a catalyst model for social change. The model is a process that attempts to engender community dialogue and collective action, in order to bring changes to the community and well-being to its members (Figueroa et al., 2002).

Figure 13: Integrated Model of Communication for Social Change
Source: Figueroa et al., 2002



To evaluate and measure social change, Figueroa et al. (2002) suggest seven outcome indicators: 1) Leadership, 2) degree and equity of participation, 3) information equity, 4) collective self-efficacy, 5) sense of ownership, 6) social cohesion, and 7) social norms. Sub-dimensions of the integrated model guide these indicators. These outcome indicators can be achieved through community dialogue and collective action under the participatory communication approach.

Table 2: List of Social Change Outcome Indicators and its Dimensions for Measurement
Source: Figueroa et al., 2002

Indicator	Dimension
Leadership	Extent of leadership
	Equity and diversity
	Flexibility
	Competence in encouraging and securing dialogue and action
	Vision and innovation
	Trustworthiness and popularity
Degree and equity of participation	Access to participation
	Extent and level of participation
Information equity	Awareness and correct knowledge about the issue or program
	Enhanced free flow of information
Collective self-efficacy	Perceived efficacy to take action as a group
	Perceived capability of other community members
	Perceived efficacy to solve problems as a group
Sense of ownership	Importance of the issue or program to participants
	Responsibility for the issue/program
	Contribution to the program
	Perceived benefit from the program
	Perceived accountability from the program results
	Perceived personal identification with the program
Social cohesion	Sense of belonging
	Feelings of morale
	Goal consensus
	Social trust
	Social reciprocity
	Network cohesion
Social norms	Norms on participation
	Norms about leadership
	Norms about specific issue/program

Figueroa et al. (2002) explain that sustained and efficient ***leadership*** is fundamental for community participation. Leadership encourages members of the community to voluntary participate in the program, demonstrate leadership vision and share benefits of the program, as

well as planning the social change process. ***Degree and equity of participation*** measures the range of participation of the community members, of those who related to the problems and of the variety of activities that members got involved. These activities range from planning stages, selecting leaders, making decisions about services and delivery mode, mobilising and managing resources, and eventually evaluating the program outcome (Figueroa et al., 2002).

Information equity measures the level of awareness and shared knowledge regarding an issue or program, either among individuals within the groups, or between groups within the community. It also measures the degree of access the community has to similar sources of information (Figueroa et al., 2002). ***Collective self-efficacy*** refers to the shared belief and confidence that a group of people who join together are capable of taking action and solving problems (Figueroa et al., 2002). ***Sense of ownership*** refers to the community's feeling/belief that the issue and program belong to them (their community), and that they have an engagement with the program (Figueroa et al., 2002).

Social cohesions are the forces that stimulate members of a group or community to stay in the group and continue their contribution to the group project. In this sense, members feel that they are part of the group, want to maintain a relationship and want to work together towards achieving the group's goal (Figueroa et al., 2002). ***Social norms*** refer to agreed standards and rules that the majority of members of the society or group adhere to. Social norms are people's beliefs about what kind of attitudes or behaviours are normal, acceptable and expected (Figueroa et al., 2002).

However, the catalyst model is a missing piece in most DC and social change literature, because there is an assumption that dialogue and action naturally take place in the community (Figueroa et al., 2002; Parks et al., 2005).

4. Buddhist approaches of development and communication

"The heart of education is the education of the heart",
"so spirituality is a heart of education" (Somphone, 2011).

The above code argues that the mind is in control of human thought and behaviour, so humanity or the human mind, before anything else, should be cultivated to allow humans to perform a central role in the development process, such as educational system.

4.1. Buddhist perspectives on development

Buddhism teaches that development is all about the awareness and understanding of the reality of nature, and the existence of human beings within the environment. People need to be aware that we live on this earth under the condition of nature. Any (development) action should be aware that there is no harm to other people (or stakeholders) and living creatures, including environment, and also need to protect them instead. There are two schools of thought about sustainable development, the Eastern and Western, which both require attention. The United Nations' [UN] Brundtland report defines sustainable development as meeting "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 45). This definition highlights the importance of the environment in economic development. However, the term "compromising" leads to further debate. Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien (2005) firmly connect society and ecology with the environment, while pointing out that the WCED (1987) recognises that the economy is increasingly attuned to ecology on all levels.

On the other hand, Servaes and Malikhao (2007) reviewed the perspective of Payutto (1998) when he indicated that human development is a missing piece in the Western (UN) literature on sustainability. Payutto (2002) explains the meaning of the term "compromising" used by the WCED in the definition of the term 'sustainable development'. He understood that 'compromising' means all parties need to lessen their needs. He also raises a question of what if ones reduce their needs, while others do not. The need reduction can thus be a problem. A compromise requires the cooperation of all involved to reduce their desires so that the final outcome (sustainable development in this case) can be based upon the happiness of all parties (Servaes & Malikhao, 2007). In this sense, sustainable development is a type of growth that doesn't exploit the environment; sustainable development and the environment must be concurrently advanced (Payutto, 2008).

The world has made a new shift in sustainable development research. The new perspective tries to understand the relationship between human beings and nature, and between people and other people. This new perspective is a different outlook from the dominant thought, which traditionally perceives the environment as isolated from the society and the economy (Hopwood et al., 2005). The core idea behind sustainable development is that people to do not control the

environment, but instead live in it harmoniously and respectfully (Servaes & Malikhao, 2007). The initial solution is all about changes in attitude towards the environment, economic behaviour, and science and technology (Payutto, 2008). A recent study Kovács (2017) on Buddhist approaches to sustainability revealed that Buddhism contributes significantly to all Millennium Development Goals [MDGs]. He claimed that "Buddhism is a mean of liberation" (p.123), it fulfilled the spiritual perfection that the MDGs missed. The Buddhist way of living is an approach to spiritual perfection through practicing the Buddhist Noble Eightfold Paths (Kovács, 2017).

Buddhism offers an alternative approach to peace through its concepts of non-violence and practices of Buddhist ethics. Sivaraksa (2009) explained that Buddhist teaching of the Noble Eightfold Path promote peace-building as a way of living and lays down the concepts of peace and non-violence. Pursuing sustainable development means building a sustainable society (Payutto, 2008). Ife (2002) argues that the ideas of peace and non-violence are new and alternative approaches that have universal endorsement as a goal, although they are hard to achieve. This argument is challenged and responded to by (King, 2009), who states that one must cultivate and apply non-violence (Pali: *ahimsa*) if he/she wants to achieve a non-violent society. Thus, one needs to cultivate inner peace first at the individual level (King, 2009) by living with mindfulness (Sivaraksa, 2009), and then use these tools to devastate any oppressive systems and bring the culture of peace to the society (King, 2009).

4.2. Buddhist ways of knowledge-inquiry

Recent research by Rodloytuk (2007) suggests the operation of Buddhist ways of development should be in the context of Buddhist mental cultivation. From the Buddhist perspective, development is a process of cultivation and there are two significant dimensions:1) tranquillity or mental development (Pali: *samatha-bhavana*) and 2) insight development (Pali: *vipassana-bhavana*) (Payutto, 2002). These two dimensions have four aspects –1) physical development (Pali: *kaya-bhavana*), 2) moral development (Pali: *sila-bhavana*), 3) heart or emotional development (Pail: *citta-bhavana*) and 4) intellectual development (Pali: *panna-bhavana*) (Payutto, 2002).

The main aim of Buddhist teachings is to eliminate suffering affecting human beings and non-human beings, individually or socially, through the cultivation of development or training

(*bhavana*). Cultivating *bhavana* eliminates the causes of human suffering-greed, hatred and delusion - which are embedded in the human mind (Darlington, 1998; King, 2009; Sivaraksa, 1998). To free the human being from suffering, these causes must be first eliminated. Humans will obtain inner freedom and compassion through a spiritual practice that blooms from selflessness (Sivaraksa, 1998). In other words, the inner or spiritual liberation brings generosity, loving-kindness and then, as a by-product, social harmony.

Buddhism and its teachings (*Buddha-dhamma*) is an education system, and "a means of liberation" (Kovács, 2017, p. 123). Sivaraksa (2009) made progress in laying solid ground for the reinterpretation of Buddhist teachings. In his most cited work, The Wisdom of Sustainability, Sivaraksa argued that education is needed to be re-visualised (including the cultivation of wisdom and social life skills), and re-visualise the concept of overwhelming oppression and exploitation. Similarly, Payutto (2012) has a similar perspective that the duties of Buddhism and its education system are to help humans to solve their problems. To achieve such a goal, Payutto (2008) suggests that humans can develop through three dimensions of training; behaviour, mind and wisdom. These dimensions can be understood as Buddhist ways of training or development (Pali: *tri-sikkha*). Behaviour refers to people adapting their lifestyles to align with the conditions of nature; the mind needs training to be firm and full of motivation and compassion; wisdom can be cultivated through understanding, changing attitude and seeing the value of living harmoniously with nature (Servaes & Malikhao, 2007).

Rahula (1978, as cited in Rodloytuk (2007), regards mental culture as a process of cleansing and purifying the mind to practice and achieve the highest concentration (Pali: *samadhi*), awareness (Pali: *sati*) and intelligence (Pali: *panna*) (Payutto, 2002). Mindfulness, or awareness, is power and a useful component of communication; it helps to keep the mind alert and improve decision-making (Hanh, 2017). Hanh (2017) argues that *bhavana* is a type of communication and has a power or resilience, so that if practised within a group, will help to achieve a collective compassion power and awaken collective understanding. He asserts that attentive (mindful) listening and speech contribute to the empowerment of the community. Structural changes, therefore, cannot be achieved without community power. Mindful community power will support, embrace and liberate suffering (Hanh, 2017).

Payutto (2008) recommends that humans should be developed as central to sustainable development, where economy, society and environment must converge in an integrated, holistic and balanced manner. Whereas (Rodloytuk, 2007) recommends that close attention must be paid to an external *bhavana* that needs to be focused on ecological and environmental perspectives.

4.3. Buddhist economics

"Right Livelihood is one of the requirements of the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. It is clear, therefore, that there must be such a thing as Buddhist economics"

(Schumacher, 1973, p. 56)

Fritz. E. Schumacher, a British economist, coined the term "Buddhist economics" around the 1950s and 1960s. Schumacher stressed that a Right Livelihood (Pali: *samma-ajiva*) is a core Buddhist principle underpinning Buddhist economics, yet Sivaraksa (2009) maintains that Buddhist economics must be based in sustainability. To cultivate sustainability, a shift must occur between an emphasis laying on material well-being to the emphasis laying on sustainable livelihoods and spiritual well-being (Hopwood et al., 2005). When one understands and can firmly link social and environmental activities to their human presence, one can achieve sustainability. Daly (2010) points out that "sustainable development is a cultural adaptation made by the society" (p.12) because the society recognises the growth is not a need.

Zsolnai (2016) suggests that it is essential to differentiate between the discourses of "Buddhist economics" and the "economics of Buddhism". "Buddhist economics" is a modern term, which sets up a Buddhist model that Zsolnai calls an "alternative model of the economy" (p. 344). The other term, the "economics of Buddhism", refers to studies of the ways of Buddhist economic life in the real social environment.

Zsolnai (2016) argues that Buddhist economics promotes simplicity and non-violence. The Eastern (Buddhist) mindset of economics is opposed to the Western (mainstream) economic mindset. Western economics focuses on multiplicity (maximisation), while Buddhist economics pursues simplicity (minimisation) (Payutto, 2008; Zsolnai, 2016). Zsolnai (2016) compares characteristics of Western and Buddhist economics by claiming that on the one hand, the West maximises profits, promotes desire, introduces markets, uses extravagant amount of world resources and has an ethics based on self-interests. On the other hand, the Buddhist mindset focuses on minimising suffering, simplifying desire, non-violence, genuine care and generosity.

Most productions and technologies in mainstream economics aim to alleviate desire rather than sustain a good quality of life and basic needs. They use human nature, such as greed, to achieve economic growth and create wealth, which the West sets as an ultimate goal. Servaes and Malikhao (2007) elaborate on Payutto's (1998) perception that the West's approach to sustainability, based on its ethics, will merely lead development into a "cul-de-sac" (dead end) (Servaes & Malikhao, 2007, p. 6). Zsolnai (2016) claims that in modern Western economics, there is limited space for ethics, because the space is taken up with facets of human nature including in greed, violence, lust for power and the exploitation of nature (Korten, 2010). Zsolnai frames the former (Western economics) as "bigger is better", and "more is more", while the latter (Buddhist economics) is "small is beautiful", and "less is more" (p. 347).

Buddhist economics is a non-violent approach. Buddhists have the perspective that the Earth is our mother, and that there are limited resources inheriting from our mother to share among her billions of children. Accordingly, people need to use the resources with care, and develop them to ensure that all of mother-Earth's children have access to the same resources. Humans need to stop exploiting mother-Earth and pursue economic development based on compassion and wisdom instead (Sivaraksa, 2009). All economic activities or growth must be guided by the conditions and conservation of the environment (Payutto, 2008). This line of thought has similarities with the concept of non-violence (Pali: *ahimsa*)-an act that harms neither sender or receiver and that promotes participative and communicative solutions (Zsolnai, 2016). According to Sivaraksa (2009), non-violence is not passive but proactive; it is a comprehensive process of dealing and resolving disputes through communication and resource sharing. It provides the core values of Buddhist economics and solves social problems (Zsolnai, 2016). This reinterpretation of the Buddhist value of economy is new phenomenon transforming the perspective over Buddhism from passive to active actor in the society, and it is also known as 'socially engaged Buddhism'.

4.4. Socially Engaged Buddhism

There are many Buddhist projects running development practices at the grassroots level which utilise Buddhist economics through the 'Engaged Buddhism' movement. For instance, the Sarvodaya Movement in Sri Lanka has used the concept of Buddhist economics as an alternative approach to the mainstream economic development in Sri Lanka (King, 2009). The Buddhist

concepts of self-reliance or self-help underpin the movement. Self-reliance refers to using the existing natural and human resources that individuals, community and country have. The term also refers to the willingness to sort the problem out by identifying goals and strategies that align with cultural necessity and tradition (Dissanayake, 2010). White claims that the concept of self-reliance involves participation as both part of its process and an outcome (as cited in Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006). Furthermore, this concept is fundamental to the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy introduced by the His Majesty the King of Thailand, Bhumibol Adulyadej (The Chaipattana Foundation, 2016) (see the 'Community development in Asia' section for further information).

Buddhist values remain significant to lay followers of Buddhism (*Buddhaparisa*) and to society in general. Queen (1996; 2000, as cited in Vutthikaro (2005), divided Buddhist ethics into four principles; 1) ethics of discipline, 2) ethics of virtue, 3) ethics of altruism, and 4) ethics of engagement. The last principle (ethics of engagement) provides the best description of the social engagement of Buddhism which focuses on a social level, as opposed to the ethics of altruism which focuses more on individual levels (Vutthikaro, 2005). For instance, Thai monks engage in environmental conservation activities, through their religious practices and moral guidelines, in order to respond to the sufferings (*dukkha*) caused by environmental degradation (Darlington, 1998). Similarly, in many traditional societies, respect is formed through wisdom and experience (Marinova et al., 2006). The "wisdom of the elders" and the "sacred ecologies" can be the "foundation for a new global environmental ethics" (Knudston and Suzuki, 1992, as cited in Marinova et al., 2006, p. 377). Darlington (1998) points out that there has been increasing debate about the relationship between Buddhism and ecology, especially environmental ethics within the religion.

4.5. Buddhism and ecological perspectives

According to Payutto (2008), development will be fruitful if humans have a sense of ethics or morality. The Buddhist concept of 'dependent origination' (Pali: *paticcasamuppada*) goes some way to explaining how Buddhism relates to, and is compatible with, ecology. Buddhism argues there is a process of causes and conditions for things coming into being; a Buddhist way of cultivating the 'right understanding' (*samma-ditthi*) (King, 2009), which is one aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path. It is worth devoting close attention to the dependent relationship between

society and the environment for sustainable development to flourish (Hopwood et al., 2005). Understanding of this deep ecology is most easily accessible through Buddhism (Arne Naess as cited in King, 2009).

There has been an emerging ecological movement against the environmental crisis and ecological degradation from Buddhists in Asia. In Thailand, the movement originated in the 1970s but did not receive widespread attention until the 1980s (Bialek, 2014). Previous studies by Bialek (2014) and Morrow (2011) indicate that the Buddhist environmental movement is an integration of Buddhist rituals and local beliefs in the spirit and sanctity of the natural world. That being said, Morrow (2011) also suggests that tree ordination is an invented tradition and not part of the primary Buddhist teachings. However, Walter (2007), in a study on the role of activist forest monks and their environmental movements in Thailand, argued that the notion of tree ordination is a reinterpretation of Buddhist teachings, which not only helps to protect the forest but also educates people at grassroots level, which thereby encourages them to value the conservation of forest resources.

The tree ordination approach uses dialogue between Buddhism and local belief in spirits to raise awareness of the connection between humans and nature (Bialek, 2014). Buddhists think that they should apply their practical and moral guidelines to conserving the ecology, as a way to respond to the suffering caused by environmental degradation (Darlington, 1998). The activist monks have led the movement at the grassroots level to resist the destructive impact of industrial development, such as "deforestation, export-oriented cash cropping, agribusiness and the toxic contamination of local land and water"(Walter, 2007, p. 335). With this approach, trees, or even whole forests, are ordained as monks, symbolised by coloured cloth or monks' robes, in the hope that their sanctity will make people hesitate about cutting them down (Morrow, 2011). This concept is not only practised in Thailand, but has also spread to neighbouring countries such as Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar (Morrow, 2011), where their forests have also been cut, and the natural ecology degraded (Darlington, 1998).

The holistic changes made by the ecological movement of tree ordination are having some effect; Morrow (2011) claims there is evidence showing tree ordination helps to protect local forests from logging. The concept of using symbolically monastic cloth, or monks' robes, to mark big trees or conservation areas, is ideal for global environmental movements and can make

loggers hesitant about cutting down the trees because the robe is a symbol of respect (Morrow, 2011). However, there are still doubts whether the practice can bring influential changes to society (Darlington, 1998). Therefore, we need to look into how these concepts are also benefitting economic, political, social and moral dimensions (Darlington, 1998).

There are few studies on Buddhist ecology; it is an area which needs more systematic and empirical study, as well as more analysis of the impacts of Buddhist environmental practice. Darlington (1998) recommends that such research will assist understanding of how Buddhist monks facilitate such projects and reinterpret and rearticulate their religious concepts.

5. Community development research and religious roles in Laos

Lao People's Democratic Republic [Lao PDR] is a multi-ethnic nation with 49 ethnic minorities throughout the country. The government of Laos classifies these minorities into three major groups - Lao Loum (Lowland Lao), Lao Thueng (Midland Land) and Lao Soong (Highland Lao). These classifications are based on geographical context and Lao PDR's four main ethno-linguistic groups and lifestyle. Lao-Tai ethno-linguistic group is the largest group in Lao PDR (Engvall, 2006) and has much socio-political and economic power. Hmong is classified within the Hmong-Mieng ethno-linguistic group that live predominantly in mountainous areas, whereas Khmu peoples settle across the country (Satoshi, 2004). According to the Asian Development Bank [ADB] (2011), there are approximately 230 ethnic groups in Lao (Engvall, 2006), although admittedly the total number is not definitive. The majority of ethnic Lao peoples live alongside rivers and work within agricultural roles to sustain their livelihoods (Satoshi, 2004).

At present, limited research and literature exists on community development in Lao PDR regarding women's participatory roles, especially in ethnic minorities. Several studies found that ethnic women face barriers to participating in the development process mainly because of traditional practices, inferior education and restricted political power. Recent research into community participation in the Ta-Oy district in southern Lao PDR, revealed that the broader development model of the Lao government policy (regarding agricultural practices) generated both positive and negative impact on community participation in agricultural activities and clean water projects (Suvayong, 2011). For instance, previous studies on Laos PDR mountainous people's shows that they are negatively affected by a government regulation which was issued

against all swidden agriculture (also known as 'shifting cultivation' agriculture) in an attempt to move the mountainous communities down to the plateaus and farm the paddy fields instead (Satoshi (2004). In this sense, people may feel that government policies and new regulations may not respond to their needs. Suyavong (2011) asserted that people are willing to participate in the project if they can see that the activity meets their needs and does not pose a threat to their livelihood.

Recent research on women's participation revealed that Khmu women find it challenging to engage in development affairs as they are obstructed by a shortage of political power, an educational gap and social norms which restrict their socio-economic independence (Vixathep, 2011). Suyavong (2011) and Vixathep (2011) also agree that cultural norms and local education levels create barriers for women in Ta-Oy and Khmu ethnic communities to exercise political power or be involved in development projects at their village, particularly during the decision-making process. However, Suyavong is likely to interpret that the differentiating of traditional practices of women and men, in development activities, actually contributes to the creation of a holistic and cohesive society. Vixathep (2011), however, perceives that the situation is not equitable and poses a barrier to women's participation. Vixathep (2011) research revealed that Khmu women understand the concept of 'participation' as the act of 'contributing' and 'sharing' within a household and community. There is no direct translation of the term 'participation' available in the Khmu ethnic language. On the other hand, Ta-Oy women fully understand this term so they participate in a project with a clear goal (Suyavong, 2011).

5.1. Religious studies in Laos

Vu, Bailey and Chen (2016) sought to investigate religious freedom in Vietnam and Lao PDR, and found that religion in Laos is essentially seen as "a phenomenon that is inimical to social development and party's rule"(p. 86). The development process counts as less significant than the religious involvement (Chamberlain, 2007). However, evidence also shows that there is growing recognition of religious communities' participation and that social prosperity is attributable to the involvement of non-government organisations (Vu et al., 2016). Chamberlain (2007) points out that diversity varies the approach and impact of development and modernisation among ethnic groups.

The research to date has tended to focus on clarifying the interpretation of Buddhist teaching and its social role, rather than empirical research. Most studies, including those by Boutsavath and Chapelier (1973), Ladwig (2006) and Sengsoulin (2014), concur that Buddhist monasteries (Lao: *Wat*) function as learning and teaching centres where Buddhist monks are instructors. In the current era, *Wats* still remain informal educational institutions alongside other state institutions (Sengsoulin, 2014). Ladwig (2006) and Sengsoulin (2014) confirmed that monks must engage in social work, helping people reduce their suffering is one of the duties of the *Sangha* (Buddhist community), as it is a primary aim of Buddhism.

The first effort to involve monks in the development process in Lao PDR occurred in the 1970s, when the Commission of Religious Affairs and the Buddhist religious body developed the *Sangha* community to be a driver for community development throughout the country. This project was seen as a failure (Ladwig, 2006) because there were only a few monks that could initiate the project, which Boutsavath and Chapelier (1973) viewed as the weakest point of the effort.

Boutsavath and Chapelier (1973) evaluated the work conducted between the Lao PDR government and the *Sangh*a community to assess the potential that the *Sangha* community could be used as a vehicle for change. Boutsavath and Chapelier's study found that two main factors obstruct the involvement of the Buddhist *Sangha* in community development. The first factor was that Westerners perceived Buddhist concepts as opposing to development or modernisation, and the second factor was that the colonial ruling powers did not include the *Sangha* in their official modernisation process (Boutsavath & Chapelier, 1973). While the research findings revealed that monks have the potential to be change agents in the diffusion of technical knowledge and social innovation within villages, the success of this involvement relies on the monks having been trained and having an appropriate relationship with the village organisations (Boutsavath & Chapelier, 1973). The selection of monks to be trained needs to be carefully made.

Although Buddhism is a significant part of Lao culture and tradition, the Buddhist monks' role in development research is largely disregarded (Ladwig, 2006). Ladwig studies the traditional and emerging roles within Lao society, and he found that the Buddhist monks have productive resources that can be used to disseminate information and implement development.

Most researchers label these resources as 'social capital' because of the strong network and authoritative voice surrounding them (Ladwig, 2006). Notably, Ladwig also suggests that voices and discussion within a culture are significant and can be used alternatively and powerfully in the development process if linked to a religious organisation. This movement can be considered as 'alternative' because it can apply only to some fields of development. For example, it is appropriate for prevention, education and information campaigns for drug abuse, ecology and health sectors (such as HIV/AIDS), because Buddhist teachings work in particularly well with these fields.

Ladwig also focuses on 'Buddhism for Project Development' [BDP], one of the three social engagements of Lao *Sangha*. The project is a small initiative to train the Lao *Sangha* (Buddhist community) to play a larger role in society (Ladwig, 2006). However, this approach is constrained because of limitations in human resources management, training organisations, planning, implementing and evaluating services. The Lao *Sangha* are advised to openly discuss their role in society, to link dharma to development works (Ladwig, 2006). Ladwig's research also suggests that the *Sangha* first need to ensure its monks and nuns have a firm knowledge of traditional Buddhist teaching, before stepping towards development work.

Recent research by Sengsoulin (2014) lays down a background in Buddhist literature, and links with Ladwig (2006) in the area of Buddhism's role in development work. Sengsoulin (2014) investigates the social roles of Lao *Sangha* after the founding of Lao PDR and points out two primary duties (Pali: *dhura*) of the Sangha; 1) scriptural learning (Pali: *gandha-dhura*) and 2) training in meditation (Pali: *vipassana-dhura*). *Gandha-dhura* refers to a study of Buddhist scripture as spiritual guidance, while *vipassana-dhura* is putting the knowledge gained from scriptural study into practice, by practising meditation to experience the highest happiness– *nibbana* (Sengsoulin, 2014).

These duties correspond with Sengsoulin's findings that the relationship between the Sangha (Buddhist clergy) and lay people, is an exchange of knowledge and resources. Monks, novices and nuns provide their lay followers with moral guidance, and in reciprocation they receive food and other resources from their villagers. This practice embraces solidarity (Lao: *khwuamsamakkhee*), love-kindness (Lao: *khwuam mee metta*), and generosity (Lao: *khwuam eua feua pheu pha*e) (Sengsoulin, 2014), which are each potent social ideals embedded in Lao culture

and traditional practice. These *dhura* deserve to be studied to examine what, and how, they can be executed and applied to a social context.

6. Chapter Summary

For decades, communication has been mistakenly used, in the name of development, as a tool to generate growth and wealth under the dominant paradigms which don't improve the human condition or environmental welfare. Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte (2006) blame modernisation and dependency as the main threads leading to the field of DC. The one-way and top-down approaches used by developed countries distort the role of communication in development. Nonetheless, the empirical and practical knowledge gained, has led to revisiting current communication theories and practices that pave the path for participatory approaches.

A human-centreed approach is at the heart of the CSC in community development. Dialogue promotes participation and gives community members power through discussion, collaborative identification of problems, and solutions to their development matters which then lead to collective action. As Ife (2002) suggests, people will participate if they see the importance and benefit of the activity. To illustrate, social capital significantly contributes to participation, through trust and solidarity. To change, trust is needed, as Bacon (2009) points out that participants grow social capital through their contributions. This is similar to when Vixathep (2011) found that people understand participation through their daily contributions and sharing with their family and community. Thus, exploring social capital in the community is required for positive change, and a facilitator is required to promote dialogue, participation and action of the community members. Doing this raises the voices of powerless and marginalised people.

Although the literature on a Buddhist approach to development has substantially increased, the Buddhist movement is still considered a minority, and much of the focus remains on conceptual clarification rather than empirical research, especially in Lao PDR. Further research on Buddhism and Buddhist engagement in development is required; previous studies recommend that further research should focus on an the external *bhavana* impact on the environment (Rodloytuk, 2007), and how Buddhist concepts of ecology also benefit social, economic and political sectors (Darlington, 1998). Significantly, Darlington suggests that the impacts of Buddhist ecology, especially the tree ordination approach, is required more analysis to understand how Buddhism monks reinterpret and rearticulate their Buddhist principles and

facilitate the initiative. Therefore, more field research and broad, flexible and participatory approaches are intensely needed (Rodloytuk, 2007).

Furthermore, the literature on gender in relation to Buddhism is missing from studies on Buddhism and its development approaches, especially in the context of Lao PDR. There have been only a few studies related to women's (nun's) role in Buddhism and development. Additionally, the role of the lay women in the temple and village is also missing and requires exploration, particularly in Lao PDR. The studies of Vixathep (2011) and Suyavong (2011) confirm that there is a substantial need for social change facilitators to promote better participation of women in development affairs in Lao PDR.

Through the examination of the past and current literature and research, it is evident that the exploration of Buddhist monks'/nuns' roles in community development, as a catalyst for social change, is strongly needed in Laos.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter explains the conceptual framework and the methods used in completing this research. I was a Buddhist novice and remained having a close connection with Buddhist organization in Laos, and also, I am an insider of the *Ban Bungsanthueng* community. Thus, the conceptual framework integrates a Buddhist development approach [BA] adapted from Buddhism for Development Project [BDP] (2012) [BDP] and the Integrated Model of measuring outcomes and process of Communication for Social Change [IMCFSC] or the Catalyst Model developed by Figueroa et al. (2002) and forms my ethnographic research. It examines how participatory communication aspects are manifesting in the Buddhist development approaches by the trained monk in order to explore their roles in community development as catalysts for social change. This chapter discusses the way in which the two frameworks are integrated into a conceptual model and this research attempts to complete it and use it as a methodology to achieve the main aims of this research; it demonstrates the research methods, data analysis; and it discusses ethical consideration.

1. Methodology

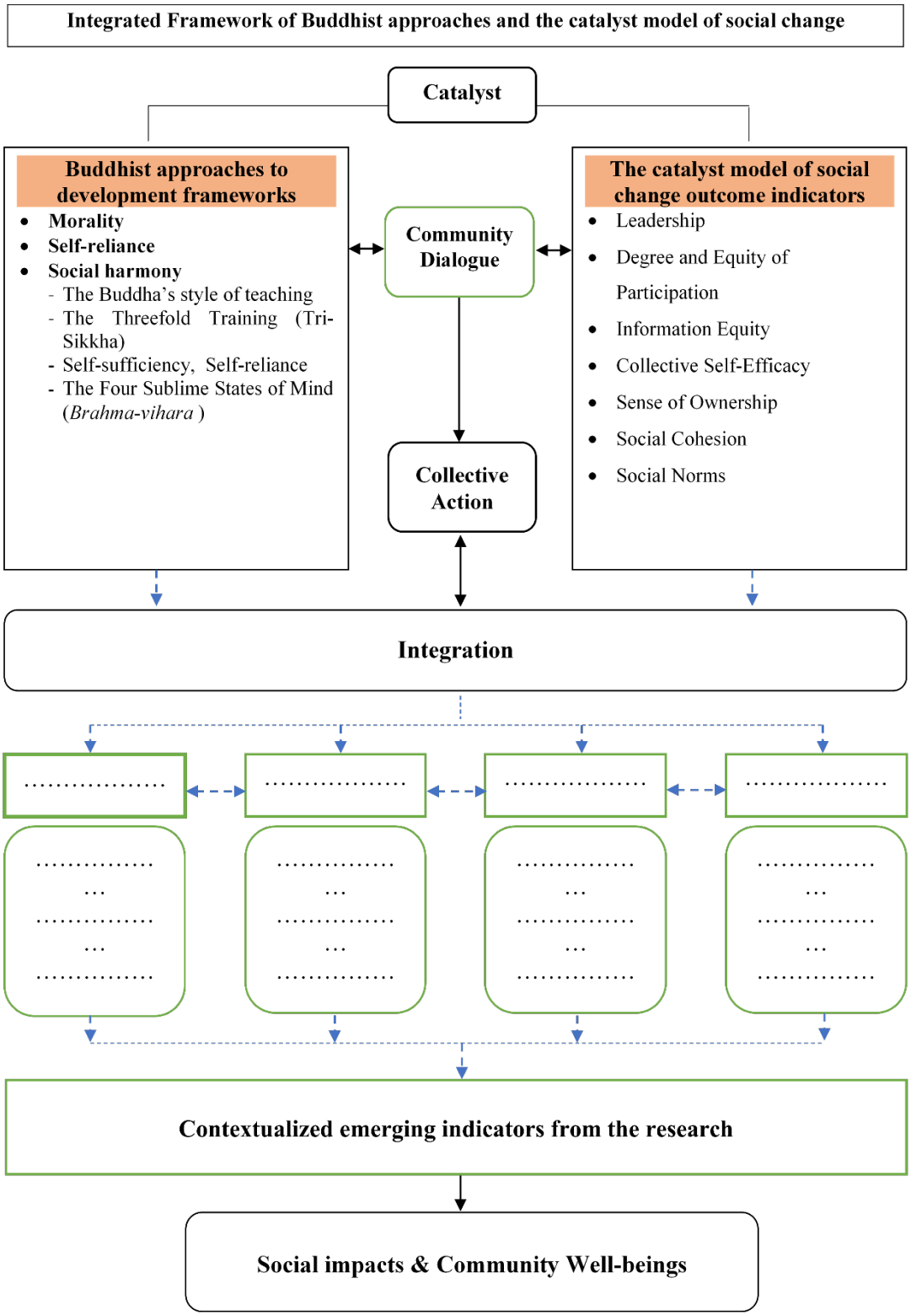
This section explains the conceptual framework and methods utilised in this research.

1.1. Conceptual Framework

According to Creswell (2003), qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting where the researcher is allowed to engage with the researched community to study the individual or participant in detail through knowing actual participants' experience. This research used the qualitative methodology based on the case studies approach with ethnographic participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups to explore the roles of Buddhist monks/nuns' engagement in community development as catalysts for social change. It used the conceptual framework of two principles of BA and the IMCFSC Model. While the IMCFSC model puts emphasis on 'community dialogue' and 'collective action' to deliver social change in the community (Figueroa et al., 2002) with the aim of improving all members' welfare or well-being, the Buddhist approaches focused on spiritual development or transformation in order to build a society that is based on morality, harmony[4], and self-reliance.

[4]The term 'harmony' in this research includes solidarity, compassion, love and mutual help.

Figure 14: Integrated Frameworks of Buddhist approaches and the catalyst model of social change
Source: Author adapted aspects of the Figueroa et al. (2002) and Buddhism for Development Project (2012) models



This framework is also informed by the liberation theory of Freire (1970) that love is the foundation of dialogue and dialogue cannot exist without a profound love, humility, and faith, building mutual trust between the parties, and making the dialogue become a horizontal relationship . Freire's theory links well with the Buddhist moral teachings and ethical values that largely influence this conceptual framework. The BA guided the researcher to explore and understand Buddhist community life and the participatory communication aspects in Buddhist development approaches practised by BDP and *Ban*[5] *Bungsanthueng* community. Then, the researcher attempts to contextualise aspects of the IMCFSC model of social change process and indicators with the above BA principles to identify similarities and differences and generate a holistic communication for a social change model that suits the Buddhist context of Lao PDR.

The following table shows how indicators of the two frameworks are contextualised in order to assist the researcher to understand and achieve the expected outcome of social change (the third column) in the Lao Buddhist context.

Table 3: Outline for the integration of IMCFSC indicator with Buddhist development disciplines
Source: Author

Buddhist Approaches Indicators	Indicators of IMCFSC Social Changes	Expected Emerging indicators
• Morality • Social harmony/solidarity • Self-sufficiency • Self-reliance/Self-help	• Leadership • Degree and Equity of participation • Information Equity • Collective self-efficacy • Sense of Ownership • Social Cohesion • Social Norms	• …….. • …….. • …….. • …….. • …….. • …….. • ……..

2. Research Methods

This research employed the ethnographic tools of participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion. This section presents population and sample, data source and collection.

2.1. Population and Sample

The field research took place at two places. The first is the *Watpa-Nakhoun-noi Vipassana* Meditation Centre [training centre] in the capital of Vientiane and the second is the Buddhist Volunteer Spirit for Community [the Buddhist Initiative) at *Ban Bungsanthueng*, Nongbok

[5]*Ban* is a Lao term referring to 'village'

District, Khammouane Province, under the network of the Buddhism for Development Project. As Creswell (2003) points out, the qualitative researcher is often involved at the site with the participant and purposefully selects the site or participants. Participants in this research include spiritual masters, staff members, trainee monks and nuns at the BDP's training centre, as well as leaders and members of the Buddhist Initiative. "Granted, sometimes this cultural group may be small (a few teachers, a few social workers), but typically it is large, involving many people who interact over time" (Creswell, 2013, p. 90).

Ethnographic participant observation

I spent three weeks at the training centre of the BDP in Vientiane observing the current training courses, the observation mostly concentrating on *Ban Bungsanthueng*. I based this action on above Creswell's (2013) idea of cultural-sharing group. As part of the observation, I employed a mini-workshop on problem-solving mapping with seven trainee monks and nuns, the same participants as the focus group, to understand their perception of the Buddhist approaches to community development as well as their roles in the community or society. I stayed at the *Ban Bungsanthueng* community for two months as a participant observer involved in the development activities that the monks and community members conducted at the village, such as general ceremonies and rituals, spiritual practices, women's handicraft related activities, organic farming and environmental activities. I acted according to Creswell (2003) that I put myself in natural setting to gather information through taking field notes of behaviours and actions. The primary observed locations and activities were a temple, an organic farming garden, the activities of women's handicraft initiatives, and the ecological preservation area. I also interviewed five key leaders of project initiatives and five members of the project initiatives through the aforementioned methods to understand their perspectives on the Buddhist approaches, the significance and the impacts of the project.

In-depth interviews

The number of participants in qualitative research is limited to smaller numbers to enable rich data collection. In this research, I interviewed three spiritual masters and two core staff members of the BDP at its training centre, and six leaders of the project initiatives at *Ban Bungsanthueng* as key informants. Each interview took approximately 40 to 60 minutes (*see Table 6and Table 7*). The interviewees chose the location and environment of the interview

themselves based on their own convenience and comfort. The Interviewees were informed that all recordings, documentation, information confidentiality required their consent before beginning each interview. The in-depth interviews were conducted with five interviewees at the Training Centre and five interviewees at *Ban Bungsanthueng*. The interviewees were one visiting lecturer, two spiritual masters and two staff members of the BDP at the training centre, and leaders and members of the Buddhist Initiative. The semi-structured interviews employed non-random sampling techniques with a snowball and handpicked samplings to interview five key informants at both places. "Non-random sampling refers to strategic requests for 'volunteers', the use of informants that 'snowball', or 'handpicking' respondents" (O'Leary, 2014, p. 112).

Recruiting the right participants was not easy so to ensure the correct balance of participants I employed snowball sampling, and interviewed the trainee monks and nuns at the training centre in Vientiane. O'Leary (2014) recommended snowball sampling for dealing with populations that are less easy to identify and access. I also employed the purposive sampling to recruit members of Buddhist Initiative for focus groups to ensure they truly represented their groups, so this sampling technique is also required As O'Leary (2014) argues, "all sampling strategies should be purposive, and all purposive strategies should be of value as determined by their ability to meet stated research goals" (p. 109).

Focus Groups

For the recruitment of the focus group participants at the training centre I sought the assistance of the staff members of the BDP. I employed the snowball sampling technique to recruit two trainee nuns and four monk participants, and volunteer sampling for one monk participant. According to O'Leary (2014, p. 110), handpicked sampling selects a sample with the intended purpose and picks representative participants for a particular topic.

I employed purposive sampling to select the participants of a focus group at *Ban Bungsanthueng.* This sampling is a commonly adopted technique in focus group recruitment in qualitative research methods (Liamputtong, 2011) and Bernard (2006) and Liamputtong (2006; 2010a), as cited in Liamputtong (2011) state that snowball sampling is also extensively used in focus group research. The participants in the focus groups were selected carefully to ensure equality of gender, different levels of age, occupation and education, and included two men and

three women. The participants were given the option to choose a time and place for each meeting in the environment they felt most comfortable.

2.2. Data source and collection

This research employed the ethnographic tools of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus groups to achieve the research objectives. A focus group method is employed to assist asking direct and specific questions with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the community (O'Leary, 2014). These methods helped me to understand how BDP applies its approach to community development and the understanding of the spiritual masters, staff members of BDP, and trainee monks and nuns, as well as members of the Buddhist Initiative at *Ban Bungsanthueng*. Using different data collection methods ensured the sufficient collection of information contributed to reliable and valid research results (Bryman, 2012) and followed the qualitative research that one or more strategies of inquiry adopted and used (Creswell, 2003).

Ethnographic participant observation

The use of this ethnographic tool allowed the researcher to explore the community's lifestyle from the perspectives of its participants to "understand, discover, describe, and interpret"(O'Leary, 2014, p. 189). Using participant observation allowed the researcher to step into the community, participate in the activities, and stay in a natural setting (Gobo, 2008). With this tool, the researcher was able to approach his participants and delve into how the community life in a Buddhist context significantly lays firm ground for his comprehension of how the Buddhist Initiative project works, and the roles of the trained monk in the community and the project. To support the method, I also employed a geo-social mapping suggested by Chuengsatiansup (2016) to study the community life, the existence and influence of Buddhism over the community life of *Ban Bungsanthueng* as a support tool for observation. It assists the research to have a holistic view and understanding of community life, human dimensions and social capital Chuengsatiansup (2016). This tool introduced change to the community and transformed the search or practitioner through the learning process. As Schensul and LeCompte (2013) assert, exploratory observation and interview are significant activities that allow research to enrich information because it helps to explore "values, beliefs deeply, and practices of cultural groups through a thick description of real people in natural settings" (O'Leary, 2014, p. 119).

The researcher closely followed the conceptual framework in order to identify how the participatory communication, especially IMCFSC model and Buddhist teaching and worldview, connects with and is manifesting in the Buddhist development initiatives.

Table 4: Guiding questions for geographical and social mapping
Source: Author

Activities/Key Questions	Sub-questions	Expected Research Outcomes
Mapping history of *Ban Bungsanthueng* (Village relocation, social spaces, and village relationship) **To observe:** What roles has Buddhism played in the village?	• Where is the old location of the village? • What was the reason for moving the village? • What happened in the village at that time?	**IMCFSC Model:** • Degree and equity of participation in changes of decision-making. • Catalyst roles in community. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Co-existence of Buddhism and traditional belief.
Buddhist and traditional ceremonies and rituals (Death rituals, Buddhist festival), and activities of BVSC **To observe:** How does Buddhism impact on village life?	• How are members of the community connected? • How do people access the information in the village? • For what purposes do villagers use the temple ground? • Who is using the temple space the most? • How do monks impact village life?	**IMCFSC Model:** • Catalyst role in the village. • Level of information equity. • Degree and equity of participation of villagers in various activities. • Village communication ecosystem. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Features of Buddhist community life. • Spiritual role of the temple. • Monks' spiritual role in community life.

The researcher also employed mini-workshops on problem-solving mapping with both trainee monks and nuns in Vientiane and members of the Buddhist Initiative at *Ban Bungsanthueng*. The participants in these workshops were the same participants as focus groups. The workshop aimed to examine the understanding of monks, and nuns about community development and their perceptions of positions and roles of monks or nuns in the community to shed light on *Sangha* catalyst roles.

Table 5: Guiding questions for mapping the perceptions of the Buddhist Initiative members of community development and monks/nuns' positions and role
Source: Author

Activities/Key Questions	Sub-questions	Expected Research Outcomes
Mini-workshop on problem identification and solution with members of Buddhist Initiative. **To observe:**	• What are the key social issues in your community? • How do you understand community development? • Do you think monks or nuns are	**IMCFSC Model:** • Villagers' perception of community development. • Monks' catalyst role in community development.

How do villagers perceive community development and the monks' or nuns' roles in the community? Mini-workshop on problem identification and solution with trainee monks and nuns at BDP's Training Centre. **To observe:** How do monks perceive community development and their roles in the community?	members of your community? • What roles do you think monks or nuns have in village initiatives? • Who else plays a role in the development of your community? • What are the key social issues in their community? • How do monks and nuns perceive community development? • How do monks and nuns see themselves in the community? • With regard to social development, what roles do monks and nuns consider they fulfil? • What role does the BDP play in the development initiatives of the alumni monks from the perspectives of trainees?	**Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Monk's spiritual role in the community development. **IMCFSC Model:** • Monks and nuns' perception/ understandings of community development. • Monks/nuns' catalyst role in community. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Level of monks'/nuns' mindfulness. Buddhist catalyst/spiritual role in addressing social issues.

In-depth semi-structured interviews

The researcher employed in-depth semi-structured interviews to explore the Buddhist approaches through the perspectives of participants of the BDP's training centre and Buddhist Initiative at the *Ban Bungsanthueng*. With the in-depth interviews, the inquirer can deepen his/her knowledge on the studied topic through thoroughly investigating the facts during the interview process (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013). This in-depth semi-structured interview used the open-ended type of questions to understand personal experiences of individuals (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013), and the meaning people make of the experience (Seiman, 2013). The interview lasted up to one hour with five spiritual masters and staff members, and five key leaders of the Buddhist Initiative as key informants or gatekeepers. Taking a semi-structured interview approach allowed flexibility in using a set of guiding questions while the main theme remained the same for all (O'Leary, 2014). The following table provides an outline of the questions used to guide the data collection process.

Table 6: Guiding questions for in-depth interviews with BDP's spiritual masters and staff members
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes
What are Buddhist principles and what are the goals of the BDP? **Sub-questions:**	**IMCFSC Model:** • BDP leadership in social development and community empowerment.

• How was the BDP established? • Why is the BDP engaging in development? • What Buddhist principles are shaping the BDP's approaches? • In your view, why should *Lao Sangha* engage in social development? • What are the main goals that BDP seek to achieve?	**Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Buddhist principles underpin the Buddhist development approaches.
What impact do the changes in course structure make on trainees? **Sub-questions:** • What makes the current training course different from previous courses? • What are the opportunities and challenges in this new course structure? • Is BDP aware of challenges or barriers associated with the changes? • How does BDP address those challenges?	**IMCFSC Model:** • BDP leadership in addressing challenges. • Level of information equity.
	Buddhist Approaches [BA]: • Level of BDP's awareness about issues [*Samadhi*].
To what extent does the BDP recruitment process enhance the equity of participation? **Sub-questions:** • How does the BDP distribute information about the training course? • What criteria does the BDP use to select suitable trainees for the course? • Do you think that the recruitment process of the BDP is fair?	**IMCFSC Model:** • Equity of the BDP's recruitment process. • Degree and equity of participation. • Level of information equity.
	Buddhist Approaches [BA]: • Level of BVSC communication network enhances the flow of information.
What self-reliance goals has the BDP achieved? **Sub-questions:** • Where do the BDP teachers come from? • Where does the BDP get funds to support its work? • What activities does the BDP undertake, without or with, limited external financial support? • How does the BDP maintain its relationship with alumni network and communities?	**IMCFSC Model:** • BDP leadership in Buddhist initiative in communities. • BDP's degree of collective self-efficacy.
	Buddhist Approaches [BA]: • Level of BDP self-reliance or self-sustenance.

Interview the Buddhist Initiative key leaders:

Table 7: Guiding questions for in-depth interviews with key leaders of the Buddhist Initiative
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes
How was the Buddhist Initiative established? What is its purpose? **Sub-questions:** • What inspired you to establish the BVSC project? • Where did you get support to establish this project or did you establish it by yourself?	**IMCFSC model:** • A catalyst or leadership role in initiating the project and identifying issues in the community. • Information equity among key informants about existing issues in the community and their understanding of the Buddhist

• What project initiative are you currently working on? • How did you choose the project initiative to work on? • Why did you choose to work on this initiative? • What new development approach is new to you? • What do you want to achieve from the project initiative? • In your opinion, what change have you made since you participated in the project initiative?	approach. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Monks' characteristics and approaches to development. • Right Intention (Pali: *Samma-sankappa*) in setting up the project and addressing issues. • Right View (Pali: *Samma-ditthi*) among key informants of the project goal. • Awareness (Pali: *Sati*) of key leaders on issues and solutions.
What project initiatives did the villagers have the most equitable participation in? **Sub-questions:** • What project initiative did the villagers actively participate in? • Who are the leaders of the project? • Who are the leaders of your project initiative? • In your opinion, why did community members participate more in the project initiative than in others? • How were leaders of the project initiatives/activities selected? • How were decisions made? • In your opinion, what does good leadership involve?	**IMCFSC model:** • Members' degree and equity of participation in the project or issues. • Social norms: Norms on participation and leadership can be informed through joining various activities. • Sense of ownership: The importance of the issues to participants, their contribution to the program, community needs. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Social harmony underpinned by concepts of collective ownership and responsibility. • The impacts of *Sila* (morality) on social rules of participation and leadership.
How do villagers access information about community development, knowledge about Buddhist approaches, and the BDP? **Sub-questions:** • What does monks or nuns teach their lay people? • How do villagers receive information about development and the project? • Who do you think holds information about the project? • Do you think you have understood the purpose of this project? • Does every member of the project have the same access to information and knowledge?	**IMCFSC Model:** • Members' awareness and correct knowledge about the project, BDP, and their working initiative. • The degree of free flow information about the project, BDP, and a particular initiative. • Influencers of information on the Buddhist approaches and the BDP. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • The practice of Buddha's style of teaching (*Desanavidhi*) impacts on members and villager's knowledge about the initiative and the Buddhist approaches. • Impacts of moral teachings on people's daily life.
What impact has the project had in the village? **Sub-questions:** • What changes have you witnessed in your community since the project was established? • What impact has the project made on the village administration?	**IMCFSC Model:** • Monks' catalyst role in stimulating people's awareness of issues and taking collective action. • Monk's interventional impact on village committee work. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • The degree of moral teachings in community peace and harmony. • Social harmony and mutual help.

Focus groups

Assessment of the roles of monks/nuns requires an understanding of the trainee monks and nuns' perspectives and the perspective of the project members at *Ban Bungsanthueng*. The researcher employed focus groups as a method. Focus groups refer to the interview with a small group of people on a specific topic (Flick, 2009) focusing on issues of concern, and interactions between participants are significant (Liamputtong, 2011). It assists the researcher to obtain in-depth information through points of view that participants interact with and discuss in the group, while I played a facilitating role in the discussion (O'Leary, 2014). I conducted two mini-focus groups. The first was carried out at the BDP's training centre in Vientiane with seven trainee monks and nuns. The second was conducted at the BBT community with five community members involved in the BDP project. Smaller groups provide the right environment for all participants to actively and inclusively express their views and allow detailed discussion of relevant and useful data (Liamputtong, 2011, p. 42). Each focus group discussion lasted one and half hours. As Flick (2009) indicates, group interview usually recruits six to eight participants running for one to two hours. All discussions and interactions were recorded and noted and then interpreted. The purpose of using the information gathered by this research confidentiality was carefully and clearly communicated to the trainees and members of the project initiatives before commencing, in order to create trust and confidence in expressing their opinion.

Table 8: Guiding questions for a focus group with trainee monks and nuns at BDP's Training Centre
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes
What do trainee monks/nuns expect from the training course? **Sub-questions:** • Where did you receive information about the training course from? • Why did you decide to join this training course? • Do you represent your community, district, and province? • Did you nominate yourself? • What have you learned so far from this course? Or, what key knowledge have you gained from this course so far? • What is your plan after finishing this course? • What barriers do you think you might face when you start a development initiative in your community area? • What is your plan after finishing this course? • What barriers do you think will inhibit you and your	**IMCFSC Model:** • Monks/nuns' leadership role in community initiatives. • Degree and equity of participation. • Level of information equity. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Level of BVSC network enhances flow of information. • Level of understanding moral teachings (*Sila*) or Buddhist approaches.

community initiative after this course?	
How do trainees perceive the BDP's goals, objectives and approaches? **Sub-questions:** • How much do you think you know about the BDP's approaches? • What best describes the Buddhist approaches to development? • Why are Buddhist moral teachings (*Sila*) essential for society?	**IMCFSC Model:** • BDP's level of knowledge and information equity among trainees. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Significance of moral teachings (*Sila*).

Focus groups with members of the Buddhist Initiative:

Table 9: Guiding questions for a focus group with members of the Buddhist Initiative at Ban Bungsanthueng
Source: Author

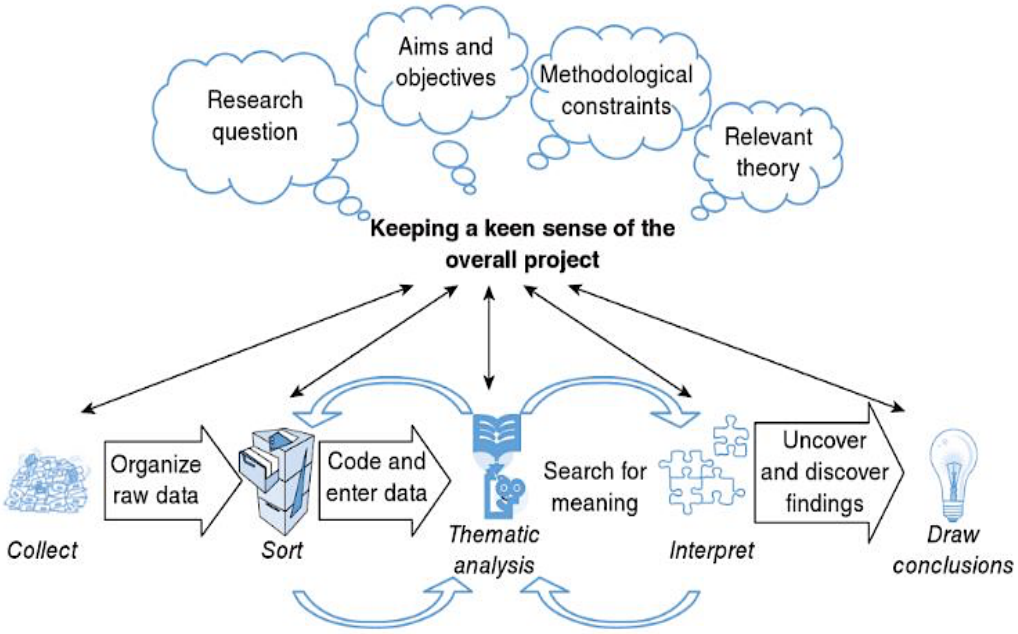
Questions	Expected Research Outcomes
How do villagers participate in the project? **Sub-questions:** • How did the monks initiate this BVSC project? • How did the monks encourage members of the group or community to get involved in this project? • How did you become a member of this project? • What motivated you to participate in this project? • Does this program create opportunities for villagers to participate?	**IMCFSC Model:** • The extent of monks' leadership role from the villager's points of views. • Feeling of morale, social trust and social reciprocity under monks' leadership in the project. • The members' trust in monks' leadership and capability to take the lead in development work. • **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • The members' right view (*Samma-ditthi*) and right intention (*Samma-sankappa*) of monks' role. [Wisdom (*Panna*)]. • Faith (*Sattha*) shapes participation and collective action.
How do community members perceive the Buddhist Initiative approaches led by monks? **Sub-questions:** • Who selected the project initiative you are working on? • What initiatives would you like to see developed? • What do you expect to achieve in this initiative? • In your opinion, what impact has this project made since it was established in the village? • What does 'morality' mean to you and your daily life?	**IMCFSC Model:** • A catalyst or leadership role in identifying issues and involving members of the community. • Level of information equity by the members' awareness and correct knowledge about the objectives and goals of the initiatives. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Right Intention in setting up the project and addressing issues. • Right View among members of the project goal. • Impact of moral teachings and solidarity.

How confident is the community about being able to sustain their activities with less, or no, external support? **Sub-questions:** • How do the villagers run their development initiative associated activities? • Where do they get financial or other support from? • What activities does your group or community run by independently? • What changes can you witness in your group or community before and after implementing this project? • In your opinion, do you think you can run the project initiatives if there is less, or no, support from external sources?	**IMCFSC Model:** • The individual and group efficacy to sustain the project. • The extent of leadership in running the project and expanding it to other community members. • The sense of belonging and feeling of morale that critical informants hold which makes them proud to be members of the project. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • The degree of moral teaching in community peace and harmony. • Community's degree of self-reliance and sustainability in continuing activities or projects by themselves. • Social harmony and mutual help in the women's handicraft group.
What challenges do the monks and community face in the implementation of their activities? **Sub-questions:** • What were the challenges in implementing this project? • What barriers or issues prevented villagers from participating in the initiative? • In your opinion, will the relationship between monks and lay people be a barrier to communication in your community?	**IMCFSC Model:** • The members' access to knowledge. [Information equity]. • Extent and level of participation in managing and making a decision among community members. • Members' extent of leadership in various activities. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Solidarity impacts on participation and achievement of each initiative or of the whole project.

2.3. Data analysis

The data analysis process in this qualitative research was conducted under a thematic analysis approach to identify the potential of Buddhist monks/nuns to be catalysts for social change, based on the Buddhist approach to development and the IMCFSC model of Figueroa et al. (2002). I utilised the process of reflective qualitative analysis suggested by O'Leary (2014) through thematic and group interaction analysis (Liamputtong, 2011). The processing of data follows the following sequences; "1) organise raw data, (2) code and enter data, (3) search for meaning through thematic analysis, (4) interpret meaning; and (5) draw conclusions" (O'Leary, 2014, p. 300).

Figure 15: The process of reflective analysis
Source: O'Leary (2014, p. 300)



The data is grouped and thematised based on aspects of BA and IMCFSC model. The researcher attempted to complete, modify, and contextualise the conceptual framework in order to accommodate similarities and differences and demonstrate their integration. All collected data has been immediately processed after the completion of each interview to avoid missing any of the significant points raised during interviews and group discussion processes. The researcher personally and carefully transcribed and translated all conversations from Lao into English to avoid misunderstandings, using his strong background and experience of being a novice and his relationship with the community. Using translation service agents can lead to misunderstanding of the context because it contains Buddhist terms which can be hard for translating agent to understand and to provide the correct meaning for.

The ethnographic participant observation allowed the researcher to observe and note human conduct in the field (Uwe Flick, 2013) and individual behaviours and activities at the researched site (Creswell, 2003). The observation data provided more details of the situation and activities of Buddhist development initiative practiced by trained monks. Thus, the data collected from the observation is added to and enriches the data gathered from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. This ethnographic method helped to record and document all raw data,

such as a field notes and visual materials, which then was analysed, and interpreted (Bell, 2005). The analysed and interpreted data provided vital primary information exploring the role of Buddhist monks/nuns as a catalyst for social changes in Lao PDR.

Table 10: Research coding
Source: Author

Participant Code	Gender	Position/Responsibilities
BDP Training Centre		
BDP-S1	Monk	Visiting lecturer
BDP-S2	Male	Staff member
BDP-S3	Monk	Spiritual master
BDP-S4	Monk	Spiritual master
BDP-S5	Male	Staff member
BVSC-T1	Nun	Trainees
BVSC-T2	Nun	Trainees
BVSC-T3	Monk	Trainees
BVSC-T4	Monk	Trainees
BVSC-T5	Monk	Trainees
BVSC-T6	Monk	Trainees
BVSC-T7	Monk	Trainees
***Ban Bungsanthueng* Community**		
BVSC-BBTL1	Male	Monks and project counsellor
BVSC-BBTL2	Female	Head of Women Handicraft Initiative
BVSC-BBTL3	Male	Head of Organic Farming Initiative
BVSC-BBTL4	Male	Village head
BVSC-BBTL5	Male	Sharman
BVSC-BBTM1	Male	BVSC members – agriculture (animal culture)
BVSC-BBTM2	Male	Deputy village head
BVSC-BBTM3	Female	BVSC members – Women Handicraft Initiative
BVSC-BBTM4	Female	BVSC members – Women Handicraft Initiative
BVSC-BBTM5	Female	BVSC members – Women Handicraft Initiative

3. Ethical Consideration

This research followed the ethical standard and guidelines set by the Unitec Research Ethics Committees [UREC]. According to Unitec policy, any staff or student who intends conduct a research project that involves human as participants, either directly or indirectly, must obtain the approval of the UREC before commencing the research to protect both the researcher and participants (Unitec Researcher Ethics Committee [UREC], 2014). The ethics application 'Form A' is then submitted to the UREC for its approval. The consent forms and information for participants were handed to the office of the BDP, the monastic abbot and village head of the *Ban Bungsanthueng* and participants before I embarked on the fieldwork and interviews to

ensure informed consent. The researcher ensured that the use of ethnographic participant observation, interview and focus groups were free of any harm to the community and impact on people's daily life. Such practice ensures compliance with the participants' right to maintain privacy (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). No data was collected before obtaining the consent of the participants and approval from the community. The researcher provided a Lao-language translation of all forms, including consent form and questionnaires, for participants and the community. The Lao language was used throughout period of the fieldwork to ensure that the language was accessible to all participants, create a favourable environment and make participants feel comfortable.

This chapter has presented the methods and conceptual framework used in this qualitative exploratory research into the role of Buddhist monks/nuns' engagement in community development as catalysts for social change and sustainable development in Lao PDR. The next chapter presents the findings obtained with those methods and the conceptual framework.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter reports the findings of the field research from the two places which were studied under the Buddhism for Development Projects [BDP]. The first is *Wat-pa-Nakhoun-noi Vipassana* Meditation Centre in the capital city, Vientiane, and the other is the Buddhist Volunteer Spirit for Community [the Buddhist Initiative] at *Ban*[6] *Bungsanthueng*, in the Nongbok district, Khammouane province (*see chapter 1 for further detail*). The aim of the field research was to explore the role of *Sangha*[7] in community development as a catalyst for sustainable social change and progression in Laos.

This chapter is organised into two sections. The first section presents a synthesis of the perspectives of the BDP's spiritual masters, core staff members, and trainee monks and nuns undertaking the Buddhist Volunteer Spirit for Community [BVSC] training course at the *Wat-pa-Nakhoun-noi-Vipassana* Meditation Centre. This section shows degree and equity of information and Buddhist communication approaches. It also shows the results received from the mapping of trainee monks and nuns' perspectives about the community approach. The second section provides a synthesis of the information from participant observation and perspectives of group leaders and project members at *Ban Bungsanthueng*. This section also concludes with findings from the mapping of the members' perspectives about the community approach to development.

1. *Wat-pa-Nakhoun-Noi* Vipassana Meditation Centre, BDP Training Centre

This section reports data retrieved from in-depth interviews with spiritual masters and staff members of BDP as key informants, and data from focus group discussions with trainee monks and nuns. The findings are conducive to understanding the participatory communication aspects in Buddhist approaches by BDP, and the catalyst role it plays in community development.

1.1. Perception of BDP's spiritual masters and staff members

Five spiritual masters and staff members of the BDP were selected for in-depth interviews to explore goals and objectives, community awareness, the trainee selection process, and the level of self-reliance in association with the BDP.

[6] '*Ban'* is a Lao term which means 'village'.
[7] '*Sangha'* refers to a Buddhist monastic order comprised of monks, novices, nuns, and ascetics.

Goal and objectives of the BDP

After the founding of the Lao PDR, the first ever *Sangha* engagement in social development works took place in 2003, when assisting the Lao government tackle HIV/AIDS and drug issues that were spread widely throughout the country. Buddhist monks intervened to raise the general public's awareness and understanding of HIV/AIDS. Their contribution has helped to reduce stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV/AIDs victims and drugs users, by providing their spiritual development. *Sangha* visited schools and a centre for drug treatment and rehabilitation to deliver a sermon (moral teachings), and to run material and spiritual support activities for drug addicts who were receiving treatment and rehabilitation.

Initially, there were many concerns over the intervention of monks because the approach was unfamiliar to the general public and different from traditional Buddhist practices; monks were expected to stay at their temple and study *Dhamma*, not involve themselves in secular affairs. The Buddhist organisation tried to clarify misunderstandings about the role of the *Sangha*, and all spiritual masters and staff members perceive that social engagement can assist in solving social suffering because Buddhism is a part of Lao society and environment (nature). A common Buddhist virtue underpinning social co-existence is that one should help another. The following comments were made by multiple interviewees in regard to this virtue:

> Sangha must involve in social development to instruct lay followers to behave appropriately and do good acts (Pali: *karma*) (BDP_S4, July 25, 2017).

> Eight duties (*dhura*) of the Lao Sangha are clearly stated in the Lao Sangha Constitution, such as promoting education and *Dhamma* (Buddhist teachings). Involvement in development is a *dhura* of *Sangha* to appreciate and help its followers, who support them; it is morally right (BDP_S3, July 25, 2017).

> The *Sangha* is compared to children of villagers; the *Sangha* will be hungry if the villagers are hungry. If villagers feel unhappy and suffered, the *Sangha* will feel the same. We live with them, we must do something for them rather than teaching *Dhamma* only (BDP_S2, July 25, 2017).

> The *Sangha* is a part of nature and nature is part of us, so if the environment is destroyed, the *Sangha* cannot stand on it. They must teach *Dhamma* (the reality of the natural world) and disseminate information about the issue, so we are a part of this responsibility (BDP_S3, July 25, 2017).

The BDP has two goals; the main goal aims to enhance the capacity of the *Lao Sangha* to play a bigger role in community development. The other goal, according to the BDP's 2016 report, is to strengthen community resilience and well-being through spiritual awareness and action. BDP_S2, a staff member of the BDP, stated that "the initial purpose of the project was to promote *Lao Sangha* to play a greater role in community and society because they have a role in the temple only" (July 25, 2017). Most spiritual masters and staff members did not explicitly mention their goal for the community during interviews; however, they gave reasons why and how the *Sangha* works with villagers.

To achieve such a goal, BDP trains *Lao Sangha*, and lay followers (Pali: *Buddaparisa*) to help the society. The first training was conducted for three years but was later reduced to nine months, and then six months. The first training course entitled "*Buddhaparisa-pheu-karnphatthana-soumxon*" (Buddhists for Community Development) was attended by members of *Sangha,* youth, and community leaders with diverse ages and roles. The ages of those attending ranged from 20 to 60 years old. After completing the course, the trainees went back to their communities and introduced Buddhist initiatives, while qualified participants were selected as spiritual masters at the BDP's Training Centre. BDP_S2 said, "those trainees in the first batch were trained to be trainers [TOT], in order to train other members of the *Sangha*, as well as villagers" (July 25, 2017).

Figure 16: Trainees are taking class (left)
and using a smart-phone to shoot a short video to reflect on in the class (right)
Source: Author

For the fifth group of participants the BDP changed the name of the training to '*Jit-asa-sao-buddha-pheu-soumxon*' (Buddhist Volunteering Spirit for Community), and the age of

trainees was also restricted to under 50 years old. Most of the spiritual masters indicated that the reasons for shortening the length of training were related to social (work) demand, individual situations of the trainees and the financial burden of the BDP. A training duration of three years was extensive, and the BDP could not produce enough trained, volunteer monks to meet the social demand of development work. The trained *Sangha* also experienced difficulties in their practical work after the training because some were already sixty-years old. Therefore, although they had knowledge and were trusted, their physical health did not align with ongoing input. Some trainees had responsibilities and roles in their temples and local Buddhist organisations, so staying away from these duties for three years proved difficult. A training duration of three years cost the BDP hugely, although the BDP received financial support from some foreign donors, and a donation from lay followers for the project:

> The first training course launched in 2003 and took three years to complete. At that time, trainees experienced many difficulties of taking a longer course, so we shortened it to nine months and then six months. The BDP has trained totally over two hundred Buddhist volunteers in 10 batches, including the current training course. The reasons for shortening [the] course duration were budget issues and time constraints (BDP_S4, July 25, 2017).

However, one interviewee explained that the political and cultural situation of the *Sangha* also contributed to the change, stating, "The *Sangha* is not a main actor of development, so it is not appropriate to call '*phra-phatthana*' (development monks). Thus, the name was changed to '*Jit-asa-sao-Buddha*' (Buddhist volunteer) which is more appropriate" (BDP_S5, August 7, 2017).

The BDP developed and adapted the training curriculum to the time changes. It now focuses on developing Buddhist and social knowledge. The trainees learn communication skills, such as social media, presentation and critical thinking. These skills are vital when working with the community, especially for providing the moral teachings sessions and delivering sermons (*see Figure 16*). The BDP also included politics and administration subjects as it is considered important for monks and nuns to be aware of the government's political structure and regime. However, some staff members perceive that these subjects also create barriers in the BDP curriculum, because it means re-arranging and shortening other subjects. This adjustment led to the ineffectiveness of other subjects which provide significant, useful skills and practical knowledge. Staff members made the following comments regarding this issue:

> 50% of the present training course focuses on human transformation, and another 50 focuses on knowledge and skills. Trainees came from different places whose behaviours and beliefs are varied and not in line with Buddhist teachings and practices. Masters help them to differentiate between Buddhist practice, culture, and traditional practices. They have been trained in life and communication skills through dialogue, and improve such inappropriate behaviours (BDP_S5, August 7, 2017).
>
> The trainers are not ready because some curriculum is under the guidance of the Lao Party and the Government. Because the BDP works with the government and the government is not familiar with a workshop pattern of teaching and learning, so the curriculum needs to be a compromise and is adjusted by including the state regulations and related concepts in the curriculum. Therefore, this prolongs the duration and leads to the exclusion of other practical subjects (BDP_S2, July 25, 2017).

Table 11 presents a key summary of the goals and objectives of the BDP obtained from the in-depth interviews with spiritual masters and staff members.

Table 11: BDP's goal and objectives
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
What are Buddhist principles and what are the goals of the BDP? **Sub-questions** • How was the BDP established? • Why is the BDP engaging in development? • What Buddhist principles are shaping the BDP's approaches? ▪ In your view, why should *Lao Sangha* engage in social development? ▪ What are the main goals that BDP seek to achieve?	**IMCFSC Model:** • BDP leadership in social development and community empowerment. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Buddhist principles underpin the Buddhist development approaches.	• Set up in 2003 to help the Lao government to solve HIV/AIDs and drug abuse issues through its moral authority **[IMCFSC]**. • Volunteer spirit for helping society which is a part of the Buddhist ethic of 'divine abode or *Brahma vihara*'. It is also a *Sangha's* social responsibility (*dhura*) and the aim of Buddhism to help people to be free from sufferings **[BA &IMCFSC]**. • *Sangh*a, laypeople and nature are interdependent, so one must support one another **[BA]**. • BDP move toward becoming a self-reliant organization and building a resilient and sustainable community **[BA]**.

Challenges of changes in the training course

Most spiritual masters and staff members recognised the potential and the limitations of both previous and current training courses (*see Table 2*). The changes in curriculum and training

structure present opportunities and challenges for trainees and the BDP; however, the changes enabled the BDP to train a larger number of monks/nuns to meet the social demand.

The previous training courses had diverse ages, seniority in *Vassa*[8] (senior monks), and Buddhist and social knowledge that became potentially useful for their community work, because they were likely to gain the trust of villagers and to spiritually inspire a wider group of people. This increase in potential helped to enhance faith among the general public or individual villager in the monks'/nuns' leadership and ability to provide education through deliverance of sermons (spiritual guidance). Another aspect is that senior monks are already well versed in Buddhist teachings, social knowledge and pragmatism, from their roles and responsibilities in the temple and the *Sangha* organisation in the district or province. One interviewee commented:

> I previously concerned myself with the physical condition for senior monks, which is a barrier to long training, while junior monks also have a limitation in practical works and experiences after completing the training (BDP_S3, July 25, 2017).

However, most trainees of the 2017 training course are younger compared with previous courses. According to personal communication with the BDP's training mentors and staff, the total numbers of current trainees are 43 people including novices, monks, nuns and youths, with ages ranged between 17 and 34 years. Although the majority of monks are junior in age, some monks are an abbot of the temple and members of the Buddhist *Sangha* committee in the district or province:

> The obstacles for trainees are about age, experience, and credibility. Young monks have much enthusiasm, but they gain less trust and faith, less attention and secure state of mind, as well as seniority in the *Sangha* hierarchy. On the other hand, senior monks have more attention, and stay firm to gain trust and credibility from villagers, so when they say something people tend to be interested and trusted them (BDP_S4, July 25, 2017).

The majority of trained monks/nuns also experienced barriers to engaging and initiating development work in the community. The BDP learned that there are two underlying issues with trained monks' engagement in the community; the first issue is a lack of trust or faith as a result of their seniority in ages and *Vassa*. The other issue is misunderstandings by authorities and

[8]Some monks are younger, but may have more *Vassa*, while other older monks but have less *Vassa*. Their *Vassa* is counted since their first *Vassa* in the monkhood.

villagers. These two factors have affected trust and credibility. Misunderstandings of the monks' methods occur because they are unfamiliar to the villagers. The trained monks tended to work directly with villagers and village authorities, and they sometimes did not pass by or notify the district, provincial *Sangha* or local government authorities. Thus, those authorities did not understand or trust the monk's methods. As BDP_S4 indicated:

> The typical problems with trained monks who initiate the community practices are that they lack coordination and knowledge about the public or government rules, regulations and procedures. So, this results in some authorities not understanding them (July 25, 2017).

And another participant stressed:

> Authorities in some communities are still doubtful of what monks are doing, and why they have to do it, and if is it morally right for them to do this (BDP_S3, July 25, 2017).

The following table summarises the perspectives on barriers, challenges and improvement of the training course.

Table 12: Perspectives on barriers and limitations in training and communities
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
What impact do the changes in course structure make on trainees? **Sub-questions:** ▪ What makes the current training course different from previous courses? ▪ What are the opportunities and challenges in this new course structure? ▪ Is BDP aware of challenges or barriers associated with the changes? ▪ How does BDP address those challenges?	**IMCFSC Model:** • BDP leadership in addressing challenges. • Level of information equity. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** ▪ Level of BDP's awareness about issues [*Samadhi*].	• Intensive curriculum affects the understanding and learning of junior monks [**IMCFSC&BA**]. • BDP is aware of the impact caused by the changes, such as Buddhist teachings and social knowledge of the trainees **[BA]**. • The intensive course helps BDP to train more development monks. It addresses challenges by bringing in its alumni to train from time to time **[BA]**.

BDP's Buddhist approaches to community development

Opinions regarding the Buddhist concepts and teachings which underpin the establishment of the project were not unanimous in the interview data. According to spiritual masters and core

staff members of the BDP, the training encompasses two components, spiritual development and livelihood, and these two components are linked.

The BDP's Buddhist approaches to community development are based on the spirit of volunteering and Buddhist ethics. The project first trained the minds of members of the *Sangha* and youths to cultivate the virtues of compassion, loving-kindness, and appropriate behaviour, through understanding of moral principles and the relevant social interrelations (*see Figure 16*). These values generate a sense of collective, or social, responsibilities and build social trust (faith or *Sattha*). All trainees were required to learn, practice and understand these values before undertaking any grass-roots initiatives. As BDP_S2 stated:

> Buddhist approaches to development first begin with training the mind to cultivate compassion, generosity and the volunteer spirit of helping others, to be ashamed of doing evil deeds, sin and immorality, and to not exploit others (July 25, 2017).

These teachings are very much based on Buddhist ethics. The BDP_S4 reiterated that:

> The goals and principles of Buddhist ways of development begin with *Vipassana* (meditation) practice to train the mind. Monks/nuns entering the community should begin with the *Vipassana* training and practice before stepping towards other development works. The *Vipassan*a training includes organizing *Vipassana* meditation activities and summer *samanera*[9] ordination camps for students, attended by the public. Lay followers recognize the *Sangha*'s spiritual leadership role through these activities, so they trust and believe in monks. This trust creates favourable conditions for monks to be further involved in social development. First, monks should develop faith (trust) within the community, so that lay followers will be willing to participate in any activities they do (July 25, 2017).

The Buddhist approach to economic development is primarily based on Right Livelihood (Pali: *Samma-ajiva*). The project aim is to encourage people to practice the Buddhist Five Precepts in their daily life. The Five Precepts include abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech (lying), and intoxicants. The values underpinning this practice are self-reliance (self-sufficiency) and understanding of the dependent relationship (Pali: *Paticcasamuppada*) with all creatures, to avoid exploitation. In regard to the subject of self-reliance BDP_S4 admitted:

[9] *'Samanera'* is a Buddhist novice who stays in the Buddhist monastic life until 20 years old.

> The Project [BDP] set to achieve self-reliance, but we have not yet reached the point" (July 25, 2017).

BDP_S5 also pointed out that:

> *Sangha* spearheads and promotes the Buddhist concepts of self-reliant living; monks will stop their role if people need to do more than be 'self-sufficient' because it is beyond their role. Monks do not promote any form of 'killings'. The goal of the *Sangha* is to create community well-being, but if people run after money, it will create suffering (August 7, 2017).

The understanding of the dependent relationship between creatures is linked to mental development (Pali: *Chitta-bhavana*), because if people understand the connection between themselves and other living things, they have already cultivated compassion and loving-kindness, and have focused their needs and desires on a life containing more self-reliance and less consumption. All participants appeared to have a conviction that the Buddhist Five Precepts is central to the Buddhist approach or the movement. The trainee monks and nuns were trained to cultivate spirituality and secular knowledge using the Five Precepts as a guide. In relation to this, BDP_S5 spoke about the Buddhist approaches:

> Buddhist approaches do not deny living and eating; the Buddhist economic ideal is to raise people's awareness of the limitation of the world's natural resources and the impact of the population increase. They need to care about their use of resources, so that they do not kill more. So, what will happen if we do not educate people to be frugal or how to utilise the resources from the environment with care? Buddhism has recognised this for a long time, but it has not been communicated to the world. People must use it [natural resources] with thorough consideration of its impact on others in the same world. Buddhism points out linkages and helps people to understand. For instance, people are prohibited from practising slash-and-burn agriculture, but people do not understand why. Monks must explain and direct them to the causes and effects, as well as understanding the links between various components, and link them to Buddhist teachings, such as abstaining from killing (Pali: *Pana Sila*) living creatures (August 7, 2017).

Community awareness of the BDP works

Most interviewees tended to be satisfied with people's contribution to the project, although there were groups that did not understand the role of the *Sangha*:

> Development monks are increasingly needed in the community (BDP_S3 and BDP_S4, July 25, 2017).

The project experienced difficulties in producing qualified monks/nuns who can spearhead grass-roots projects. Although the project could produce many volunteer monks and nuns annually, only a few monks met the requirements and criteria:

> It is hard to have competent and appropriate monks in this field. In each training batch, there are only a few monks that meet the requirements (BDP_S4, July 25, 2017).

On the other hand, the Lao government and most villagers recognised and accepted the significance of the engagement. Most interviewees were satisfied and shared the same opinion about how their Buddhist approaches supported the Government directives and policies, as well as met the needs of villagers. In turn, the government agreed with the BDP approaches and supported them. Several of the interviewees acknowledged the coherence between the government and BDP's objectives:

> The government gave the green light for BDP to run activities and help the government to address social issues (BDP_S4, July 25, 2017).
>
> The various authorities agree with monks' approaches (BDP_S2, July 25, 2017).
>
> The Lao citizen accepts and witnesses the result of the approaches that are in line with the party and government policies" (BDP_S3, July 25, 2017).
>
> In my view, I see that Buddhist approaches and the Lao government approaches go in the same direction. If you can grab the gist of Buddhist approaches, it is not difficult to understand the government approaches. One aspect of Buddhist Five Precepts is similar to the government policy on frugality (thrift and anti-extravagance policy). *Sila-ha* stress an abstaining from intoxicant drinking, these are frugal expenses, and the government advises its citizens to spend their money with care and a consideration of necessity (BDP_S1, July 26, 2017).

On the one hand, there are a small group of people in each community that do not understand the social roles of monks or nuns because such involvement is a new phenomenon in the community. Traditionally, monks were understood to stay away from secular (social) affairs and conception was a significant issue that the BDP experienced in each community:

> A minority of people have not yet understood the *Sangha* roles and responsibilities (BDP_S2 and S3, July 25, 2017).

The BDP had to intervene to help its alumni improve people's understanding of the significance of their engagement in reducing suffering (resulting from social problems). BDP_S2 pointed out that the position of monks/nuns in the village is crucial for participation:

> Monks/nuns did not approach the community with a position of giving orders or command. Instead they tended to form discussions and consultations by inviting villagers to gather at the temple and clarify their purpose (BDP_S2, July 25, 2017).

Selection process of trainees

The BDP advertises and disseminates information about the training through three communication channels; the Buddhist alumni network (volunteer monks), the *Sangha* organisations in provinces and districts, and the media (radio, magazines, newspapers and social media).

The BDP's alumni network plays a primary role in the nomination of trainees for a training course and act as a communication network for the BDP. The trained monks and nuns are alumni and represent the BDP in their communities and provinces throughout Laos. The BDP distributes a letter to provincial and district Buddhist organisations, as well as its alumni network, to invite nominations of candidates. The network nominated the majority of trainees in the name of the province or district, but sometimes nominated directly to the BDP on their behalf. The BDP then selected suitable candidates based on its criteria, such as age and potential:

> The selection process involves communication with the BDP alumni and asks them to nominate participants as representatives of their provinces, and then BDP will do a screening test and select suitable participants based on its criteria. In the past some participants were 60 years old; however, the age is now limited to 50 years old or below (BDP3, July 25, 2017).

However, trainees in the 9th BVSC training course were concerned about the inequity of the selection process. For example, some provinces dominated the allocated spaces, this has created discontent. The data from the interviews reveals that most spiritual masters and staff members were aware of this issue:

> Initially, the BDP announced and asked its alumni network to nominate monks/nuns who were interested in attending the course. The announcement was also available via media, but the alumni nominated most participants (BDP_S2, July 25, 2017).

The same participant also conceded:

> The commitment of BDP is to select one monk representing each province; however, it could not follow the commitment due to the demands of a particular province. For example, Sayabouri province nominated ten monks - this covers other provinces' slots. Although participants come from many provinces, the course did not include every province, so I think the course is not yet inclusive (BDP_S2, July 25, 2017).

The following table summarises the BDP's selection process for trainees, its communication networks and approaches to community participation.

Table 13: BDP's process of trainee's recruitment Process
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
To what extent does the BDP recruitment process enhance the equity of participation? **Sub-questions:** • How does the BDP distribute information about the training course? • What criteria does the BDP use to select suitable trainees for the course? • Do you think that the recruitment process of the BDP is fair?	**IMCFSC Model:** • Equity of the BDP's recruitment process. • Degree and equity of participation. • Level of information equity. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Level of BVSC communication network enhances the flow of information.	▪ Information about the training course is communicated through its BVSC alumni network, district and provincial *Sangha* organization, radio, newspapers, and brochures **[IMCFSC & BA]**. ▪ Selecting 1-2 provincial/district representatives, but it fails. The age ranges from 18 to 50 years old **[IMCFSC & BA]**. ▪ BVSC alumni network is the primary communication channel **[BA]**. ▪ Some interviewees feel that they cannot meet the requirement of participation for the recruitment process **[IMCFSC & BA]**.

BDP's level of self-reliance

The BDP desires to be a self-reliant organization in the fields of human and financial resources (*see Table 24*). It stopped using training services from its network in Thailand and used its own trainers instead:

> Previously, well-known trainers were visiting from Thailand to deliver a workshop, but BDP is now using only its trainers to fulfil its commitment to be a self-reliant project (BDP_S2, July 25, 2017).

The BDP received funding from both general public donations and foreign organisations. The foreign organisations support funding for some of the BDP's activities which are related to educational improvement and community capacity building, such as the *Metta-Dhamma* project (working with sectors of education), HIV/AIDS, and drug abuse. The BDP also receives a budget for its media/communication work, such as teaching manuals and other publications. However, the project did not receive funding from organisations for its moral teaching activities because the donors considered this component to be religious propaganda, thus the project needed to mobilise funds for this activity from the general public. As one spiritual master explained:

> Although the BDP receives funds from internal and external donors, the fund is also conditional. Donors do not fund the *Vipassana* and other works where they see an association with religious promotion. For instance, youth summer ordination camp, the BDP and the alumni monks in various communities have to seek their budget (BDP_S2, July 25, 2017).

However, as BDP_S4 indicated:

> The [organization] donors praised and accepted that there were many activities that the BDP and its alumni monks can do by themselves without using village funds or funds from donors. This potential was accepted by the donor (July 25, 2017).

One of the BDP's roles in the community is fundraising, where it acts as a coordinator and fundraiser, responding to the requests of their alumni and the community. Before completing the course, the BDP allowed each training monk/nun to submit a small grant proposal for their community initiative. The BDP accepts the community project proposals each year and then allocates funds to qualified proposals. However, most of the interviewees recognised that many communities can already run some activities by themselves. For example, the women's group at BB village is developing their local handicraft wisdom, transferred through generations, to sustain value, increase value and earn additional income. In this instance the BDP and monks can assist the group by facilitating fundraising for marketing. As BDP_S2 said:

> The community is only self-reliant in some activities, such as mushroom culture. The mat weaving has been longstanding practised by villagers. The BDP provides only assistance and helps with promotion because the trader has undersold the villagers. Thus, BDP helps to raise funds and increase sales, through sale exhibition and promotion (July 25, 2017).

In short, BDP has contributed to social change at the macro level in terms of changing social perceptions about the role of *Sangha*, from its traditional practice to the understanding of the *Sangha* duty (Pali: *dhura*) in the involvement of social development in the name of volunteer spirit. BDP therefore empowers its Sangha community and grassroots leadership. The BDP's goals of sustainability and self-reliance are likely to be achieved, especially because the BDP has already managed to ascertain self-reliant human resources and some self-funded activities.

Table 14: BDP's level of self-reliance and perspective on community self-reliance
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
What self-reliance goals has the BDP achieved? **Sub-questions:** • Where do the BDP teachers come from? • Where does the BDP get funds to support its work? • What activities does the BDP undertake, without or with, limited external financial support? • How does the BDP maintain its relationship with alumni network and communities?	**IMCFSC Model:** • BDP leadership in Buddhist initiative in communities. • BDP's degree of collective self-efficacy. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Level of BDP self-reliance or self-sustenance.	• BDP previously used spiritual masters from Thailand, but it now uses its own spiritual masters **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • BDP raised funds from donors and public donations. Donors do not fund moral teaching activities; they raised it from the general public. **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • Stopped relying on the services from Thai partners and uses its trained monks as spiritual masters to achieve a self-reliant organisation **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • Be a fundraiser and support for their alumni networks **[IMCFSC]**.

1.2. The perspectives of BVSC trainees at the BDP's Training Centre

This section reports the data collected from the focus group discussion with seven BVSC trainee monks and nuns (trainees). The trainees' perspectives contribute to my understanding of their expectations and perceptions about community development, as well as their catalyst roles in the community.

Aims and expectation from the training

The table below illustrates the aims and expectations of trainees, and the expected barriers to their community development activities. Understanding the aims and expectations of the trainees significantly contributes to understanding their overall participation in the BDP and engagement in community development.

Most trainees heard about the training course from their spiritual masters who are part of the BDP alumni network and *Sangha* organization. The alumni network spreads information about the training in the *Vipassana* meditation events. For example, BVSC_T1 and BVSC_T2 heard about the training course through their spiritual masters in the community and through *Vipassana* meditation events they attended. BVSC_T3 & T5 received information from alumni monks, while BVSC_T4, T5 and T7 were nominated by a provincial and district *Sangha* organisation. However, all trainees volunteered themselves to attend the training course:

> I volunteered myself to join this training course, [supported by] the nomination of the monks in the Sangha organisation of my district, who are alumni of the BDP. Also, I am personally interested in moral propaganda at temples and at village level, so I would like to enrich my knowledge and verbal skills. The district lacks personnel who can translate this knowledge from temple to … community level (BVSC_T5, July 26, 2017).

The most popular term used in the focus group discussion is 'moral teaching' or propagate '*Dhamma*'. This term impacts on the decision-making of all trainees undertaking the training. All trainees desire to learn more about Buddhist teachings and communication skills for *Dhamma* propaganda (they refer to the term *Dhamma* propaganda as 'moral teachings'). For instance, BVSC_T5 wishes:

> [To be involved in] promoting morality at temple and village level.

Likewise, BVSC_T3 wishes:

> [To learn more about] moral teachings and propaganda (July 26, 2017).

Although the trainees differed in background and knowledge, their expectations were similar. The group interview found that both monks and nuns expected to learn about teaching approaches of morality or propagating *Dhamma* (*see Table 10*). They are passionate about

transforming and developing their personal and interpersonal communication skills and about community development:

> I want to be a *Dhamma* and moral teacher or propagandist" (BVSC_T3) and I want to know the gist of Buddhism and propagating approaches (BVSC_T7).

The trainees' expectations could be divided into two levels based on their seniority and experience. Trainees who had a lot of experience in practical work and knowledge in *Dhamma* could explain their expectations to a more in-depth degree than junior trainees. For instance, BVSC_T7 said:

> I would like to bring this knowledge gain into practice, to inspire lay people to build the forest monastery. The temple has been ordained, so the knowledge gain from this course will fulfil and improve my work (July 26, 2017).

BVSC_T6 stated:

> I expect to continue what I have already started and play a role as Buddhist personnel. I expect to work with villagers … in the temple and village, to restore the forest and be a shade for people. Promoting *Sila-dhamma* practice will enhance unity and cultivate love (July 26, 2017).

Table 15: Trainee's essential knowledge gains, expectations, and potential barriers for their initiatives
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
What do trainee monks/nuns expect from the training course? **Sub-questions** • Where did you receive information about the training course from? • Why did you decide to join this training course? • Do you represent your community, district, province? • Did you nominate yourself? • What have you learned so far from this course? Or, what key knowledge have you gained from this course so far? • What is your plan after finishing this course?	**IMCFSC Model:** • Monks/nuns' leadership role in community initiatives. • Degree and equity of participation. • Level of information equity. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Level of BVSC network enhances flow of information. • Level of understanding moral teachings (*Sila*) or Buddhist approaches.	• Most trainees received information about the training or project through alumni monks and senior monks in district and provinces **[BA&IMCFSC].** • Trainees wanted to learn about moral teaching approaches, Buddhist ethics, mindfulness and *Vipassana* practice **[BA]**. • Most trainees voluntary and decided to join the training. Some of them represented provincial and district *Sangha* organizations **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • Most trainees have had a moral education and aim to inspire villagers to protect environment **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • Most trainees focus on providing

• What barriers do you think you might face when you start a development initiative in your community area? • What is your plan after finishing this course? • What barriers do you think will inhibit you and your community initiative after this course?		moral teachings **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • Trainees see the three big challenges as; Confidence in their *Dhamma* knowledge; Social trust due to being junior in *Vassa*; Local and traditional practices and misunderstandings of the *Sangha* role **[BA&IMCFSC]**.

Understandings of the Buddhist approaches

The trainees showed little knowledge of the goals of the BDP; however, most of them understand the ways in which they can apply *Dhamma* to help people in the community. During the group interview it was found that, while few trainees were aware of the goals of the BDP or were able to explain it, others could interpret how the goal works in practice. For instance, BVSC_T3 explained the role of the BDP is "to promote the Sangha role and engagement in practical works." Similarly, BVSC_T2 said "the *Sangha* [are] involved in community development to help liberate people from suffering."

Therefore, trainees understood the BDP's goal through its linkage with practical work or activities, such as providing moral classes at schools, and raising people's awareness of social issues. However, one trainee revealed a lack of knowledge about the goals of the BDP:

> The goal is to empower the *Sangha*'s role. It does not make sense for only practising sitting meditation; the monks should undertake and engage in community development to enhance its knowledge (BVSC_T3, July 26, 2017).

One theme which emerged in this analysis surrounded the terms 'moral teaching' and '*Dhamma* propaganda', which were frequently used by spiritual masters, staff members and trainees. The frequent use of these terms led me to question why they were important to the trainees, the community and to society overall. When probed, explanations for the terms' significance were expressed differently, including:

> [The] improvement of people's mindfulness (BVSC_T1).

> [To] create peace in the society and the world (BVSC_T2).

Two explanations were more in-depth. BVSC_T6 stated that:

> Morality relates to action (Pali: Karma). *Vipassana* (meditation) training will help us to escape from the Karma circle.

BVSC_T5 explained that in different dimensions morality relates to regularity and went on to explain the social aspects of the Five Precepts. BVSC_T5 referred to the Five Precept as 'social securities':

> *Sila* normalises our consistent good acts, including our speech and behaviour. Everybody must have *Sila* to live together. In other words, *Sila* can be compared to clothes covering our body. *Sila-dhamma* can be inserted into society, such as the Five Precepts. The first aspect of the Five Precepts is abstaining from killing and exploiting one another; this is the security of the society. The second aspect is abstaining from stealing one another's assets which compares to asset security; people will steal others' property without this aspect. The third aspect is abstaining from sexual misconducts; this can be understood as sexual abuse or human trafficking. The fourth aspect is abstaining from false speech; this is the fame security, credibility and sincerity people have for one another in the society. The last aspect is abstaining from intoxicants; it is health security. If people have morality, we will live together in peace. If we have morality, we do not need to close the door of our house because nobody will steal one another's property (BVSC_T5, July 26, 2017).

Trainees perceived that morality protects people from all vices (allurements). They believed that each aspect of the Five Precepts has a social value in itself, and if people stay away from the precepts, it leads to deterioration. For instance, alcohol or intoxicants can lead to a lack of mindfulness that can cause physical abuse and violence. One should know their own capacity for drinking, or otherwise, avoid it. BVSC_T2 argued that:

> Our society has many problems because people lack morality. Morality also links with individual duties (Lao: *nathee* or Pali: *dhura*), such as the duties of wife and husband, duties of children, duties of parents, as well as duties of monks/nuns" (July 26, 2017).

Morality teachings also raised people's awareness of other enticements such as technology:

> People … run after the technology, such as smart-phone and luxurious cars. They paid much money for a minor change in the product (BVSC_T3, July 26, 2017).

The following table summarises the trainees' understanding of the Buddhist approaches which underpin the BDP approaches to community development.

Table 16: Monks/nuns' level of understanding the Buddhist approaches
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
How do trainees perceive the BDP's goals, objectives and approaches? **Sub-questions:** • How much do you think you know about the BDP's approaches? • What best describes the Buddhist approaches to development? • Why are Buddhist moral teachings (*Sila*) essential for society?	**IMCFSC Model:** • BDP's level of knowledge and information equity among trainees. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Significance of moral teachings (*Sila*).	• Most trainees have less recognition of the goals and objectives of the BDP, but they know how to put their Buddhist teachings into practice **[IMCFSC]**. • Trainees did not know much about the BDP goals, but they are confident that they know the Buddhist approaches well **[IMCFSC]**. • The BDP interprets Buddhist morality and puts its mindfulness as the basis for approaching social development **[BA]**. • Morality contributes to a peaceful society and world. The social aspects of morality are the Buddhist Five Precepts (*Sila-ha*) **[BA]**.

Mapping monks and nuns' perceptions of community development and their positions and roles in the community

The below diagram (*see Figure 17*) illustrates, through problem-solving mapping, the trainee monks' and nuns' understanding of community development and how they perceive their position and their roles in the community. I invited the participants of the focus groups to join in with the mapping process.

The results of the workshop show that trainees are well aware of the issues within their communities, coming up with many issues such as drug abuse, forest destruction and chemical use. Looking specifically at the abuse of the drug meth-amphetamine, they determined that people use this drug because of individual attitudes and behaviours, teenage curiosity, and surrounding environments (such as peer pressure) (*see Figure 17*).

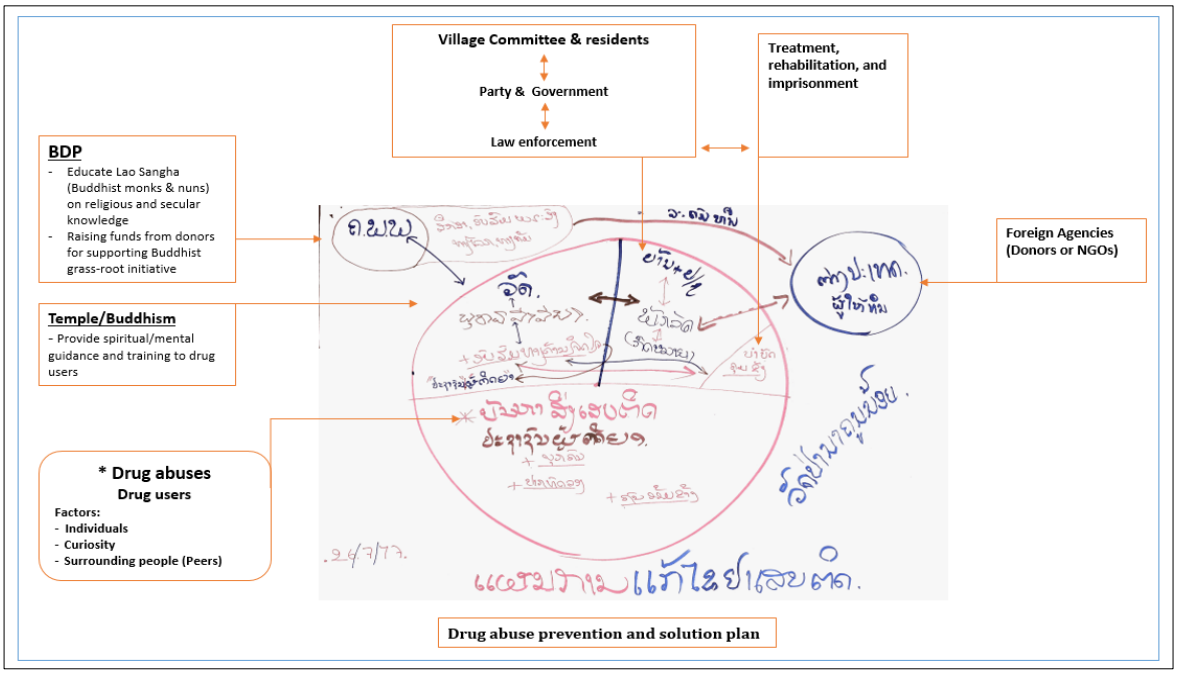
The trainees understood that community development occurs through three institutions; '*Wat*', '*Ban*' and the government. From their perspective, the *Wat* in Buddhism has two meanings (monks and temple ground), while *Ban* also has two meanings (*Sao-Ban* [villagers] and *Khana-Ban* [village committee]). The diagram below shows that the latter, the *Khana–Ban*, represent the legal authority of the Lao State-Party (*see Figure 17*). The trainees believed that the *Wat* and monks play an essential role in an attempt to prevent and address issues. Monks not only provide spiritual guidance, but they also raise awareness and clarify the impact of various

issues on villagers. Interestingly, the trainees put the government inside the circle, indicating that they perceived the government to be a part of their community.

Trainees think that the *Wat* is responsible for educating villagers and drug users using mental and spiritual training. The *Ban* (village committee) is responsible for legal actions and coordination with various government agencies, so if the circumstance is beyond the capacity of the monks and village, the village committee will coordinate with relevant government agencies to intervene and to solve the problem. For instance, drug users are sent for treatment, rehabilitation or even detainment. The trainees put the BDP and foreign assistance outside the circle as outsiders, because the BDP is a central organization and its roles is to train *Lao Sangha* in secular (social issues) and religious knowledge, and to raise funds from various foreign donors to support their activities. Foreign donors donate money via the BDP and the BDP allocate funds through *Wat* (monks) to various communities.

Trainees identified the relationship between actors and process. They explain that *Wat* (monks) function as spiritual refuges, while *Sangha* is a spiritual educator at pre and post treatment, or imprisonment. The *Wat* and *Ban* collaboratively attempt to solve the problem and the *Wat* also helps to raise funds for community work (*see Figure 17)*.

Figure 17: Mapping issue identification and solution by BVSC trainees at Wat-pa-Nakhoun-noi Centre
Source: Redrawn by author



In summary of this first section, the following key findings and observations are made. BVSC approaches highlight the concept of equitable participation and inclusiveness, yet faces challenges in the equity of the selection process and knowledge gaps among the BDP trainees. Buddhist morality and ethics (Lao: *Sila*) is a core Buddhist approach which informs the concept of BVSC. Most nuns and monks consider themselves to be internal to the community, where they involve themselves in every stage of the community development process.

These findings provide initial evidence for answering the research questions about participatory communication aspects in Buddhist development approaches, levels of sustainability and self-reliance, and barriers and challenges. Therefore, these findings provide grounding for an understanding of the practical work which the trained monks at BVSC (*Ban Bungsanthueng*) undertake. This practical work is discussed further in the following section.

Table 17: Trainees' perception of community development and their positions and roles
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
How do monks perceive community development and their roles in the community? **Sub-questions:** • What are the key social issues in their community? • How do monks and nuns perceive community development? • How do monks and nuns see themselves in the community? • With regard to social development, what roles do monks and nuns consider they fulfil? • What role does the BDP play in the development initiatives of the alumni monks from the perspectives of trainees?	**IMCFSC Model:** • Monks and nuns' perception/ understandings of community development. • Monks/nuns' catalyst role in community. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Level of monks'/nuns' mindfulness. • Buddhist catalyst/spiritual role in addressing social issues.	• Trainees are aware of issues challenging the community. Drug abuse is listed as the top issue that monks are aware of **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • Monks understand community development through the cooperation between *Wat* (temple and monks), *Ban* (village committee and villagers) and the government **[IMCFSC]**. • Monks and nuns see themselves as community insiders **[IMCFSC]**. • They also see that *Wat* or *Sangha* play a spiritual role that is essential for preventing and solving problems **[BA]**. • Monks and nuns see the BDP as external to the community, which trains *Lao Sangha* and helps to raise funds. It does not form a part of the community, but it has direct relationships with monks/nuns **[IMCFSC]**.

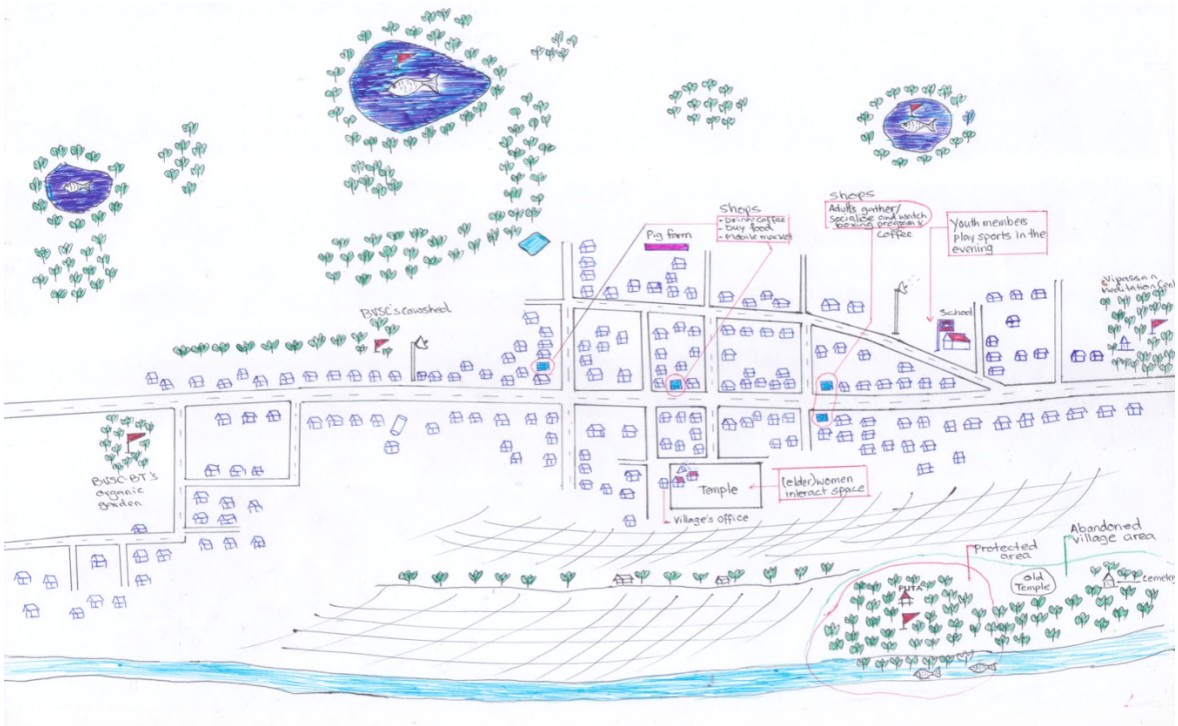
2. Buddhist Volunteer Spirit for *Ban Bungsanthueng* Community [the Buddhist Initiative]

This section presents the findings collected through the social mapping of the *Ban Bungsanthueng* and interviews of the Buddhist Initiative leaders and members.

2.1. Geo-social mapping of the *Ban Bungsanthueng*

For this research, I carried out two months of non-participant observations within the community under study. The data came from the mapping, personal observations, field notes and diaries that I collected during my two-month stay in the village. For the first two weeks, I spent time with monks and members of the Buddhist Initiative and hand-drew the community map (*see Figure 18*). Monks assisted me with the mapping by taking me to different areas related to their project around the village. Children also helped me to understand aspects I had missed in the mapping. The geo-social mapping revealed data about the impacts of Buddhism, community life, and women's' roles, which manifest through the social function of the *Wat*. This, in turn, contributes to knowledge of participatory communication in a Buddhist context. The following image is a scanned photo of the hand-drawn community geo-social map.

Figure 18: Mapping geographical and social dimensions of the Ban Bungsanthueng community
Source: Author



Mapping local history and community life

In this research, drawing the geo-social community map provided in-depth information on the journey of Buddhism in the village, and how much it has impacted on village life, such as tradition and culture. It also helps to communicate the social complexity of the community, which will be further discussed in the next chapter.

The present location of the village is a new location. The village was moved approximately 100 years ago from its previous location situated to the south of the present location. This previous site is well known to the villagers as '*Ban Hang*' (abandoned village), as '*Ban*' is a Lao word which refers to 'village' in English. The *Ban Hang* is located 1km from the present village and between *Hor Ban* or *Don Hor* (the house of the village guardian spirit or *Puta*) and *Pasa Yai* (the old village cemetery), while the old temple ground is situated at the centre of the *Ban Hang*.

Local concerns about propitious location and village design were the main reasons the village was relocated. The villagers believed that it was not good for *Ban* and the welfare of villagers (*Sao-ban*) if the *Ban* was designed or located in between *Hor Ban*, *Wat* and *Pasa* (the cemetery). They believed that the village was burdened and that this would be harmful to its destiny and well-being. The outbreak of disease caused some deaths in the village and the villagers believed this was a result of the displacement of the village. Therefore, they decided to relocate the village it to its current location.

Drawing on personal observations as a community member, I perceive there to be an additional reason for the change in the geographical location of the village. The abandoned village area was in a lower place near a marsh, while the current location is in a higher place. During the rainy season, the Mekong River rises and pushes more water into the marsh, so paddy fields in the area are flooded. As a result, the Ban Hang (abandoned village) is annually at risk of flooding and this natural phenomenon could be another contributing factor for the relocation of the village. The BVSC_BTL5 (village shaman), a person who communicates with the great ancestor spirits (Lao: *Puta*) explained:

> The village was formerly located in the Ban Hang (abandoned village), it was moved to the current place around nearly two hundred years ago; however, I am not sure about the exact time. There was a disease outbreak which killed many people in the village. There was a traditional belief and strategy that Ban (village) should not be located between the cemetery,

> temple ground and Hor Ban (village guardian spirit house). It was [decided] that this incompatibility with the traditional beliefs made the villagers live unhappily (November 18, 2017).

BVSC_BTL2 discussed a similar reason in an in-depth interview:

> I cannot remember well what happened at the time. I only heard from senior villagers that the village was earlier at the Ban Hang (abandoned village). The reason behind the relocation was an outbreak of contagious disease; if I am not wrong, it was smallpox. The disease spread very fast, and many people died because the medical service was only traditional, not advanced like these days. If it happens today, I think nobody would die (November 13, 2017).

The majority of the villagers moved to the new village location, while a minority moved to neighbouring villages. The *Ban*, *Wat*, and *Pasa* were also moved to new places, but the *Hor Ban* remains at the same place. They followed the traditional belief that the *Wat* must be relocated in the centre of the village, while the *Pasa* must be relocated to the south of the village. The *Hor Ban* is now located to the southwest of the village, and with this relocation the village is not burdened. In this regard, the *Wat* has been an integral part of the community's beliefs and traditional practices, which impacts the welfare of every member of the community.

The table below presents data about the local history of *Ban Bungsanthueng*, one of the findings from the geo-social mapping.

Table 18: Answer summary of local history finding from the mapping
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
What roles has Buddhism played in the village? **Sub-questions:** • Where is the old location of the village? • What was the reason for moving the village? • What happened in the village at that time?	**IMCFSC Model:** • Degree and equity of participation in changes of decision-making. • Catalyst roles in community. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** ▪ Co-existence of Buddhism and traditional belief.	**Previous location:** • Abandoned village area is located to the south of the present village location. *Hor Ban* (village guardian spirit house) was to the north of the abandoned village. The old cemetery was to the south of the abandoned village. The *Wat* (temple ground) was in the centre of the old village **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • Unpropitious location of the village defeated the welfare of the villagers because *Hor Ban, Wat* and cemetery burdened the village **[BA&IMCFSC]**. **Reason for replacement:** • Outbreak of contagious disease (smallpox) caused deaths in the village **[IMCFSC]**.

Figure 19: Monks cleaning the surrounding area of the Puta's house (left) and pointing to the demarcation of the protected area (right)
Source: Author

Co-existing animism and Buddhist practices

I also observed the traditional rituals and ceremonies in the village, such as the death rituals, to understand the structural relationships in the community. I found that the villagers carry out well organised rituals, with ritual roles and responsibilities assigned to individual members, especially amongst relatives. For example, there were two death rituals or cremations during my stay at the village. As soon as a person died, the village headman notified villagers about the death via the village loudspeaker (Lao: *Tholakhong*). Then, the villagers began to gather at the dead person's house and assist in the rituals.

Whilst observing, I noticed that women played a vital role in this kind of ritual. Young and adult women, especially daughters-in-law, dealt mainly with food, especially cooking, serving and cleaning, with the men's help. A group of (older) women were responsible for preparing the necessary materials for religious activities and took the lead in the religious procedures. For instance, they led the religious ceremony and chanted to entreat monks to deliver a sermon. On the other hand, a group of young men, especially sons-in-law, were responsible for preparing sites for rituals and cremation. The host had to arrange food for all the visitors who come to assist and share condolences throughout the event. Notably, people contributed money to the host which is known to the villagers as '*moh (kin) tharn*' (giving). With this type of village welfare, every household rotates the monetary contribution, to share in the family's financial costs for the cremation.

In this ritual, monks were invited to the event and played a spiritual part. They gave the last sermon (*Sutta*) to both the dead person and the living. Buddhists believe that listening to the last *Sutta* about the natural world and rules helps to release the spirit of the dead person from the current world. This also spiritually relieves the relatives' suffering over the loss of their beloved one. Monks teach that the reality and nature of this world is based on the rule of *Tri-Lakkhana* (the three characteristics of existence); 1) impermanence (Pali: *Aniccatā*), 2) incompleteness (Pali: *Dukkhatā*), and 3) no-self (Pali: *Anattatā*). In other words, our body and life rises, stays and falls at the end.

Figure 20: Spirit house situated inside the Buddhist Initiative organic garden (top) and a banana basket of food people offered to monks to generate merit from the ancestor spirits in the Buddhist festival in the Ban Bungsanthueng (bottom).
Source: Author

Community life

The *Wat* is the village centre of interaction and community life, especially for older, adult women. Its social functions include birth and death activities, and it serves as a public, community space for political and cultural communication activities.

Most households in the village coexist as groups of relatives or kin and have mostly built houses close to each other in their inherited land area from their ancestors. During the fieldwork, I walked through the village talking to people and observing that they associate themselves with their family group. BVSC_BTL5 said:

> Most villagers are relatives; there were two main family trees in the village, and then they were spread out within the village and to neighbouring villages when the village was moved from the abandoned village (November 18, 2017).

I observed that the villagers mostly communicated through interpersonal interaction (*see Figure 21*). Groups of adult men gathered at the shops in the morning for a coffee and a talk. During my stay, I walked to the shops regularly, where I heard conversations mainly about their daily living activities and current affairs. In the mornings and evenings, shops were crowded as villagers came to buy food and other necessities (*see Figure 21)*. There was also a group of teenagers, most of whom are students, who sold lottery tickets and gathered at the shops after finishing their work.

Although the villagers regularly visit the market in the district's main town, which is 10km from the village, they also access food via the stores in the village and mobile market pick-up (*see Figure 21*). They sometimes cross the border to Thailand to buy food and appliances on the market days. According to villagers, the mobile market pick-up comes every Monday and Thursday because the Thai markets, located on the Mekong Riverside of Thailand, are open these two days. The market was made available for both Lao and Thai small merchants to exchange and sell local products between the two nations. *Ban Bungsanthueng* sometimes sell homemade and other local produce there.

Figure 21: Villagers were buying food at the shop in the centre of the village (left) and a mobile market pick-up that comes to the village every Monday and Thursday (right) Source: Author

The role of women and the Wat

Women, both adults and girls, gather daily at the *Wat* (temple) to make breakfast and lunch offers to the monks. The village has put in place a roster according to units (Lao: *Nuai* or *Jou*) to take turns offering meals to the monks each day. I observed that people who brought food to the monks were mostly older women. They interacted, joined a meal and would sometimes take food home. Women appeared to interact more during this activity and the monks sometimes participated in the conversation. The conversation was conducted in a way that enriched the villagers' knowledge because it is usually an exchange activity.

Supporting monks is a broad responsibility and the duty of every member of the community. I used the word 'broad' here to specify that it is an assignment for all villagers and a collective responsibility, but it also depends on individual choice. The villagers believe that their ancestors would receive merit if they generate credit with monks by offering food and other goods. In this case, monks then communicate the merit to the spirit of their ancestors. I noted that monks redistributed most of the food and items to villagers in their shared meals (*see Figure 22*). In addition, the *Wat* is also a space for elder women who visit the temple on the holy day to participate as temporary nuns after observing the Buddhist precepts and practicing internal meditation (*bhavana-vipassana*). Monks and the women engage in dialogic in the form of *Dhamma* talk.

The following table describes the social and environmental relations of *Ban Bungsanthueng*, and identifies the social roles of monks and the function of the *Wat*.

Table 19: The village social networks and the monks, nuns and Wat social functions in the community
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcome	Summary
How does Buddhism impact on village life? **Sub-questions:** • How are members of the community connected? • How do people access the information in the village? • For what purposes do villagers use the temple ground? • Who is using the temple space the most? • How do monks impact village life?	**IMCFSC Model:** • Catalyst role in the village. • Level of information equity. • Degree and equity of participation of villagers in various activities. • Village communication ecosystem. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Features of Buddhist community life. • Spiritual role of the temple. • Monks' spiritual role in community life.	• Villagers live as a group of kin or relatives. Almost all households are related, so they live in sisterhood and brotherhood **[BA]**. • Villagers exchange information based on daily interactions at the *Wat*, and shops are also a central communication space **[IMCFSC]**. • Temple ground is a collective space. Villagers, especially young and elder women, meet and exchange information and knowledge in the morning, at lunch time, and on Buddhist holy days **[BA].** • The *Wat* functions as an informal religious village school, and as a space for community communication, participation in village meetings, dissemination of information and knowledge, sharing of food, and as a spiritual refuge of the village **[BA&IMCFSC]**.

Figure 22: Village offerings to monks on Buddhist holy days
Source: Author

Mapping the link between the *Wat* with village information sources and communication tools

Apart from being a community centre of communication, the *Wat* has also been used as the village centre for information dissemination. It can be considered as an informal community education institution alongside the local state school. In fact, in the 1990s, the *Wat* was used as a formal village school because there were not enough rooms in the state school. At the state school at that time Monks were teachers, as well as spiritual guides (Pali: *Dhamma*) at the temple. They set the example of how to live a good life through cultivating proper conduct and promoting love, generosity and solidarity. I heard from many villagers whom I talked to that monks want to strengthen love, aid and solidarity within the village.

There are many information spaces and communication tools located inside and outside around the *Wat*. There is a community library located inside the temple ground which was funded by the German Embassy in Laos under the Buddhist development initiatives (*see Figure 23*). Although there is a village office, most village meetings and dissemination of information and knowledge are still hosted at the *Wat*. The meetings are sometimes organised at the headman's house or shops at the centre of the village.

Figure 23: Community library (top right), the handicraft heritage exhibition hall(top left), Tholakhong (loudspeaker) tower (bottom right), and village administration office and information bulletin located in the temple ground (bottom left)
Source: Author

Village communication tools

Within the village, people communicate through daily interactions, mobile phones and internet, whilst the *tholakhong* (loudspeaker) is used as formal channel for public communication (*see Figure 23*).

Face-to-face communication remains vital to daily access to information. Shops are places where people gather in the mornings and evenings to share stories happening around the village and the neighbouring villages. The *Wat* is another place where people, especially elder women, visit every morning to offer food to the monks, and it becomes a centre of assembly when there are religious events. Villagers use the space to interact, express love, solidarity and generosity, share general information and engage in customs and traditional practices. Additionally, small groups of people also like gathering and interacting at someone's house each day. This practice can be seen widely and regularly in the village. Thus, shops, *Wat*, and individual houses serve as significant social spaces for the villagers' communication.

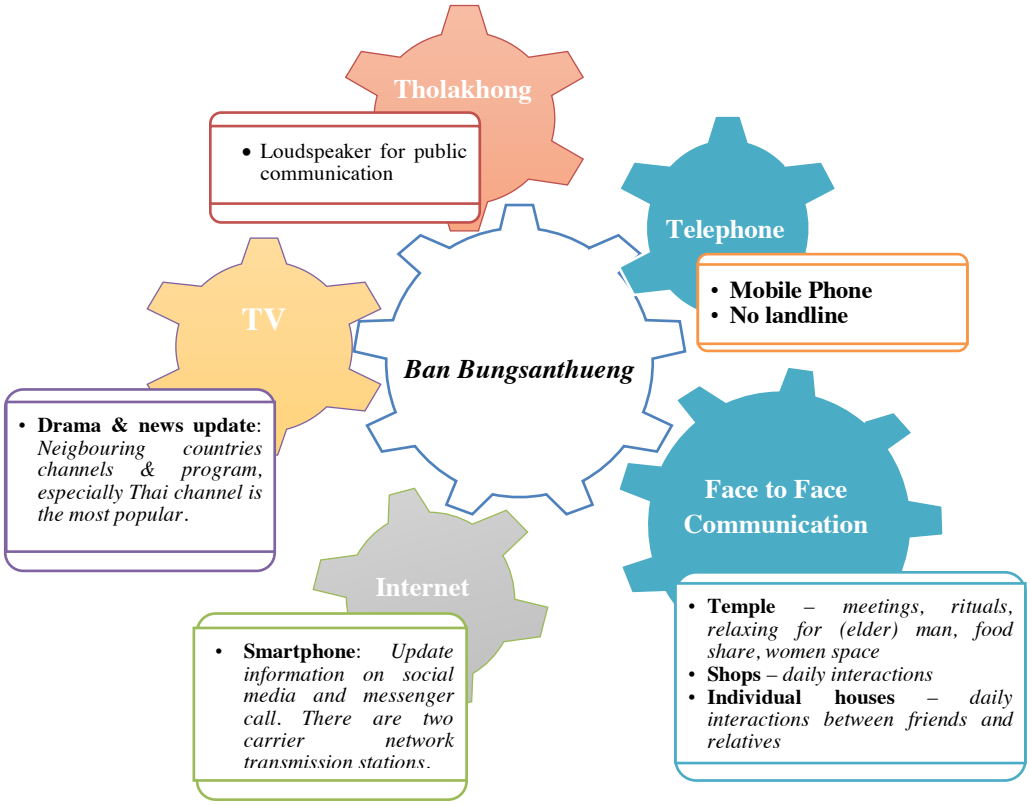
Mobile phones also play an important role in the life of villagers, mostly amongst youth. As mentioned in chapter one, a number of the village members work in Thailand, so a mobile phone is vital for staying connected to family who work abroad. There are two mobile network transmission stations located in the village. These enhance the villagers' access to information via the internet and impact on the villagers' life, especially young members (*see Figure 24*). Most youth members are able to access the internet, and villagers are likely to connect with family and children in Thailand via the internet rather than a mobile phone which costs a lot of money.

Figure 24: Mobile network transmission stations situated in the village
Source: Author

Thailand has largely influenced the village life through an outflow of labour. The Thai media has also partly impacted on the villagers' communications, including through language. This is because Thai television programs are very popular because Lao media is a recent development which does not always reach remote areas. The villagers enjoy watching dramas, television shows and current affairs, which they then share with their friends in the village. This has become a regular social activity in the village.

The *tholakhong* tower is a tool used by the village committee, and sometimes monks, to formally transfer information to villagers, and is located inside the temple ground (*see Figure 23*). Apart from village meetings, villagers mostly receive information about state policies, regulations and other legislatures through this channel. Monks sometimes use this channel to deliver *Dhamma*, especially on the Buddhist holy days, when they play audio of *Dhamma* talks in the early morning. They also use it to invite villagers to the temple or announce activities for the day. *Tholakhong* is a favoured tool in the rural areas of Laos and it can even be compared to community radio. The information system within *Ban Bungsanthueng*, based on the above findings, appears in the diagram below.

Figure 25: Ban Bungsanthueng communication and information flow
Source: Author



In brief, the evidence from my observations shows that the *Wat* is a participatory space, spiritual refuge and centre for village communication and information. This finding ties well with the findings from the local history mapping exercise, which suggested that the wat must be situated in the centre of the village where it has geographical, social and spiritual purpose.

2.2. Perspectives of the Buddhist Initiative leaders

This part of the chapter presents findings from the interviews with the principal leaders of each group within the Buddhist Initiative. It presents the purpose of the Buddhist Initiative, the monks' approaches to participation and negotiation of traditional practices, levels of participation in the Buddhist Initiative activities, and selection of group leaders and members. Findings from this section contribute to an understanding of Buddhist participatory approaches and as a catalyst for social change.

Purpose of the Buddhist Initiative

The project keeps the same title with the BDP's training course as 'Buddhist Volunteer Spirit for Community' (Lao: *Jit-asa-Sao-Buddha-phue-soumxon*), and they just added their village name '*Ban Bungsanthueng*' to make it particular to their community. BVSC_BTL1 stated that "The project is a part of BDP and under its supervision" (September 5, 2017).

Although engagement in community development is the duty of monks and the *Sangha* community, the key actors in community development remain the formal organisations such as the village committee. It is for this reason that the monks formed the 'Buddhist Volunteer Spirit', as an alternative approach to community development.

The purpose of the Buddhist Initiative is to enable an environmentally friendly, united and morally conscious community. I found that all activities the monks are doing with the villagers are interconnected with two components. The first component is a training of the mind, which is undertaken through the organisation of *Vipassana* meditation sessions on every Buddhist holy day, and through which a moral teaching is communicated. The second component is a developmental intervention which is organised by the villagers and/or members of the project, but under the monk's guidance.

The monk tries to encourage the villagers to avoid or reduce using chemical products, such as fertiliser and pesticide in their agricultural activities, by raising awareness of the link between themselves, their daily activities and the environment. He demonstrated this method with a trial organic farming garden, where integrated crops were non-chemically grown to cope with the insecurity of food sources. The BVSC_BTL1 stated that:

> Cultivating integrated farming is better than mono-cropping because it will ensure food security and provide options for villagers so that they are resilient (September 5, 2017).

BVSC_BTL1-3 and 4 also agreed that:

> The level of the villagers' awareness of environmental issues is raised, but they still couldn't change their behaviour right away. It must take time.

Whereas BVSC_BTL1 highlighted that:

> Taking action might take [a] longer time, but it is good, at least, they are aware of it (September 5, 2017).

Leaders appear to have limited recognition and understanding of the overall project purpose, in accordance with the BDP goals for community. None of the leaders mentioned the primary goal of the project, but they could explain the goal of the particular group which they belonged to. For example, BVSCB-L2, who is a leader of the BT-WHI, explained that:

> The goal of the project is first to preserve and develop the longstanding wisdom [and] heritage of the village and pass it onto young generations. Also, the second [goal] is to generate additional income for women in the village, to help to share their family's financial burden (September 7, 2017).

The term 'become developed' was widely used by leaders who perceived that all activities undertaken were for 'developing' the village, with the ultimate goal to 'become developed'. This focus on development led me to explore how the villagers define this term and in what ways the community desired to achieve it. The understanding and the ability to explain the meaning of 'development' is different amongst leaders, especially the women. Although the women seemed to understand the term, they were more limited in verbalizing that understanding. For example, the phrases used by BVSC_BTL2 were:

> To modernise, to promote development, and to generate additional income (Personal communication, November 13, 2017).

BVSC_BTL3 used the phrases:

> People are moral, united, and harmonised in action … to have an additional income (September 9, 2017).

The following table summarises the perspectives of key leaders of the Buddhist Initiative about the establishment and purpose of the Buddhist Initiative.

Table 20: Perspectives of key leaders of the Buddhist Initiative about the establishment of the initiative Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
How was the Buddhist Initiative established? What is its purpose? **Sub-questions:** • What inspired you to establish the Buddhist Initiative? • Where did you get support to establish this project or did you establish it by yourself? • What project initiative are you currently working on? • How did you choose the project initiative to work on? • Why did you choose to work on this initiative? • What new development approach is new to you? • What do you want to achieve from the project initiative? • In your opinion, what change have you made since you participated in the project initiative?	**IMCFSC model:** • A catalyst or leadership role in initiating the project and identifying issues in the community. • Information equity among key informants about existing issues in the community and their understanding of the Buddhist approach. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Monks' characteristics and approaches to development. • Right Intention (Pali: *Samma-sankappa*) in setting up the project and addressing issues. • Right View (Pali: *Samma-ditthi*) among key informants of the project goal. • Awareness (Pali: *Sati*) of key leaders on issues and solutions.	• The village initiated the project themselves and were inspired by the trained monk to restore *Sila-dhamma* [moral teachings] and protect the environment in the village **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • The project includes *Sila-dhamma* teachings, *Vipassana* meditation practice, women's handicraft, environmental protection, organic farming and animal culture **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • The activities were processed through discussion and collective decision-making by various stakeholders **[IMCFSC]**. • The villagers want to sustain and transfer their local wisdom and raise people's awareness about environmental impact. However, most leaders were lacking knowledge of the exact project goals and objectives **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • Leaders see that the Buddhist approaches are different and do fit within the context of their village, and they witnessed some changes **[BA&IMCFSC]**.

Monks' negotiation of the participation in the community

Initially, the monk at the village acted as a spiritual teacher who led villagers to practice *Samadha-bhavana* or *Vipassana-bhavana or* meditation (spiritual training) on Buddhist holy days. The monk urged villagers, specifically young people, to gather at the temple and do activities together, in order to sway young people from enticement and encourage them to do things for the community. The monk engaged villagers in Buddhist practice for a period, and then formed a group of children as a Buddhist volunteer spirit group. He taught the children how to behave appropriately and in the spirit (awareness) of working for the community, and to value the environment and natural resources. The work began with cleaning and repairing the road,

growing organic vegetables and producing compost fertiliser in pursuit of the 'green community' goal. BVSC_BTL3, who is one of the initiative leaders, explained:

> After the monk completed his study at Vientiane, he did not begin his development work immediately, but he took two years to observe the community. During the time, I saw that he only urged villagers, including children, to visit the temple, especially on Buddhist holy days, to listen to his *Dhamma* talk and practice meditation. Then he set up a Buddhist volunteer group of which members are all children. He led them to work, such as cleaning the road, growing vegetables and producing compost. After that, the adult villagers observed and [were] more often involved in those activities (September 9, 2017).

The monk lived for several years in the village before officially intervening with development activities. In 2013, the monk invited village committees to discuss and approve his intention to initiate the development work, before inviting villagers for meetings. He facilitates and consults all activities under the Buddhist Initiative. BVSC_BTL2 emphasised that:

> The monk is the person who brought funds to our Women's Handicraft Initiative [BT-WHI], and he also facilitates and guides our group (September 7, 2017).

BVSC_BTL3 stated that:

> Every activity must have the monk as chairman [of the] board, his name must be shown first in the organisational chart. He takes care of, and gives counsel for, the whole project" (September 9, 2017).

Although the villagers identified themselves as Buddhist, they firmly hold on to their traditional belief systems and practices. Resultantly, the integration of the two spiritual traditions has led to a blend of Buddhist and local traditional practices. This mixture is a challenging factor for the monk when initiating development work. BVSC_BTL1 stated that:

> Some villagers' behaviours are not in line with traditional customs and practice; we need to direct them to the right way, for instance, [against] deforestation for agriculture.

Recently, the village forest has been vastly destroyed, and the trees were slashed-and-burned for agricultural purposes. Furthermore, the villagers also used chemicals heavily:

> The severe problems in the village are deforestation, such as cutting trees in private farming. It is now hard to find big trees. In addition to the deforestation, the health issue has become more concerning. The villagers used chemical products in their agriculture, such as for vegetable growth. This behaviour harms the health of the villagers. Toward this issue, the monk spearheaded the compost production as an alternative to chemical fertilizer. However, the majority of villagers do not want to use it because it does not give a good quality product, so the trader will not buy it (BVSC_BTL3, September 9, 2017).

To respond to the deforestation, the monk called the village committee and villagers for a meeting to discuss environmental issues, make a decision and take action. In this meeting, the monk clarified to the villagers the need for environmental protection and reforestation. The meeting concluding by agreeing to take the village's sacred forest (the forest situated in the *Puta*'s house) as a reserved forest, but they would need permission from the *Puta* (the *Puta* is a spirit and protector of the village and the well-being of the villagers). The villagers communicated with the *Puta* through the village shaman, who is his medium. The villagers and monk organised the ceremony at the *Puta* forest for the permission, and negotiated the boundary of the protected and reserved area. According to BVSC_BTL5, who is the shaman:

> Initially, the monk and villagers have come to meet and stated their purpose that they wanted to protect, reforest, and reserve the sacred forest. They asked me to communicate their intention with the *Puta*. On the day of the ceremony the *Puta* occupied my body, so I became his medium. The monk and villagers negotiated with the *Puta* directly through me as the medium body. He granted them his permission and pointed [out] the boundary so that the monk and villagers could demarcate [it]. He instructed not to make a fence because there is no exit for him. The trespassing on the area is not permitted for villagers (Personal communication, November 18, 2017).

At first, the monk and villagers tied the monastic robe around the trees to indicate that those trees were ordained by monks. They chanted and ordained the whole forest, including some areas of the marsh and the old cemetery of the abandoned village connected to the sacred forest. Later, *Puta* asked the monk to remove the robe because it dwarfed his power, as Buddhism and spirits operate in different worlds.

> The *Puta* told me later to ask the monk to remove the monastic robe because it prohibited him, and the monks were not allowed to put a monastic robe [on the tree] and practice *Bhavana* (*Vipassana* meditation) in the forest because the monastic world and the spirit world are

different. However, the forest can be ordained (BVSC_BTL5, Personal communication, November 18, 2017).

Removing the monastic robe did not impact on the protection of the forest because the villagers strictly believed in the sanctity of the *Puta*. Furthermore, they had already committed, during the ordination ritual, not to trespass in the area. However, the monk is planning to locate the *Naga* head in the marsh area, not inside the forest, to symbolically show that the area has a protector (*see Figure 26*). The *Naga* is believed to be an animal of sanctity and a protector of the river and has a firm connection with Buddhism. Monks expect that the belief in the sanctity of the *Naga* will help to prevent people from catching fish and hunting animals in the area. However, many villagers and the monk told me that every villager could collect forest products in the sacred forest, such as bamboo shoots and other vegetables, although they should verbally notify the *Puta* of what they wanted as well.

Figure 26: A monk is painting a Naga head (left)
and a monk is pointing at a nameplate of the protected area (right)
Source: Author

Many areas surrounding the village, including shared borders with other villages, are marked as protected and conserved areas. Those neighbouring villages were also included in the decision-making process of defining the boundaries of the area, and also committed to the conditions of protection and conservation. This initiative includes many activities, such as reforestation, boundary defining, and land and aquatic animal protection, which combine traditional beliefs and Buddhist rituals.

This provides evidence of how the monk has succeeded in raising awareness, and also how he has established a trusting relationship where he can rely on the cooperation of the villagers to

sustainably use local resources. Additionally, it demonstrates how the monk expanded his BVSC network to other surrounding villages, which then lead to a concerted effort about the responsible use of shared natural resources.

Level of participation

This section refers specifically to the level, equity, gender and leadership component of this participation. These elements are then presented in detail further below.

Level and equity of participation in activities under the BVSC

The level and equity of participation in various activities of the Buddhist Initiative is varied. Participation in activities or groups funded by an external donor, such as the Women's Handicraft Initiative [BT-WHI], is limited because the funding is not sufficient to cover all members of the village. The current number of members in the BT-WHI is 15, who received preliminary funds for initiating their weaving activity over period of two years. They then extended their membership to other women's groups in the village.

By comparison, more villagers participated in events jointly organised by the village and monks. For example, over 100 villagers of different ages and gender attended the forest protection and conservation initiative, and activities related to the promotion of morality. Although these activities received some material support, the opportunity was open to all community members. For example, the BDP provided the village with plants for the reserved forest and garden, and this led to a commitment from each household to contribute their plants too. According to BVSC_BTL4:

> To raise people's awareness of environmental protection, the villagers reached an agreement that every household is committed to contributing at least two young plants to plant in the reserved forest and pilot garden.

In addition, BVSC_BTL2 added that:

> The reforestation project was the project that got the highest number of people attending (Personal communication, November 13, 2017).

Gender and participation in village and the Buddhist Initiative activities

The proportion of participants in the activities organised by the monks or villagers is different to the proportions of participants in the activities organised and funded by donors. Elders, adults and children attended the activity organised by the monk, of which women and girls participated in higher numbers. This also seems to apply to the participants in the *Vipassana* meditation practice at the temple, which is mostly attended by women. BVSC_BTL1 explained that:

> It is hard for men to stay and observe precepts at the temple when compared to women. They are busy with finding food, and they think that it is … for women to deal with the temple. Nonetheless, men frequently attended the events or activities that required more physicality (September 5, 2017).

On the other hand, men liked attending events such as village meetings because it is perceived as part of the role of the head of the family. Notably, in the village committee's announcement which invites villagers to the meetings, the phrase 'head of the family' is mentioned. This practice reinforces the conviction that participation in village work, including meetings and official activities, is the responsibility of the men who are seen as the traditional leaders of the family. Women attended such events on behalf of their husband and family, if their husbands had another engagement. Therefore, the proportion of women participating in the village's administration appeared to be less than in cultural and religious work. Thus, the temple provides a space for women's participation that is limited in official village gatherings.

Selection process of group leaders

The selection process of the leaders for each group is based on a discussion involving monks and village committees. The selecting criteria are based on the connection the person has with the role they play in the community and the community's trust. The leader of the forest protection and conservation, who was also a shaman, was selected because of his connection to the forest, seniority and respected status so they trusted in his leadership when dealing with matters of the forest and spiritual communications. Throughout his role as a medium for the *Puta*, he was involved in protecting the forest, so he was considered as the right person to lead the activity. The monk, and other monks in the temple, provide support by mobilising villagers to participate, by coordinating funds with external donors (such as the BDP), and by participating themselves in such events. As BVSC_BTL1 described:

> After discussing and selecting an appropriate leader who has [the] relevant experience for the role, the village committee and villagers voted. The leaders of each group, such as forest protection and conservation, were just structurally appointed, but in fact, all villagers worked together, so everyone played a [part in selecting the] leadership (September 5, 2017).

The perspective of BVSC_BTL2 about the group leader's selection was the same as BVSC_BTL1 (stated above). BVSC_BTL4, who is the village headman, appears to endorse a more formal procedure, as witnessed through his choice of language:

> We appointed [a] responsible committee … [with a] voting ballot … attended by district officials and various committees.

Perspectives of leadership

The project leaders understood leadership to be based on an 'act' or 'action'. The leader should be able to demonstrate to the group or community effective ways of 'doing' and a willingness to 'do' alongside the rest of the community. Concurrently, the leader should also be a role model which means the leader should behave appropriately in order to build faith and trust with the community. As BVSC_BTL2 described:

> The leader must be a person who always stands at the front and leads people to take action and is a role model for people. The village recognises very well who is the leader for various activities. The leadership in the village [is] divided into various aspects, such as traditional and customary leadership and village administration (Personal communication, November 13, 2017).

Evidence from this research indicates that the monk was trusted in his leadership for the community development work. The villagers trusted him because they had witnessed his behaviour and his capacity to put his words into practice. The monk was able to provide guidance and to help solve conflicts between the village committee, groups and members. The position he was placed in by the villagers allowed him the power to negotiate disputes amongst groups and members. The leadership of the monk could be described through a phrase like 'the monk leads by doing'. According to BVSC_BTL3:

> This project has been brought [about] by the monk from the WNTC[10]. He has led the village to implement [changes] for around four years, and he also did everything [himself] (September 9, 2017).

His leadership was evident right at the very beginning of the project when he introduced the approach to the community, then initiated, spearheaded and managed various issues. The spiritual leadership of the monk was described through his impact on people's behaviour and awareness. He encouraged people to understand the significance and value of contributing to the community through collective action. For example, BSVCBT-L2 stated:

> The monk can do it; he could change the person who was a bad person to become a good one. When he does it, he does it so seriously. He encouraged people to think and do it for future generations (September 7, 2017).

The following table summarises the approaches the trained monk used in stimulating the villagers' participation in the project.

Table 21: The monk' approaches to community participation
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
What project initiatives did the villagers have the most equitable participation in? **Sub-questions:** • What project initiative did the villagers actively participate in? • Who are the leaders of the project? • Who are the leaders of your project initiative? • In your opinion, why did community members participate more in the project initiative than in others? • How were leaders of the project initiatives/activities selected? • How were decisions	**IMCFSC model:** • Members' degree and equity of participation in the project or issues. • Social norms: Norms on participation and leadership can be informed through joining various activities. • Sense of ownership: The importance of the issues to participants, their contribution to the program, community needs. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Social harmony underpinned by concepts of collective ownership and responsibility. • The impacts of *Sila* (morality) on social rules of participation and leadership.	• Villagers participate more in activities led by monks and use local resources, such as forest protection and conservation and moral training **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • Less people attended activities supported by external donors or NGOs because of limited membership, for example, the women's handicraft group **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • The group leaders were selected at the meetings which were attended by stakeholders in the village **[IMCFSC]**. • The selection process of the initiative leader is based on traditional practice and norms. Most leaders have a strong connection to the activity and are respected and trusted by villagers **[BA&IMCFSC]**.

[10] WNTC' stands for *Watpa Nakhoun-Noi Vipassana* Meditation Centre in the capital of Vientiane

made? • In your opinion, what does good leadership involve?		• Most villagers agree that each leader should be able to communicate clearly and also lead the villagers to take action **[IMCFSC]**.

Figure 27: The monk is clearing grass (left) and maintaining the pilot organic integrated garden (right)
Source: Author


Information access

This section presents the finding about members' access to information about the project, the BDP, and Buddhist approaches that is also summrised in Table 22. The data from the table is then enriched by the mapping of the Buddhist Initiative information ecosystem which identifies information flows and influences through vertical and horizontal communication processes. This mapping contributes to an understanding of the extent to which the information about the project is equitably accessible. The interpretation of these findings will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Data from in-depth interviews indicates that the monk and village headman hold the most information about the Buddhist Initiative, with the exception of the local handicraft knowledge of the BT-WHI, which is managed by members themselves. The village headman's favoured communication tools for the dissemination of information are the *tholakhong* (loudspeaker) and official meetings. The monk mostly uses interpersonal communication through daily interactions, sermon deliveries or *Dhamma* talks to disseminate information. He sometimes uses *tholakhong* for announcing activities, inviting villagers to gather at the temple, or for playing the audio from a *Dhamma* talk.

The level of knowledge and access to information among leaders is also different. Women leaders appear to have limited knowledge and have less access to information about other

activities outside their handicraft initiative, although the committee also elects female members. According to their green community committee project organisation chart, most committees are dominated by men, with only one female representative. Beyond their own BT-WHI, women appear to have limited access to information about other Buddhist Initiative and village committee activities. However, they tended to access more information about the project and understood Buddhist approaches better than the male leaders (with the exception of the village headman). The research found that members of the BT-WHI play many roles across the entire project including the *Vipassana* meditation and environmental activities. Women also had more opportunities than the men to approach the monk and have discussions with him. As BVSC_BTL1 said:

> The group of women recognised and understood the approaches and activities related to our project. However, they do not know how to express it verbally. They did well with demonstration rather than verbal explanation. It remained a barrier when there were visits from other villages and donor agencies. Their verbal skill is still poor (September 5, 2017).

This information was congruent with the observation I made during my in-depth interview with a leader of the BT-WHI. The interviewee found it difficult to explain with words; though she knew what she wanted to say, she did not know how to say it.

Most leaders access information about the Buddhist approaches, such as environmental issues and Buddhist teachings, through the monk, and information related to the BT-WHI came directly through donor agencies (*see Figure 28*). The villagers are likely to receive information about Buddhist approaches through face-to-face interaction and practical experience, rather than other modes of communication. Buddhist knowledge and its application to everyday life are transferred via the *Vipassana* activity, the *Dhamma* talk and interpersonal communications in various religious events organised by the monks.

On the other hand, the leaders, except the village headman, had limited knowledge on the BDP, though the monk claimed that their project was subsidized by the BDP. Most members understood that the project and support for it were initiated by the monks, so they were not interested in knowing more about it:

> The village committee (headmen) knows better about the BDP, but the BT-WHI members do not know about this (BVSC_BTL2, Personal communication, November 13, 2017).

They perceived the BDP as a donor and a *Sangha* relationship of the monk, so the monk is assigned to coordinate with the BDP. They had also learned about the BDP when its staff visited their community:

> We do not know much about the BDP. I know only the BDP supported young trees for our community to reforest our protected area and pilot garden (BVSC_BTL2, Personal communication, November 13, 2017).

Nonetheless, there was unanimous agreement amongst leaders on what they perceived as barriers to their work. Evidence from this research demonstrates that project members' knowledge is limited to their groups rather than the entire project. While the monk, the village headman, and members of the village committee hold the overall knowledge of the entire project, others can only describe issues related to their groups. For instance, BVSC_BTL1 indicated:

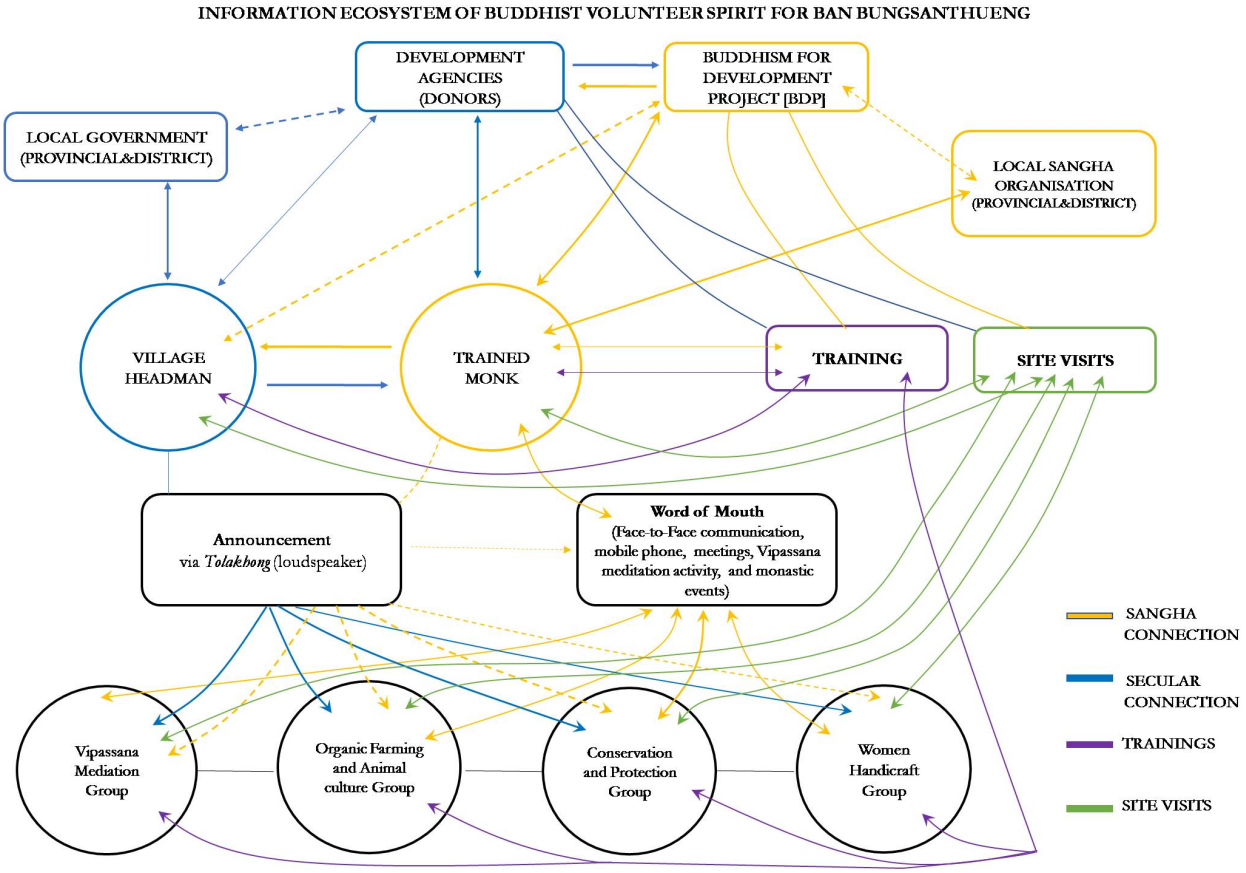
> The financial budget remains the most substantial barrier to the project continuity … the villagers are aware, for instance, of the chemical impact on health and environment, but they cannot leave the practice right away, it will take some time (BVSC_BTL1, September 5, 2017).

Likewise, BVSC_BTL2 stated:

> Members of the project lack understanding and consistency; we have differing understandings. Members can do it, but it is not in line with the perspectives of village committees. For instance, we spoke and acted in a way we have learned, but others say differently. This creates confusion and leads to difficulties. However, members of our group understand each other (September 7, 2017).

The data obtained from interviews indicates that members have used trainings and site visits as sources of knowledge. Donors, such as the BDP, occasionally provide training to both the monk and members, together with group members of other villages. The trainings and site visits were also mainly coordinated through the monk and sometimes the village headman, and then they communicated this information to various groups within the project. The monk and BT-WHI have the most access to training due to the donors attempting to empower women. Thus, the community's ecosystem mapping, based on the above evidence, looks as following:

Figure 28: Information flow of the Buddhist Initiative
Source: Author



As the above map indicates, the flows of information between various members and leaders of the community varies, revealing the monk has a very integrated presence in the community. While the information flowing through the village headman appears to be more vertical, the monk's communication flows are more horizontal become he emphasizes interpersonal communication and two-way interaction.

Table 22: Summary of members' access to information about the project, the BDP and its approaches
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
How do villagers access information about community development, knowledge about Buddhist approaches, and the BDP?	**IMCFSC Model:** • Members' awareness and correct knowledge about the project, BDP, and their working initiative. • The degree of free flow information about the	• The monk always emphasises *Sila-dhamma* (moral teachings) and raises awareness of environmental impact and the need for protection **[BA]**. • Most information about the approaches and the BDP is held by the monk and the

Sub-questions: • What does monks or nuns teach their lay people? • How do villagers receive information about development and the project? • Who do you think holds information about the project? • Do you think you have understood the purpose of this project? • Does every member of the project have the same access to information and knowledge?	project, BDP, and a particular initiative. • Influencers of information on the Buddhist approaches and the BDP. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • The practice of Buddha's style of teaching (*Desanavidhi*) impacts on members and villager's knowledge about the initiative and the Buddhist approaches. • Impacts of moral teachings on people's daily life.	village headman. They also occasionally receive information from staff of the donor agencies visiting the village **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • The monks' style of teaching affected how well members understood the information and their participation. Monks play a limited role in each group due to their social status and rules **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • However, access to information about the approach and the project are not equal among leaders and members **[BA&IMCFSC]**.

The BVSC initiative impact on community

Most of the interviewed leaders believed that the villagers' understanding of environmental issues and the need for protection, as well as their daily behaviours, was improved following the intervention of the monk. For example, they now clean their houses, keep their front yards clean all the time, and contribute to village activities such as road cleaning, which they previously had little interest in. These activities have become routine to the villagers and a voluntary responsibility, as BVSC_BTL3 stated:

> It is much better than the past. People are more aware of their actions. It can be seen in their behaviours, including the way people interact. In the past, the villagers used to drive fast in the village - they now reduce their speed and drive with care. They often used to enjoy drinking alcohol and entertainment, and they now celebrate only on some occasions (September 9, 2017).

Most leaders said that when discussing the village or community, solidarity and harmony amongst the villagers needed to be mentioned, as it brings people together and drives progress in community work. Since the engagement of the monk in community activities, the villagers have learned to recognise the importance and value of participation:

> I am confident that our BT_WHI will be sustained because our members are united and have no disputes (BVSC_BTL2, September 7, 2017).

According to leaders, the monk's intervention facilitates improved practices by the village committee. In the past, the village committee found it challenging to get villagers to attend the village meetings, and the villagers made less contribution to the village work. Interviewed leaders admitted:

> The villagers were not interested in participating in the village work. For example, when the village headman called for meetings, only a small number of people attended (BVSC_BTL2, 3, 5 and BSVC-L4).

However, the villagers appeared to participate more in the monastic work and events (*see Figure 29*), which they seem to consider a higher priority in comparison to village committee work. Table 23 below summarises the findings of the impact of the Buddhist Initiative on the community. It highlights community awareness and participation in political and cultural commitment.

Table 23: Impacts of the Buddhist engagement on village life
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
What impact has the project had in the village? **Sub-questions:** • What changes have you witnessed in your community since the project was established? • What impact has the project made on the village administration?	**IMCFSC Model:** • Monks' catalyst role in stimulating people's awareness of issues and taking collective action. • Monk's interventional impact on village committee work. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • The degree of moral teachings in community peace and harmony. • Social harmony and mutual help.	• People are well aware of issues in the village and the impact of their behaviour, and they also discussed it more **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • Most leaders of the project and village committee accept the impact of the monk's interventional help to improve their village committee work, solidarity and participation **[IMCFSC]**.

Figure 29: Villagers attending the Vipassana Meditation Centre parade
Source: Author

All leaders accepted that people contributed more to village work after the engagement of the monk. The village committee took this as an opportunity to improve their credibility and to restore the trust of the villagers. The project has now become the top priority work for village development. According to BVSC_BTL4:

> It is obvious that the villagers contributed more to village work due to the intervention of the monk. Although he was the person who brought the project, he let the villagers implement it, so the project belongs to the village (September 10, 2017).

Whereas BVSC_BTL3 described:

> The work is now better than before. Regarding the agricultural production, the villagers used to work individually, but they now work as a group. The village unity is better which is seen through more villagers participating in each meeting organised by the monk; those who never [previously] appeared at the village meetings … attended such events. The outstanding activity is the Buddhist Precepts observation (*Vipassana* meditation or *Bhavana*), that people increasingly visited the temple ground and attended more monastic activities when compared to the past (September 9, 2017).

The above evidence indicates that the monk has recognized cultural values as fundamental for successful communication and participation. This is witnessed in the number of people who participated in events related to culture, traditions and religion, such as the forest ordination. The monk has succeeded in raising people's awareness, establishing trust and expanding his network, all of which could potentially contribute to sustainability and self-reliance.

2.3. Perspectives of BVSC members

This section presents the findings on the BVSC members' perspectives about the Buddhist Volunteers Spirit movement. The five members representing different groups of the project were selected and invited to a small focus group. The terms the 'villagers' and 'members' may be interchangeably used in the section. The findings enhance the understanding of participatory approaches, the level of sustainability and self-reliance, and barriers and challenges from the perspective of each initiative member.

Access to participation

Based on the villagers' feedback, two factors contributed to inspiring the villagers to participate in the Buddhist project initiated by the trained monk. These factors are faith and trust in the monk. The villagers already had faith in Buddhism and the *Sangha*. Faith acts as a connecting force between the villagers and the Sangha through their daily interactions and mutual learning experiences. The impacts of the *Sila-dhamma* (morality) teaching, internal and external *bhavana* (training), as well as the Buddhist volunteer movement of children and youth led by the trained monk, were evident in the villagers' decision-making. The resulting trust in the capacity of the trained monk to lead the villagers and to bring well-being to the village was an important factor in engaging the villagers. As BVSC_BTM4 described:

> When the trained monk brought the project to the community, [I felt] we must participate to be a role model for the younger generation. The monk led practices of meditation and morality; I was curious why the practice is essential and what I would get from the practice. Regarding the organic farming; this is new knowledge he introduced to the village, so I was curious to know about it and brought it into practice. So, I volunteered myself for this project (September 12, 2017).

Other motivating factors included the preservation of village wisdom and the generation of additional income. The sense of ownership of local wisdom, heavily inspired by the trained monk, created a sense of pride amongst the villagers. According to BVSC_BTM5:

> I joined the project because I wanted to reserve our village's wisdom for the next generation. The monk also informed [us] that it could generate additional income for the family (September 12, 2017).

The table below summarises members' perspectives regarding access to participation in each initiative and activity within the project.

Table 24: Inspiration for being a member of the project
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
How do villagers participate in the project? **Sub-questions:** • How did the monks initiate this BVSC project? • How did the monks encourage members of the group or community to get involved in this project? • How did you become a member of this project? • What motivated you to participate in this project? • Does this program create opportunities for villagers to participate?	**IMCFSC Model:** • The extent of monks' leadership role from the villager's points of views. • Feeling of morale, social trust and social reciprocity under monks' leadership in the project. • The members' trust in monks' leadership and capability to take the lead in development work. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • The members' right view (*Samma-ditthi*) and right intention (*Samma-sankappa*) of monks' role. [Wisdom (Panna)]. • Faith (*Sattha*) shapes participation and collective action.	• The trained monk invited villagers to the *Vipassana* meditation and founded Buddhist the volunteer spirit group **[BA]**. • The monk first built a sense of mutual help and solidarity to make the villagers aware of collective action **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • Most project initiatives give opportunities to every member to participate, except the women's handicraft group that receives limited funding from donors **[IMCFSC]**.

Understanding of the Buddhist approach

The members understood the Buddhist approaches, including goals and objectives, through real-life learning and experiences. The interviewed members explained their understanding through the cause and effect connection of a particular activity. For instance, BVSC_BTM1 said:

> If we want to have good health, we need to eat healthy and organic vegetables. We produce organic vegetables [which is] not only good for our health, but also it can make us money too (September 12, 2017).

While BVSC_BTM3 said:

> I think I know a lot about the project and understand that, if it works well, I think it will be a sustainable project (Personal communication, October 23, 2017).

They were able to explain the purpose of the project and showed an understanding of the project's approach. Most of the interviewed members agreed that the monk's approach was

appropriate and met the needs of their community. The monk helped to build solidarity in the village, as BVSC_BTM1 described:

> The monk's approach is appropriate because it helps to enhance participation by bringing together the three institutions; *Ban* (village), *Wat* (temple), and *Honghian* (school), and exchange knowledge and ideas (September 5, 2017).

Community unity is a need that the villagers wanted to address. It links with participation, decision-making, collective action and reciprocity:

> The purpose of the project is … [for] the village to become developed, self-reliant and [to have a] reserved forest for future generations to use. The handicraft activity is to preserve local wisdom [for] future generations to inherit too. The monk raised awareness and taught, with the *Sila-dhamma* activity how to behave, and speak appropriately, and practice mindfulness (BVSC_BTM3, Personal communication, October 23, 2017).

Interviewed members understood the *Sila-dhamma* through the appropriate physical and verbal behaviour which is called the Five Precepts (Lao: *Sila-ha*). The *Sila-ha* is the Buddhist rules of coexistence for humans, encompassing an abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, and consumption of intoxicants. The *Sila-dhamma* influences a range of activities in people's daily lives, including their physical and verbal behaviours. For instance, the normal dress code for women and girls visiting the temple is a long Lao skirt (Lao: *Sin*) (*see Figure 30*). The hem of the *Sin* should fall below the knee and in the middle of the *Sinh*, and their shirt needs to cover their upper body and neck adequately. Adherence to these behaviours indicates the importance of mutual respect and social harmony in the village:

> *Sila-dhamma* can be interpreted with different meanings, such as having good thoughts and actions towards each other. Previously, children did not know or were not aware of their verbal and physical behaviours, they lacked respect and humility. They are now changed; they dress properly, and they do not wear pants or shorts when visiting the *Wat* in accordance with traditions and customs. Every holy day, both adults and children are committed to visiting the temple (BVSC_BTM4, September 12, 2017).

Table 25 summarises perceptions of the Buddhist approaches by members of the project initiatives.

Table 25: The villagers' perception about Buddhist approaches and their information access
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
How do community members perceive the Buddhist Initiative approaches led by monks? **Sub-questions:** • Who selected the project initiative you are working on? • What initiatives would you like to see developed? • What do you expect to achieve in this initiative? • In your opinion, what impact has this project made since it was established in the village? • What does 'morality' mean to you and your daily life?	**IMCFSC Model:** • A catalyst or leadership role in identifying issues and involving members of the community. • Level of information equity by the members' awareness and correct knowledge about the objectives and goals of the initiatives. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Right Intention in setting up the project and addressing issues. • Right View among members of the project goal. • Impact of moral teachings and solidarity.	• The monk invited villagers to a discussion, identifying initiatives to work on **[IMCFSC]**. • Members expected to learn new knowledge and needed to promote and sustain the local wisdom and resources for the future generation. They are also keen to know more about morality, *Vipassana* meditation **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • The teaching of the monk, through organising activities in the temple, has raised villagers' awareness and enriched knowledge and information for the villagers **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • Most members agreed that morality influenced their community life in a range of ways - from speech to action **[BA]**.

Figure 30: Women wearing the Lao skirt (Lao: sin) to the temple at Buddhist events
Source: Author

Level of confidence and challenges

The villager's confidence of their capacity to continue their activities without support from external donors was varied. The members of the BT-WHI seemed to be more confident than

other groups because mat weaving (Lao: *Sard-phue*) is their local wisdom passed down through the generations. They are confident that they can extend their newly gained knowledge and skills to other members of the village for new generations to come. There also seems to be a general confidence in the monk's ability to include others in the project:

> The chance that the project will be able to continue is high because the project was not limited only to the village. The monk also extended its membership to other villages. Other villages can also do it if we can do it (BVSC_BTM2, September 12, 2017).

Other groups seemed to have less confidence and still require support from external donors, such as the animal culture and organic farming groups. As mentioned in the earlier section, the monk is also limited in his engagement here as *Sangha* do not promote killing or any activities viewed to be against its precepts, so it is beyond the monk's role when people raise animals for trade. However, the monk supports this group with co-ordination aspects of the activity and seeks funds from the BDP and other donors.

The following table summarises the level of confidence and sustainability of activities under the Buddhist Initiative.

Table 26: Group confidence in sustaining their activity and project
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
How confident is the community about being able to sustain their activities with less, or no, external support? **Sub-questions:** • How do the villagers run their development initiative associated activities? • Where do they get financial or other support from? • What activities does your group or community run by	**IMCFSC Model:** • The individual and group efficacy to sustain the project. • The extent of leadership in running the project and expanding it to other community members. • The sense of belonging and feeling of morale that critical informants hold which makes them proud to be members of the project.	• Members/villagers run their activities as a group **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • The women's handicraft group gets supports from NGOs and the BDP with the monk working as their facilitator **[IMCFSC]**. • Members of the women's handicraft group and environmental conservation group are confident that they

independently? • What changes can you witness in your group or community before and after implementing this project? • In your opinion, do you think you can run the project initiatives if there is less, or no, support from external sources?	**Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • The degree of moral teaching in community peace and harmony. • Community's degree of self-reliance and sustainability in continuing activities or projects by themselves. • Social harmony and mutual help in the women's handicraft group.	can sustain their activities by themselves, though they do not get support from donors **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • Members see that they are more united, harmonious and have gained new knowledge and skills **[BA&IMCFSC]**.

Barriers and challenges

The data from the focus group shows that some activities might not be sustainable due to a lack of funds. The animal culture group, in particular, seems to have a less sustainable outcome because it requires more funds to purchase cows. This issue also has an impact on organic farming groups because they require cattle dung to produce compost to use as a natural fertiliser. Thus, the organic farming was also in the same situation. BVSC_BTM1 stated:

> Our project can [only] be partly undertaken by ourselves, so we need to rely on external support because there are many things we require. For example, if we grow organic vegetables, we need organic fertiliser, so we need cows. Although we can use resources within the village, it is not enough (September 12, 2017).

Despite evidence of some group's achievements, there were also some issues of harmony. The BT-WHI had a strong unity, but some members did not cooperate and remained inactive in production. Not all members that received funding, support and training for their handicraft were making active contributions to the group production, as BVSC_BTM4 claimed:

> The problem in our group is a few members do not cooperate well. They lacked an understanding of the terms and conditions of the group from the beginning (Personal communication, November 13, 2017).

This has affected the group's ability to supply the market, as well as challenging the group's ability to extend the membership every two years, as required.

The villagers found it difficult to access the right information about the project and information was limited to members of the group. Furthermore, the members felt uncomfortable

with the technology supplied by the donors, without having the training to use it. BVSC_BTM2 said:

> I want the project to print a poster or other media to display at the temple or in the village, such as patterns of the mat, to allow other villagers to learn and understand it. It is uncomfortable for members to communicate with the donor staff when they have some doubts and want to know more about the project (September 12, 2017).

BVSC_BT5 said:

> We would also like the donor to teach us how to use [the technology] when they give us something. For example, they provided us with a sewing machine, but they did not train us to use it. Thus, we ended up with hiring someone in the village to sew for us and it increased our production costs (BVSC_BTM5, September 12, 2017).

This indicates the mismanaged communication of information and knowledge. The villagers were unable to benefit from the technology and innovation from the donor, which resulted in an additional financial burden for members.

The third barrier is that the village headman is the holder of community information about the village's socio-economic development and the BVSC project. Data from this research reveals that the villagers and group members felt uneasy about receiving sufficient information (that should have been shared freely by the village headman). Although they are close to each other through kinship, the formal authority and a top-down approach have imposed barriers to participation and decision-making by the villagers in the project, as well as causing a decrease in trust. According to BVSC_BTM2:

> Not everything was often good; there were some misunderstandings that effected mutual trust.

BVSC_BTM4 indicated:

> The village headman did not understand and prevented the voice and opinions of the group members because he has power. He lacked monitoring the activities of the BT-WHI (Personal communication, November 15, 2017).

The village headman's interference with the BT-WHI group negatively impacted the participation and leadership of the group, so they lacked confidence in continuing their activity. BVSC_BTM4 added:

> As a coordinator for the group, I reported to the head of my group and did not report directly to the village headman. The donor agency told us that I did right, but the village headman said I did wrong (September 12, 2017).

This demonstrated some tensions in the community about power and accountability. The BT-WHI wanted the donor's help with expanding their market; they were manipulated by traders who took advantage of the villagers' productivity in many ways, such as by underselling the product (the traders bought lower and sold high) and by seizing ownership of the local knowledge. The villagers wanted to access the market and sell their products themselves, so they could negotiate directly with customers and receive a fair price (*see Figure 31*). BVSC-BBTM2, M3, M4, and M5 agree that "for our group, we do not have a market, we only sell ourselves" (September 12, 2017).

The traders bought the product from the group, but they did not recognise or appreciate the ownership of the knowledge (that goes into making the product) that belongs to the group. They claimed instead that it was their property when they put it on the market. All participants of the focus group said the same thing:

> Traders bought the mat of *Ban Bungsanthu*eng, but they put their name [on the product]. Hence, the traders are the people who have implicitly gained a [good] reputation [associated with the product] and become the owner of the product (September 12, 2017).

Table 27 below summarises perceptions the project members had about barriers and challenges to their activities, and what need to be improved.

Table 27: The villagers' thoughts about barriers and suggested improvements
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
What challenges do the monks and community face in the implementation of their activities? **Sub-questions:** • What were the challenges in implementing this project? • What barriers or issues prevented villagers from participating in the initiative? • In your opinion, will the relationship between monks and lay people be a barrier to communication in your community?	**IMCFSC Model:** • The members' access to knowledge. [Information equity]. • Extent and level of participation in managing and making a decision among community members. • Members' extent of leadership in various activities. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Solidarity impacts on participation and achievement of each initiative or of the whole project.	• Some projects lack funding, have different levels of knowledge and information amongst groups, or lack active participation in group activities **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • Unequal power relations between formally politically empowered people and informally empowered people, and a leadership-imposed barrier to cooperation, participation, and the efficacy of the group **[IMCFSC]**.

Figure 31: Collecting products for exhibition (left) and a group representative selling at the fair (right)
Source: Author

Mapping the perceptions of the Buddhist Initiative members of community development and monks/nuns' positions and roles

I invited five participants, three women and two men, to the workshop, just as I had done with the trainees in Vientiane. The workshop was conducted soon after the small focus group ended to avoid disturbing the participants' daily activities. The workshop aimed to understand villagers' perspectives about the monk's roles in their community and their perceptions of community development. A comparison between the villagers' perspectives with the monk's and

nun's perspectives would help me to understand the differences and similarities between monks, nuns and villagers, which helps to draw out that identified them as catalysts.

In this setting, I had to play a full facilitator role, which included writing, drawing and verbalising the villagers' questions, because their ability to do the process themselves was limited in comparison to the trainees in Vientiane. That being said, the critical ideas and knowledge came from the villagers. The following table summarises the findings of this mapping exercise.

During the workshop it was evident that the villagers were aware of issues. The problems they listed (drug abuse, gambling, and chemical use in agriculture), were also in line with the trainee monks' and nuns' perceptions. Throughout my stay at the village, I found that drug abuse was a daunting problem that people often expressed concern about (*see Figure 17*). The drug abuse problem has spread quickly among youth and adults, especially men.

To solve this problem, four institutions in the village had to work closely together. Villagers understood and interpreted the term 'community development' as internal cooperation through four key institutions in the community: 1) temple or monks (Lao: *Wat*), 2) village committee (Lao: *Khana-ban*), 3) villagers or family (Lao: *Sao-ban*) and 4) school (Lao: *Honghian*). However, the solution provided by the villagers was slightly different from the solution provided by the trainee monks and nuns. The villagers put the government outside the circle, while the trainee monks and nuns put it inside the circle. The villagers understood that village problem-solving was an internal affair and a responsibility that required cooperation between the community insiders and institutions mentioned above. However, the two workshops gave near identical explanations for the government's intervention in the village:

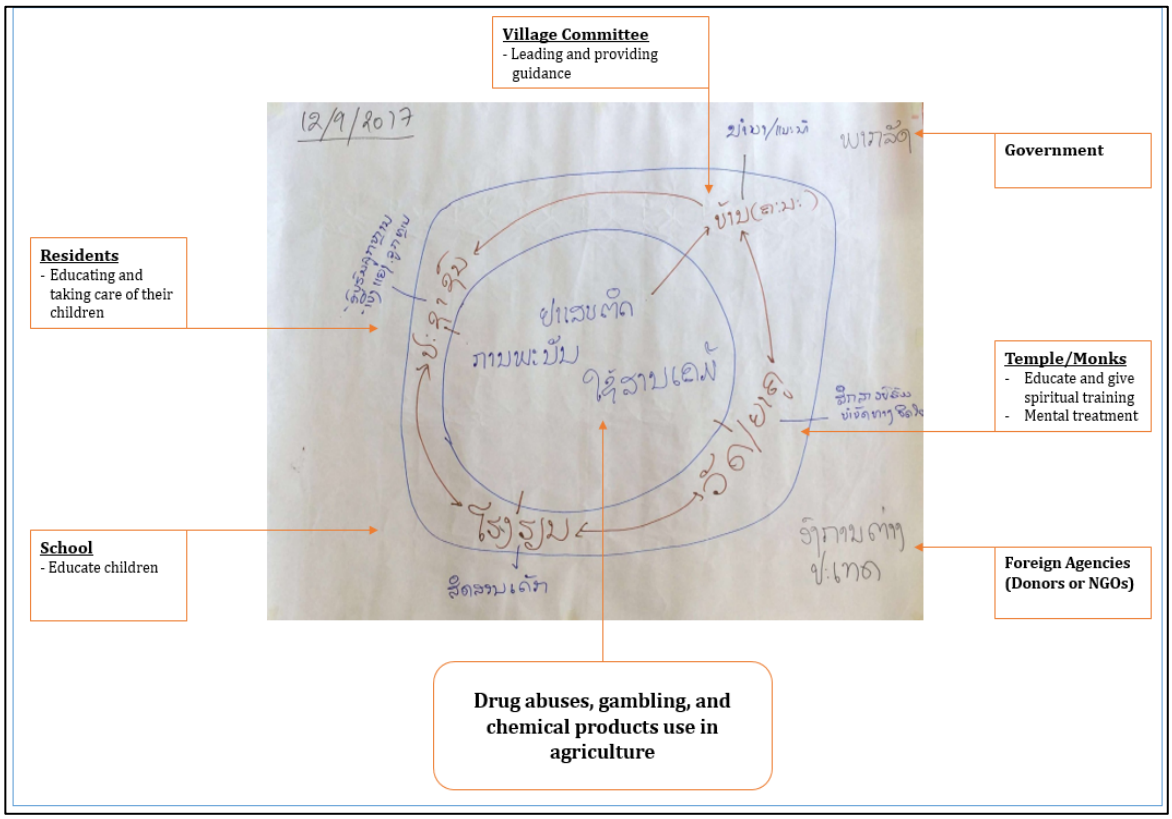
> Community development cannot be implemented without three components; Ban or village (village committee and residents), Wat (or temple) and school (BVSC-BBT-Mem1, September 12, 2017).

> If the problem is beyond the capacity of the village, we need to ask for intervention from the district or government (BVSC-BBT-Mem2, September 12, 2017).

The villagers assigned roles for each institution (*see Figure 32*). The *Wat* or monks were responsible for moral teaching and providing spiritual guidance to villagers, including children

and youth, in pursuit of an ethical and morally rich life. The monks were responsible for clarifying the negative impact of drug abuse, for encouraging villagers to behave appropriately, and for encouraging an abstinence from evil deeds. *Khana-ban* provided leadership and legal guidance, while school and parents or guardians were to educate, monitor, and take care of their students or children. It was imperative that all four sectors of the community work holistically and cooperatively.

Figure 32: The Buddhist Initiative members' mapping of issues and solutions
Source: Redrawn by author



The villagers perceived monks/nuns as insiders and part of their community. They had put *Wat* (representing monks/nuns) inside the circle, along with the other three components. The *Wat* was seen as the spiritual base, and monks were seen as spiritual educators and counsellors. This finding was congruent with my observation that villagers visited monks each day to discuss their problems, such as religious rituals and medical treatment. Although the village administration is a form of government organisation, the villagers perceived the government as an outsider which was only required if they needed external intervention. Villages showed initiative and leadership

by trying to solve the problem themselves, rather than relying on external support, as BVSC_BTM1 and M2 agreed:

> The issues must first be attempted to be solved by three institutions of the village - *Ban, Wat* and *Honghian* - before asking for external or government help.

As *Wat* is an internal institution, monks are seen as a stimulus in the village. Monks are viewed as educated people that can point out issues relating to community welfare including environmental degradation and certain behaviours that do not fit in with the village's cultural context and traditions.

In short, the evidence about the members' perspectives shows that participation in the project is much inspired by faith and trust, as well as a sense of sustaining local resources and wisdom for future generations. However, insufficient funds, disharmony between group members and political power, impact on the participation, ownership, group decision-making and sustainability of each initiative.

Table 28: Summary of villagers' awareness of community issues
Source: Author

Questions	Expected Research Outcomes	Summary
How do villagers perceive community development and the monks' or nuns' roles in the community? **Sub-questions:** • What are the key social issues in your community? • How do you understand community development? • Do you think, monks or nuns are members of your community? • What roles do you think monks or nuns have in village initiatives? • Who else plays a role in the development of your community?	**IMCFSC Model:** • Villagers' perception of community development. • Monks' catalyst role in community development. **Buddhist Approaches [BA]:** • Monk's spiritual role in the community development.	• Villagers are aware that abuse of meth-amphetamine, gambling, and chemical-based agriculture are listed as the top issues challenging their village **[BA&IMCFSC]**. ▪ Villagers understand village development as a cooperation among four village institutions – *Ban* (village committee), *Sao-ban* (villagers), *Wat* (temple), and *Honghian* (school). These need to be simultaneously developed **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • *Wat* is a spiritual educator and counsellor. The village committee plays a formal leadership role. Residents are to educate, bring up and take care of their own children. Moreover, school is also responsible for educating children **[BA&IMCFSC]**. • Monks and nuns provide stimulation in the process of problem identification and solution identification **[IMCFSC]**.

3. Chapter Summary

The BDP has two roles to play in the Buddhist movement. The first role is to train their monks and nuns to engage in social development, the other is to engage and support their trained monks' initiatives in various communities. The Buddhist concepts of development underpinning the approaches are in accordance with its concepts of *Tri-Sikkha* (the Buddhist way of training) consisting of *Sila* (morality), *Samadhi* (concentration), and *Panna* (wisdom). The community engagement is guided by the principle of *Sila-dhamma* and Buddhist ethics, which can be understood as *Sila-ha* (the Five Precepts). Trainee monks and nuns have been trained to deliver the Buddhist teachings and lead the lay people to practice *Sila-dhamma* through *Vipassana* meditation and other Buddhist practices, before initiating the development initiative. However, the discrepancy between trainees' backgrounds and levels of knowledge challenges the BDP as these can have an impact when the trainees are entering the community.

Most of the trainee monks and nuns participated in the training course through a nomination from the BDP's alumni network. The alumni network plays an important role as a coordinator and communication channel for the BDP, with various communities and the *Sangha* committee in various districts and provinces. The trainees aimed to enrich their knowledge about *Sila-dhamma* and secular issues, and aimed to develop communication skills regarding moral principles so that lay people could apply the principles in their daily lives. The trainees understood community development occurred through cooperation between three institutions in the village including *Wat* (temple), *Ban* (village and residents), and government. The trainee monks and nuns considered themselves insiders of the community, and play a critical role in the effort to manage and address issues within the community, along with other two institutions. They perceived themselves as fulfilling a spiritual educator or counsellor role.

The *Wat* is central to communication practices of *Ban Bungsanthueng*. It serves as the centre of the village for meetings, rituals, ceremonies, and learning and sharing. Most importantly, it appeared to be a spiritual base for the villagers and has been involved in the well-being of the village and villagers, along with other traditional beliefs and practice. The Buddhist *Wat* and traditional rituals and beliefs have been integrated and harmonised, and have resulted in a hybrid local spiritual system. The *Wat* is also a place that values the leadership of women

through religious activities and where monks play an influential role as spiritual guides and Buddhist teachers in daily village life.

The Buddhist Initiative leaders understood the Buddhist approach to development, the monk's aim of increasing Buddhist practice in the community, and his contribution towards building a resilient community based on unity and harmony. The Buddhist practice of morality impacted on the villagers' speech and actions. Solidarity and harmony are positive forces driving the community to achieve its goals of becoming a 'green', united and morally rich community. However, the lack of equitable access to knowledge and information amongst each group presents challenges to the village to achieve its goals. Unequal power relations amongst village committees, villagers and members of the project remain barriers to the accessing of information and knowledge, trust and leadership. This, in turn, impacted the decision-making process and the community participation.

The villagers decided to become members of the Buddhist Initiative because they had faith in their monk and trust in his leadership. The villagers saw the monk as their spiritual leader and counsellor, rather than an external actor. They perceived various activities 'belonged' to them and thus they had a responsibility to implement them by having the monk as their supervisor and supporter. However, only a minority of the villagers recognised that the project is part of the BDP network, which shows a gap in the dissemination of information and lack of clarity about who leads the project. They likely perceived that it was the monk's responsibility to deal with the BDP. Most villagers acknowledged Buddhist approaches through interactions with the monk, particularly in the *Vipassana* meditation practice on every Buddhist holy day.

However, the biggest challenge for the villagers is the information gate-keeping by the village headman which imposes barriers to their participation, decision-making and self-management of their group. Additionally, the donor's support of technology discourages more participation and facilitates a more vertical, top-down approach to community development (as the members are not taught how to use the technology). Furthermore, the BT-WHI is dominated by traders and is at risk of losing its identity, its' ownership of products and its' local wisdom because of ineffective marketing support.

Villagers perceived community development to occur through the cooperation of three institutions; *Ban* (village and residents), *Wat* (temple), and *Honghian* (school). These three

institutions worked together and used their solidarity as a driving force. The villagers considered monks as insiders in their community, who act as spiritual guides and leaders. The monks inspired people's participation in various activities.

The emerging themes from the findings in this chapter lay down critical groundwork for the discussion in the next chapter. The following chapter discusses the catalyst for change in the Buddhist context of Lao PDR, the social functions of the *Wat* and *Sangha*, integrating the IMCFSC model with the Buddhist approaches to development, and communication for community development in Laos.

Chapter Five: Analysis and Discussion

This chapter provides a discussion and analysis of the findings presented in Chapter Four, regarding the roles which Buddhist *Sangha*[11] play in community development in Lao PDR and using the Buddhism for Development Project [BDP] as a case study. The findings are compared with scholarly literature, previous studies and other relevant theories of participatory communication, community development and Buddhist principles, which were first discussed in Chapter Two.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the catalyst for change in the Buddhist context in Lao PDR, by analysing Buddhist values, the role of Buddhism in the BDP, and Buddhist *Sangha* roles in community development. The second section demonstrates the assimilating of the Integrated Model of Communication for Social Change [IMCFSC] developed by Figueroa et al. (2002)into the Buddhist development approach [BA] of Buddhism for Development Project [BDP] (2012). The integration aims at enhancing the Communication for Social Change [CFSC] approaches in community practice, and engendering social impact which is appropriate to the Buddhist community in Laos.

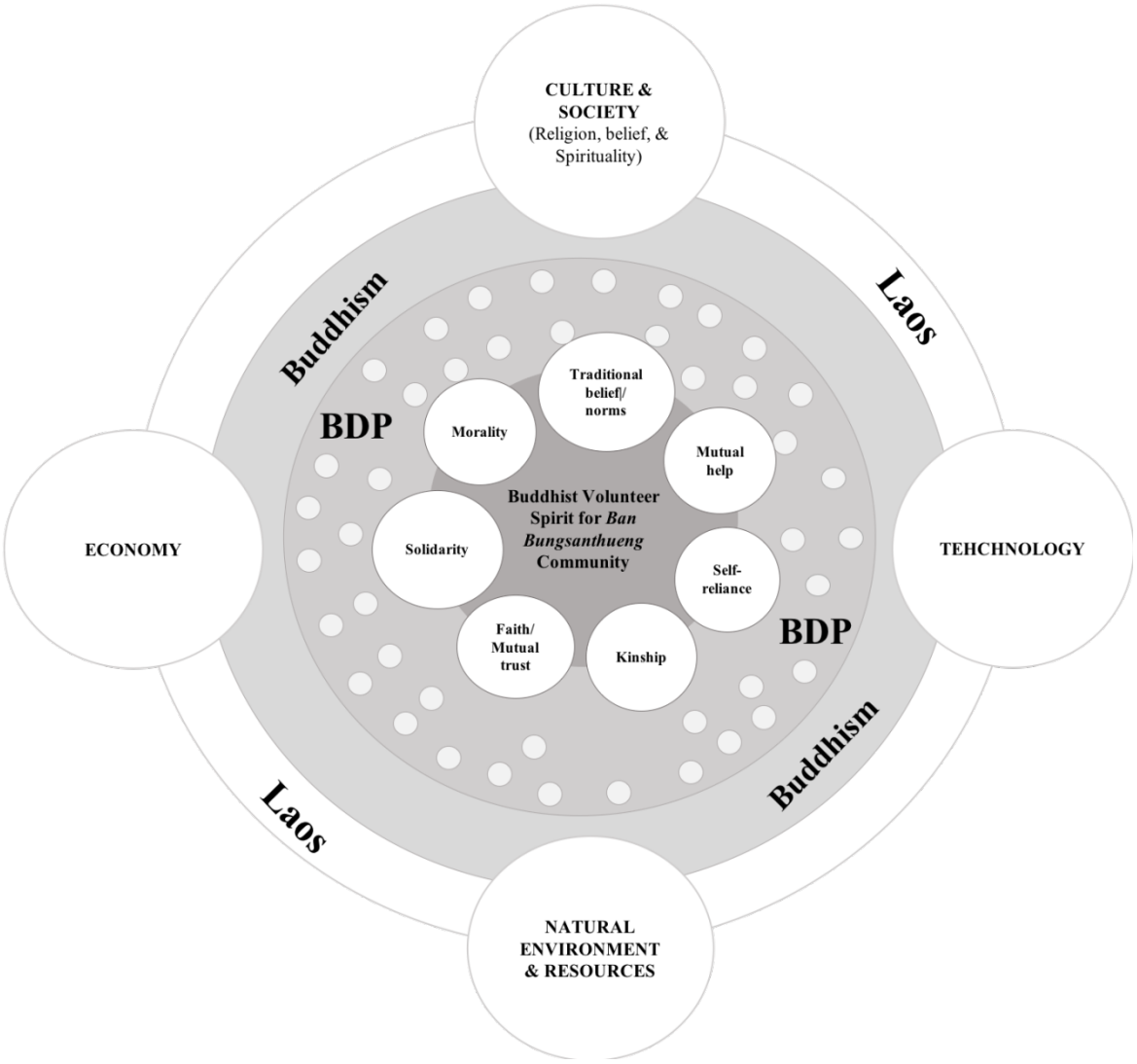
1. The catalyst for change within the Buddhist context in Lao PDR

This section discusses the contextualised holistic Buddhist approach as a catalyst for change. It includes social roles and *Dhamma* [teachings] of Buddha and BDP, and the Buddhist Volunteer Spirit for Community [BVSC] network in society and *Ban Bungsanthueng* community life. Thomas et al. (2016)suggest that in order to work in communities a continuing process of relationship negotiation is required, and that researchers should consider relational accountability through a holistic approach which also incorporates the natural environment, respect, reciprocity, beliefs and spirituality. By exploring the Buddhist catalyst role, this section attempts to answer the research question regarding participatory communication aspects in the Buddhist *Sangha*'s engagement in community development in Laos.

[11] *Sangha* in this study refers to novices, monks, nuns and white ascetics in the Buddhist monastic order.

Figure 33: A holistic spiritual approach to community development through the catalyst of change

Source: Author



1.1. Describing the Buddhist holistic spiritual approach through the lens of the catalyst for change

First and foremost, comprehending a holistic view of how four main dimensions of culture and society, nature, technology and economy, play a role in Lao society requires to be recognised. While, these dimensions are interrelated and play dominant roles in the macro-environment, the micro-environment is more incorporated with cultural dimensions and networks (*see Figure 33*). This is recognized, in Buddhism, as '*paticcasamuppada*' which means dependent origination or inter-being. Hopwood et al. (2005) argue that it is worth devoting close attention to the dependent relationship between society and the environment, in

order for sustainable development to flourish, while taking into account that Buddhism is a part of the wider Lao society. Therefore, the value of Buddhist teachings is embedded in cultural, political, economic and social dimensions of the country. BDP represents the Lao Buddhist Fellowship Organisation [LBFO], the highest ranked Buddhist organisation in Laos, which engages in social development by training its *Sangha* community and volunteer youth members for community development. The BVSC movement is a *Sangha* network of BDP, implementing grass-roots initiatives in various communities throughout Laos. The impacts of these three actors - Buddhism, BDP and BVSC *Sangha* - within local communities, deserves discussion.

1.2. Discussing the Buddhist holistic spiritual approaches through the lens of the catalyst for change

This section discusses the catalysing Buddhism, the BDP and the trained monk in community development in Lao PDR.

Catalysing Buddhism in context in Lao PDR

The research findings reveal that Buddhism and indigenous belief practices regulate the community life of the rural village, *Ban Bungsanthueng*. This research focused on whether both beliefs (Buddhism and indigenous) have become a cultural practice. The Buddhist teaching of the Five Precepts (*Sila-ha*) for instance, is one of the dominant social norms of the village, and this finding reveals that Buddhist ethics regulate thinking patterns and behaviours of the villagers. Ladwig (2006) highlights that Buddhism influences Lao society and culture. This research is supported by the Lao Statistic Bureau (2015) which also indicates that Buddhist followers make up over half of the country's population. Although the *Ban Bungsanthueng* villagers identify themselves as Buddhist followers, they still practice their traditional belief system, namely with the village guardian spirit [*Puta*][12] and with the spirits of ancestors. Holt (2009) outlined the beliefs of Lao indigenous peoples, mainly in rural areas, as cults of spirits (Lao: *phi*) and vital essences (Lao: *khwuan*). The mapping exercise undertaken in this research confirmed the long co-existence of traditional (animistic belief) and Buddhist practices in the village and provided evidence that Buddhism and traditional practices are equally important to

[12]In Laos, most villages that believe in cults of spirits have a village guardian spirit, which has a unique name. In *Ban Bungsanthueng,* the guardian spirit is called '*Puta*' or sometimes '*Ya-phaw*'.

the villagers and village welfare. This was identified through the influence that both belief systems had on the village relocation, as discussed in the previous chapter:

> The reason [for] relocating the village was because the village [*Ban*] is located in the middle of *Hor Ban*, *Pasa* [cemetery], and *Wat*, so it brought illness, unhappiness, and death to the villagers (BVSC_BTM5, November 18, 2017).

The strategic positioning of the *Wat* and *Hor Ban*[13] in the village must follow villagers' traditional beliefs and practices. The *Sangha* engage in social development by using these values as the basis of an attempt to restore morality to society, and in pursuit of changes which facilitate peace and harmony.

Findings from observations and mini-workshops indicate that the *Wat* (temple) is one among three central institutions in the community, as well as *Ban* [village] and *Honghian* (school). According to participants, the Lao term '*Ban*' represents the family institution and government organisation, and *Honghian* represents a formal state educational institution. *Wat* represents a religious institution constituted of temple grounds and the *Sangha*. These three components have different roles, but they are required to cooperate and unite.

The *Wa*t is an informal education centre where monks provide spiritual guidance for villagers and teach them morality ethics and Buddhist social ethics on holidays (Ladwig, 2006). This finding is confirmed by the perspectives of trainee monks and nuns, as well as *Ban Bungsanthueng* villagers. They suggest that the *Wat* is an institution for educating people with *Sila-dhamma* (moral teachings), which directs them to act in accordance with social norms, rules and traditions, as well as *Dhamma*. The *Wat*, including *Sangha*, is comparable to glue, which joins every piece of the community together, and bridges gaps in community relationships. Ife (2002) and Witten-Hannah (1999) infer that social capital is the glue which joins people and bridges gaps in society. Villagers maintain their faith in Buddhism, and they trust in the ability of *Sangha* to guide them to a good life.

Ladwig (2006)argues that most studies on Lao Buddhism fail to address the central functions of the *Wat*, or the role of monks in village affairs and the daily lives of the village people. This is despite the monks' institutional and personal networks being one of the primary

[13]A place where a hall or house of the village guardian spirit, or the *Puta*, is situated.

attributes of Lao society. The *Wat* must be positioned at the centre of the village, indicating its paramount importance for the villagers' spirituality and collective welfare. The *Wat* appears to be the heart or spiritual refuge of the community, the centre for community functions and solidarity. The findings of this research also concur that the *Wat* is one of the social places for the villagers to meet and interact. As (Ladwig, 2006) asserts, the *Wat* is the centre of village communication, learning and spirituality, where villagers gather and interact for festivals. The roster of supporting the temple and monks with meals (breakfast and lunch) is considered a good tradition that helps to strengthen connections between people in the community, especially amongst adult women whose voices are heard less in public matters. The *Wat* fosters a relationship between *Sangha* and laypeople by encouraging more interaction and less of a gap in the relationship in the village, both socially and economically, based on the collective asset concept of the *Wat*.

People have faith (Lao: *sattha*) in *Sangha* because they behave appropriately and act as models for living a good and simple life. In this sense, *Sangha* illicit a powerful faith forming a substantial ground for social trust. Reardon (2003) asserts that following the premises of CFSC, partnerships between different members and institutions in the village help to solve current issues and crises, and pave the way for building long-term social capital. Thus, the *Wat*, as a voluntary organisation, can be seen as holding social capital because it promotes community relationships. This is consistent with Robinson's (1999) research, which defines social capital as a social network that simplifies the social process, and can take the form of a voluntary organisation that promotes community relationship and empowerment. Based on the above evidence, the *Wat* can be considered a stimulus for village relationships, solidarity and harmony, which means it has solid and long-term social capital.

BDP as a catalyst for social change

Payutto (2008) argues that as an initial solution to current social issues, one should embark on changing peoples' attitudes towards the environment, economic behaviour, science and technology. Based on this perspective, the BDP provides the training course BVSC, following the concept of development from the inside out. It aims to empower its *Sangha* community to have the correct attitudes and knowledge before they are exposed to the actual development work. As identified by Ladwig (2006), *Sangha* and laypeople find it challenging

when combining the traditional teachings with concrete actions. They are trained to play the role of a trainer or mentor in their communities and to develop a BVSC network. The BDP trains members of *Sangha* and community members, facilitates their community practices, coordinates funds for them and also restores and strengthens moral or spiritual norms in the society. Through its moral teachings the *Sangha* educates people to raise awareness and understanding of the connection between causes, conditions and problems occurring in communities, and to spearhead positive changes. A study by Doan-Bao et al. (2018) of the Listen, Inspire, Nurture [LIN] organization in Vietnam, provides comparable evidence of how the BDP acts as a catalyst for change. Similar to the BDP, although in an urban context, LIN improves the quality of its network by facilitation, capacity enhancement, coordination of funds and promotion of new social norms in urban community development.

To better illustrate the catalyst role of the BDP and its participatory approaches, I will look specifically at the training course called '*Jit-asa-saoBuddha-pheu-soumxon*' or BVSC. The name of this course has significant meaning, and the three key terms deserve consideration because they highlight the BDP's Buddhist participatory communication for development spirit.

Leaders of the project have used mainly the Lao terms *'jit', 'asa',* and *'sao-Buddha'* throughout interviews. '*Jit'* means 'mind or spirit' and *Sangha* develops minds through the BDP training. As Somphone (2011) purports, *"*the heart of education is the education of the heart" (p. 2), so spiritual development is therefore the cornerstone of education. This highlights that the essence of human development is mental (spiritual) training, which is also the core of Buddhist education ('*Chitta-bhavana*' [mental training]). Mental *bhavana* is a way of training the *Sangha* to cultivate virtue (*metta-bhavana*), to be aware of ethics and morality, and then to transfer those values to laypeople. Doing this will gain the trust of the local people before commencing development initiatives. This corresponds with previous research by Rodloytuk (2007), which recommends that Buddhist ways of development should be in the context of Buddhist mental cultivation. In other words, when '*Jit*' has been well established and the student understands the interconnectedness of 'being', it resultantly cultivates compassion and volunteer spirit or '*asa*' as well.

'*Asa*' means volunteer and connects with '*jit*', which contain the virtues of compassion and loving-kindness. From a Buddhist perspective, the developmental education of humans has

two main dimensions (Payutto, 2008); 1) mental development or tranquillity (Pali: *samatha-bhavana*) and 2) insight development (Pali: *vipassana-bhavana*) (Payutto, 2002). Once the *Sangha* mind has been developed, they then embrace the spirit of serving others (*Bodhisattvacarya*), which is one of the four ethical Buddhist practices suggested by Queen (2000). The cultivation of such spirit is part of the pursuit of moral, spiritual or emotional development (Pali: *chitta-bhavana*).

'*Sao-Buddha*' refers to all Buddhists. This concept is consistent with Freire's (1970) idea that all stakeholders must be included in the development process in order to promote self-determination. Based on this, *'Sao-Buddha'* attempts to emphasise that the BDP does not limit its training to only its *Sangha* community, but also includes laypeople and those who have the volunteer spirit for serving and helping others. According to Queen (2000), the practice of insight meditation (Pali: *vipassana*) may help practitioners to cultivate feelings of compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity, so that they can transfer the same feelings to others in society.

Like most community development projects, the issue of equity can be challenging. Although the term '*sao-Buddha*' highlights the spirit of equitable and inclusive participation, this research has found that the BDP is facing challenges of equity and inclusiveness in its recruitment process. These challenges include finding the right *Sangha* to represent each community, district or province. The data from interviews and focus groups in Vientiane reveals the dissatisfaction with the recruitment process and the feeling of inequity:

> I want BDP to improve how it selects trainees to ensure equitable access and opportunity (BVSC-T3 July 26, 2017).

BDP needs to improve its recruitment process in order to ensure equity and inclusiveness of all its stakeholders in the development process. All stake holders must be given the opportunity to determine the outcome (Freire, 1970).

BDP's Challenges

An intensive curriculum has also created a knowledge gap among trainees, a significant issue in the current training course (BVSC 9). Ladwig (2006) provides a similar example of the *Sangha* involvement in the HIV/AIDs prevention campaign. He points out that the *Sangha* in some provinces required training, experience and skills in responding to HIV/AIDS because the

project was designed to reinterpret and combine traditional Buddhist teachings with concrete actions. This can be an issue, especially with the newly ordained monks and nuns, who have limited knowledge of Buddhist teaching (*Dhamma*), might find it difficult to link and apply the Buddhist worldview to social concepts and issues. Intensive courses such as those run by the BDP can equip the *Sangha* with knowledge that prepares them to initiate their leadership network at the community level. As UNICEF EAPRO (2009) points out, in similar cases monks improved their knowledge of how to link the Buddhist scriptures with social issues if they passed the training. Nonetheless, the BDP needs to reflect on its equity, inclusiveness and capacity for providing such retraining for each member of the BVSC network.

The catalysing social perception of Sangha's social engagement

This research indicates that the BDP educates its *Sangha* community and also changes the broader perception of *Sangha* roles, from the view that *Sangha* is isolated from the wider society's needs to the view that *Sangha* are socially engaged with wider society. This positive change highlights the importance of Buddhism, especially *Sangha*, as part of the Laos society. This aligns with Vu et al. (2016), who argue that one indication of positive change is when participation in religious communities is increased, as these communities were previously seen as opposed to social development and the party's rule. Based on this project's findings, the BDP has faced criticisms about initial social interventions and the *Sangha's* involvement. This is because there is a wider, traditional belief that development is a secular, not religious, affair. However, the BDP has persevered in communicating the Buddhist ethics of social engagement [Pali: *dhura*] to the public, by demonstrating their relevance in action.

Ladwig (2006) recommends that the power of linking religious organisations, especially Buddhism, with the development process should not be ignored, because doing so emphasises voices and discourse within a culture. Lao *Sangha* approaches social development through the use of Buddhist ethics and moral authority, which can bring a positive change to communities. Most spiritual masters, staff members and trainees of the BDP agree that social intervention is crucial for *Sangha* because solving social problems is a principal duty of *Sangha*. It is also the ultimate goal of Buddhism, which emphasises liberation from suffering. In keeping with Ladwig (2006; 2008), the duties of *Sangha* are to educate lay followers about *Dhamma* and Buddhist

ethics, provide moral support and engage in social activities that eliminate human suffering; the primary goal of Buddhism (Pali: *dukkha*).

Buddhist Sangha volunteer spirit in Community Development Practice

As Witten-Hannah (1999) argues, establishing community initiatives is the most productive means of developing social capital. This sub-section discusses the *Sangha* roles in the BVSC project initiatives at the *Ban Bungsanthueng*, and their importance in popularising knowledge transfer, moral values, female empowerment and environmental awareness.

Stimulating the knowledge of Buddhism and traditional practice

Ladwig (2008)contends that one of the main challenges the *Sangha* face is the maintenance of Buddhist knowledge in the society and as isolated from traditional spirit-worship. However, findings from my fieldwork differ from the above position. The *Sangha* in the observed communities seem to make an effort to value and adapt to the local practices. They guide people to Buddhist knowledge whilst also maintaining room for indigenous practices, rather than isolating them or eliminating them completely. This finding aligns with Sengsoulin (2014), which indicates that the *Sangha* adapt to meet the local needs of different places, while teaching the laypeople *Dhamma*. My research concurs with Sengsoulin (2014) in regards to the *Sangha's* involvement in various village rituals such as blessings for births, ordinations, deaths, new business openings, new cars and housewarmings. Although Buddhism dominates the village life, the *Sangha* retains some of the traditional values and practices, and ensures people understand both.

A previous study by Dutta (2011) argues that the top-down development approach under the modernisation paradigm was ineffective because it neglected local communities, culture and knowledge. Therefore, development should focus more on cultural sensitivity and context. The villagers seem to seek to cultivate both Buddhist and traditional values, informed by expressions such as, "the villagers should speak and behave morally." The meaning of this expression is twofold; people have to speak and act by Buddhist moral norms (based on the Buddhist Precepts) and by village traditions or traditional norms:

> The villagers cannot differentiate in their practices what a traditional or Buddhist practice is. My work is to guide them to the knowledge and acts conforming to Buddhist and traditional norms (BVSC-BBTL1, September 7, 2017).

Ladwig (2008)looks at the unique authoritative position that society bestows on monks. *Sangha* tries to build a collective consciousness (collective ownership) based on the understanding of the *Wat* as a public space which everyone can easily access. Everything the residents do for the *Wat* is for the public interest of the village. Most of the interviewed members agreed that the *Sangha* intervention had impacted the villagers' contribution to village political affairs. Furthermore, their engagement has brought together the three institutions of the village including *Ban, Wat and Honghian*, and strengthened cooperation for sustainable development. This finding corresponds with what Waisbord (2001) says; that mobilizing members, encouraging ownership and supporting innovation is more important to community participation, than pre-determined strategies by outside forces.

Empowering women

Sengsoulin (2014) found that the members of the *Sangha* are predominantly Buddhist disciples such as novices, monks, nuns and white ascetics, although the majority are monks and novices, and nuns are a minority. Similar to Sengsoulin, this research found that most Lao people identify *Sangha* members as either monks or novices, with nuns[14] less frequently referred to. However, this does not prevent monks and novices from advancing women's roles in community development and Buddhist society, as the findings of this research demonstrate.

Cernea (1991), as cited in Parks et al. (2005, p. 10) argue that changes can fail to address local needs, to build local assets, to be long term and to be productive if they lack local ownership. As the findings indicate, the trained monk facilitates power sharing and expression within *Ban Bungsanthueng*'s Women's Handicraft Initiative, in order to encourage ownership and control of information and knowledge. The women's group determines how to develop and sustain their local wisdom of '*sad-phue*' (reed mat weaving) as an economic initiative and they are keen to sustain and transfer this knowledge to younger generations. With this activity, the

[14]A nun (Lao: *mae-khao*) is an ordained female in Buddhist life observing the Eight Precepts (Lao: *sila-paed*). There are no male nuns but there are female and male white ascetics who are temporarily ordained and generally seen at religious events only.

women can control the information and knowledge exchange among group members and other villagers because they *own* the craft knowledge (skills). The monk and the village government act as facilitators and are in agreement with the Parks et al. (2005) assertion that communication and social change practitioners should transfer ownership to affected communities, and facilitate better access to, and control of, information.

Parks et al. (2005) support the notion that both public and private dialogue about social norms increases enrolments of women in education and encourages family support for women in education. Formal school is mainly designed for educating young students, while schools for adults are missing in most remote villages in Laos. Resultantly, the *Wat* remains an essential learning centre. In this instance, the monk plays an educator role for the villagers, through daily interactions, religious events and *Vipassana* meditation practice. Based on the findings from the geo-social mapping and personal observations, the *Wat* is the space where adults, especially women, access knowledge by sharing daily experiences and information. The *Wat* can be seen as a learning space, with *Sangha* acting as a source of knowledge for villagers, especially for senior women who often receive limited information through media technology. For this reason, interpersonal communication is crucial for senior women. The villagers, as either individuals or groups, are provided with knowledge, skills and values which are useful for development participation and action (Servaes & Malikhao, 2007).

Based on the evidence from this research, it can be argued that the *Wat* provides space and promote women to demonstrate their informal leadership. The empowerment process facilitated by the *Wat* or *Sangha* contributes to power redistribution amongst groups of women who are considered oppressed within the village (Ife, 2002). Men have traditionally held power in the family and in the community, so women have often been disregarded. Following the position of Figueroa et al. (2002), it is arguable here that strengthening the leadership for a particular issue is one of the primary objectives of a social change program. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD] (2015)argues that women can be catalysts for rural transformation, provided that gender-based constraints be eliminated efficiently. Although formal leadership is recognized in the ‘head of the village’ or village government, the villagers also recognise informal leadership:

> The villagers know very well who the leader for that activity is and each leader is unique to a particular field. We have village administration leaders, leaders of women's union, leaders of united fronts, traditional and religious leaders (BVSC-BBT_L1, November 5, 2017).

This research indicates that the *Wat* facilitates the process of women's empowerment in the village, especially for adults and older women. It does this by providing them a space to show capability and leadership, and particularly spiritual leadership that caters to multiple facets of the community's needs.

Catalysing Buddhism and traditions for environmental consciousness

Building on Waisbord (2005) argument, peasants in many Laos communities have been oppressed and forced to change traditional methods of agricultural practice to unfamiliar processes. *Ban Bungsanthueng* has experienced the negative environmental impact of a market-oriented agro-economy such as slash-and-burn and chemical-based agriculture activities. These activities have led to massive environmental degradation such as deforestation and soil infertility. Buddhism holds the opposing view that, in order to achieve sustainability, economic development should take place alongside human development and environmental protection (Payutto, 2008). The research findings from *Ban Bungsanthueng* show the trained monk responded to the environmental issues by applying Buddhist ethics and Precepts through *Vipassana* meditation practice and *Dhamma* talks. This educated and stimulated the villagers into having positive thoughts and actions about sustaining the natural environment. In line with Walter (2007), the notion of tree ordination is a reinterpretation of Buddhist teachings. Tree ordination not only helps to protect the forest but also educates people at a grassroots level, thereby encouraging them to value the conservation of forest resources.

Observations from this research also indicate that the monks engage with traditional beliefs (animism or 'worshiping *Puta*[15]) and incorporate them into their environmental action. This finding is supported by Bialek (2014) and Morrow (2011), who also argument that the Buddhist environmental movement is an integration of Buddhist rituals and local beliefs in the spirit and sanctity of the natural world. The *Sangha* environmental practice is built on faith and belief in both spiritual systems and practices. Monks mobilized *Ban Bungsanthueng* villagers to

[15] *Puta*, which means 'the guardian spirit of the village', is a Lao local term which is specific to some local communities.

initiate forest ordaining, including in the nearby marsh, by observing the sacred forest (the location of *Puta's* spirit house) as a protected and conserved area. They ordained the forest by tying monastic robes around tree trunks and have planned to place the *Naga*[16] head on the marsh to prevent fishing.

> Every member of the community promises that they will not touch the protected forest and animals in the conservation area (BVSC_BTL1, September 5 and BVSC_BTL5, November 18, 2017).

A study by Darlington (1998)indicated gaps in development research, and suggested the impact of Buddhist ecology (especially tree ordination) on socio-economic and political aspects of community development, be examined more closely. Culturally speaking, the forest ordaining gives precedence to the local culture, where all stakeholders have renegotiated their needs in order to reach an agreement on the protection and maintenance of the forest ecosystem. Furthermore, Morrow (2011) researched trees, or even whole forests, which are ordained as monks by the symbolic coloured cloth or monks' robes, in the hope that their sanctity would make people hesitate about cutting them down. This activity potentially contributes to food security and sustainability for a community with consumption practices based on self-sufficiency. However, most importantly, people became more aware of environmental protection and actively participated in community development, which signifies the political commitment of each village member.

This is strongly supported by Kaza (2000) who argues that the Buddhist principle of interdependence promotes an understanding of natural systems and the Buddhist ecological movement. This, in turn, indicates that the Buddhist ethics of discipline and virtue, and the Five Precepts and interdependence (Pali: *paticcasamuppada*), are the backbone of the Buddhist environmental movement. The Five Precepts encourage people to live in harmony with nature, while the Buddhist ideal of interdependence reflects how all living beings are linked. The ideal

[16]*Naga* is an animal and has a connection with Buddhism since the Buddha's life. It is a symbol of sanctity and ordination in Buddhism. It is believed that the *Naga* is the protector and king of the river and nether world (a world under the river), according to the Lao people and a number of Buddhist followers. The *Naga* (head) can be commonly seen in the Buddhist temple.

of interdependence also links to all the activities the monks engage in, so that people are aware they are living under the conditions of nature.

Based on the above data, the *Sangha* tries to adapt and reinterpret the Buddhist teachings into current social context, rather than taking over the local traditional practices (Sengsoulin, 2014). The field research findings lead to the conclusion that the *Sangha* have integrated indigenous practices, as well as used local resources, to stimulate positive changes in the village.

Challenges

The trained monk experienced opportunities and challenges in their community work. Politically speaking, the *Sangha*, as a religious body, cannot fully function as a leading development actor in the village. This is in spite of the fact that the state-party and government have given rights to all citizens to contribute to the development of their own family, village and country. However, it is commonly understood that the development role must belong to the village administration or government, leaving the monk to focus on their religious role of teaching morality and *Dhamma* to the laypeople. This challenge has led the *Sangha* to take an approach to community development through *Jit-asa* (volunteer spirit) as part of an alternative Buddhist approach. I would argue, based on evidence from this research, that the term '*Jit-asa*' is participatory in its practice. This challenge is witnessed in the name change of the training course by the BDP, from '*Phra-patthana*' (development monks) to '*Jit-asa*' (volunteer spirit). This change was implemented because:

> The term, '*Phra-patthana'* is too broad, but '*Jit-asa'* is more specific to Lao Buddhist characteristics and positions (BDP_S5 August 7, 2017).

Although the *Sangha* has a limited political role, it takes advantage of its social capital by using the Buddhist values of obligation and duty to negotiate development participation with the government and leading development agencies:

> The Lao government recognises the work of [the] BDP and [they] work hand-in-hand (BDP_S2,3,4,5 July 25, 2017).

> While [the] BDP produces development monks or agents, the government supports [the] BDP regarding policies (BDP_S4, July 25, 2017).

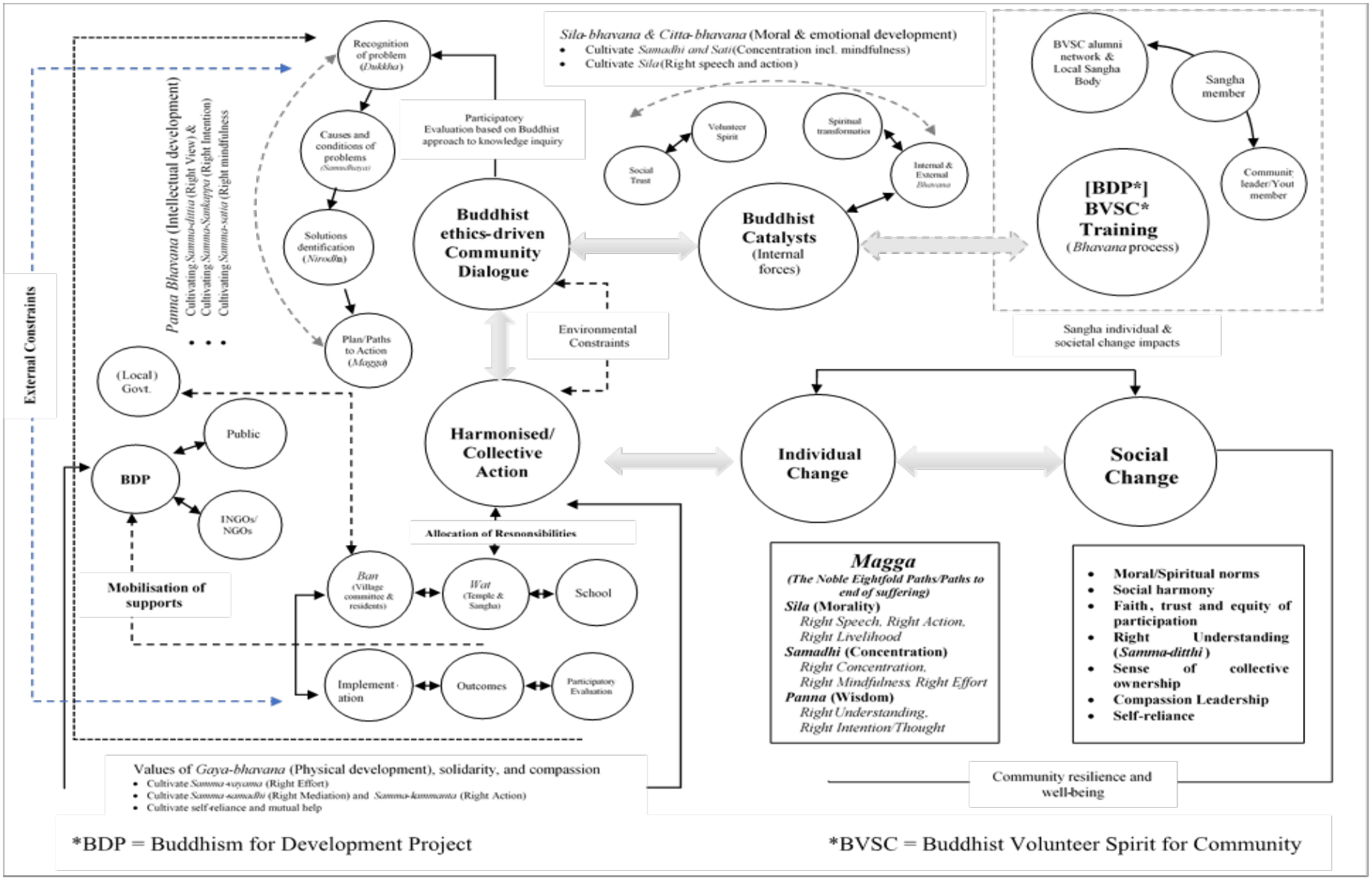
This tactic is supported by the (UNICEF EAPRO, 2009) approach to HIV/AIDs which set up the Buddhist Leadership Initiatives [BLI] that engage Buddhist monks, nuns and lay teachers in combating HIV and AIDS in Laos. Their involvement contributes significantly towards eradicating the discrimination against victims of HIV/AIDs, based on the Buddhist ethics of self-discipline, compassion and moderation.

2. Integrating the IMCFSC Model with the Buddhist Approach to Development and Communication

In this section, I will attempt to integrate my findings into a model that takes into account the IMCFSC or Catalyst Model developed by Figueroa et al. (2002), and the BA by the Buddhism for Development Project [BDP] (2012). The resulting combined model will also draw on elements of the Internews information ecosystem model. By integrating these two main approaches, I intend to demonstrate that the resulting synergy can provide a more holistic approach to community development in Buddhist societies.

The IMCFSC model can act synergistically with the Buddhist epistemology, through the Buddhist ontology – the Four Noble Truths. Buddhist moral teachings and ethics can effectively regulate the entire process of communication for social change. First, this section provides an overview of the emerging model; Secondly, it discusses how the Buddhist catalyst role enriches the information ecosystem of the Buddhist Initiative and the social values of the Five Precepts, and discusses how the Buddhist dialogic communication can result in collective (harmonious) action; finally, it presents the proposed contextualised indicators.

Figure 34: Integration of the IMCFSC Model with the BA to Development and Communication
Source: Author



2.1. Describing the emerging model from the integration

The above model is divided into a four-stage social change process, or what can be referred to as the 'Four Noble Truths for social change process', with two possible outcomes for individual and social change.

BVSC Training

The first stage includes members of the *Sangha* and general Buddhist followers that participate in a training course organised by the BDP. The dashed line and the dashed arrow show that members attend this course subject to individual needs, and members of the *Sangha* and various communities can become change agents by adopting the BDP approach.

The Buddhist catalyst

The Buddhist catalyst may or may not be an alumnus of the BVSC, and regardless, they can be a part of the BVSC network. The Buddhist catalyst mainly focuses on internal stimulus, and community members or internal issues may stimulate that dialogue. At the earlier stage, Buddhist change agents work with internal and external *bhavana* (training) to transform people's spirituality and cultivate virtuous values. Such values include compassion and desire to serve others in the name of volunteer spirit and trust building. This stage of the process is particularly important as members learn and cultivate, through interpersonal communication and real-life experience, fundamental knowledge such as interconnection, interdependence and Buddhist ethics. Through this process, the agents gained the trust of the community members who, in turn, can be spiritually transformed by gaining Concentration (Right Concentration and Right Mindfulness) and *sila* (Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood), so that they are ready to enter into dialogue.

Buddhist ethics-based community dialogue

Through learning, understanding and cultivating Buddhist ethical values, the next stage of the process is participatory dialogic communication, or Buddhist ways of analysis (Buddhist ontology). In this stage, I attempt to incorporate the Buddhist Four Noble Truths (Pali: *Ariya-sacca*) as a method for analysing problems, finding solutions and planning for action, while using Buddhist ethics as a basis for participatory learning and evaluation. At this stage, the *Sangha* can play a significant role by motivating members to stay together, as conflict or misunderstandings may occur at this point. The *Sangha's* spiritual role remains a key force in holding members together.

Collective (Harmonious) action

At the collective action stage, the spiritual need is doubled, requiring mutual trust, solidarity, social harmony and collective consciousness. Here, the Buddhist catalyst (change agent) can demonstrate their leadership to members. Three key community units, *Ban* (village and residents), *Wat* (temple), and *Honghian* (school), are required to work hand-in-hand. At this stage, external actors may be involved in some activities; however, the Buddhist approach values and prioritises self-reliance or independence.

Individual and social changes

Individual behavioural changes can take place at every stage of the process. In the BVSC training, changes can take place through the individual *Sangha* members and through the collective *Sangha* community. At the second stage of the process, individual or group members may experience changes through spiritual transformation. At the third stage of the process, members are equipped with skills which are based on knowledge of the inter-being[17] of natural systems. Individuals may develop collective consciousness and have ideas about taking action and making a change either individually or collectively. In this instance individuals gain *magga* which leads to changes in morality (Pali: *sila*), concentration (Pali: *samadhi*) and wisdom (Pali: *panna*), in which each aspect of the Noble Eightfold Paths is achieved. Collectively, the community may experience a shared understanding of moral/spiritual norms, social harmony, trust, faith, equitable participation, Right Understanding (Pali: *samma-ditthi*)[18], a sense of collective consciousness, compassionate leadership and self-reliance.

2.2. Discussing the emerging model

This section presents the emerging model from the research. It discusses the contextualised indicators for holistic development approaches which fit into the Buddhist context of development specific to Laos. Following this, it also discusses the Internews' information ecosystems which enrich information for the emerging model.

The Buddhist catalyst roles

The characteristics of the Buddhist catalyst can manifest through the role of a spiritual transformation guide, development facilitator, information influencer and a trusted source. These roles are performed by the *Sangha* members and laity in community development and

[17] '*Inter-being*' refers to the belief of interconnection and interdependence (Pali: *paticcasamuppada*) between all things. The belief considers that everything that occurs is based on causes and conditions. For instance, economic development (the occurrence), utilizes natural resources (conditions) to promote growth (cause).

[18] *Samma-ditthi* (Right Understanding) is a knowledge and insight gained from cultivating or practicing the Four Noble Truths (the reality of nature) and *paticcasamuppada* (interdependence or inter-being).

predominantly act as internal agents of stimulus. These catalysts aim to transform and prepare people's spirituality for community initiatives or action.

Internal stimulus/change agent

The BDP is likely to focus more on the community's internal factors and resources than external ones (*see Figure 34*). This finding aligns with studies by Figueroa et al. (2002) who describe the catalyst as either internal or external to the community, but as an internal stimulus and change agent which can take the form of policy, innovation, technology or mass media. Therefore, the trainee selection process of the BDP can be considered successful because most trainees and future change agents under the BDP network are likely insiders to communities. This is consistent with Melkote's (2012) argument that endogenous efforts and local leaders need to spearhead social transformation using their own practices (p. 31). The endogenous efforts of leaders in the BDP approach are witnessed in the language used by the BDP's spiritual masters, staff members and trainees. Throughout interviews and focus groups, such statements were heard, which clearly demonstrate a connection to the community, such as "I (the trainee) represent my *community*, district, and province of…." And "I will go back to my community to…."

The findings from the mini-workshops with trainee monks, nuns and members of the Buddhist Initiative, suggest that the *Sangha* is an insider, who knows the context of the community's needs and is better equipped to identify barriers, challenges and opportunities compared to outsiders. This finding is supported by Parks et al. (2005) who argue that change agents engender dialogue, promote participation in decision-making processes, emphasize grass-roots approaches and facilitate the process. Based on the information above, this research argues that the Buddhist catalyst approaches give more internal stimulus and resources precedence.

Spiritual transformer

Apart from traditional tasks, such as meditation and *dhamma* studies, members of the *Sangha* are trained to lead community development initiatives in concurrence with the BDP's goal of consolidating Buddhist knowledge into social work at a grass-roots level (BDP, 2004, as cited in Ladwig, 2006, p. 22). Here, the *Sangha* comprehends the significance of spiritual transformation. In this model, the *Sangha* members are trained to transfer development knowledge (in connection to Buddhist worldviews) to their *Sangha* community by practising internal and external *bhavana* (development or training). Dissanayake (2010) argues that self-

transformation is important for understanding the Buddhist way of life, as according to Buddha, social transformation can only take place through spiritual self-transformation. As a result, Buddhism emphasises that social change must originate in the mind of the individual. This practice both strengthens the mental ability of *Sangha* themselves, and also helps laypeople to cope with the uncertainties that occur in everyday life.

Previous attempts by the Lao government to engage the *Sangha* as an agent of community development, as Figueroa et al. (2002) indicate, change agent is often used by NGOs in community intervention, have failed (Ladwig, 2006; 2008). The government assumed that by borrowing the *Sangha*'s moral authority, they could reach large populations and foster development by shaping new attitudes and changing people's behaviours towards a modern society (Boutsavath & Chapelier, 1973). In these instances, the *Sangha* were misused, and the outcome of the approach (failure) was predetermined the moment the key spiritual core was excluded from the proposed transformation.

This research demonstrates that the *Sangha* guide people to an understanding of natural systems, interdependence and the application of solidarity values for community harmony. The Buddhist value that bears the idea of social harmony is '*Brahma-vihara*' or the Buddhist social emotion (Queen, 2000). This includes, "loving-kindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudhitha*), and equanimity (*upekkha*)" (Dissanayake, 1983, as cited in Dissanayake, 2010, p. 87; Queen, 2000). This Buddhist value is evidenced in most of the research participants' language, including:

> The monk is a spiritual leader.

And:

> The monk changes a bad person to a good one.

And:

> The monk promotes solidarity and mutual help in the village.

In this context, solidarity and mutual help can be seen as potential social capital which can support the community's sustainability, resilience and peace. Thus, spiritual transformation is significant and deserves to be taken into account in the efforts of building a resilient community.

In addition to the *Sangha*'s role as information transmitter and knowledge translator, they are also considered to be social capital. Ife (2002)and Ladwig (2006) explain that social capital

covers a range of social aspects, such as human relationships, religious communities, compassion and generosity, solidarity, trust and reciprocity. In line with this, the *Sangha* are seen as a religious and trusted community that has the promotion of human relationships through the strengthening of solidarity and trust, as a spiritual mandate. By using Buddhist ethics and moral teachings, the *Sangha* trains people to cultivate compassion and generosity, which in turn, lay the foundation for social harmony and trust. Rawls points out that the village *Wat* connects with the concept of 'distributive justice', because funds donated by the community to the *Wat* support the education of novices from low-income families, which shows solidarity (Lao: *khwamsamakhi*) Rawls (1971), as cited in Ladwig (2006). Based on this previous research and evidence from my own findings, the *Sangha* can effectively intervene in community development by transforming villagers' mental abilities and improving their understanding of the inter-being of the natural world. This, in turn, promotes the Buddhist social emotion that can lead to action for change.

Sangha as information influencers and people who are trusted

This section discusses how the Buddhist Initiative information ecosystem, based on Internews' Information Ecosystem framework, can help us better understand community communication flows. Better understanding can then contribute to the identification of significant barriers to planning appropriate and effective intervention (Internews, n.d). This framework can assist in evaluating the *Sangha's* and individual monk's contribution to a more connected and resilient community (Internews, n.d).

Principally, in the Buddhist Initiative, the information flows better in a cultural context and supports political activity. The village government (headmen) manages political and formal sources of information about development in the community, while the monk deals with the socio-cultural and spiritual framework. The villagers often feel uneasy seeking information from the headmen because this information is primarily limited to circulating within the village committees and is only sometimes shared with villages during village meetings or public announcements. Accordingly, the power relationships between the village authority, project members and villagers becomes constrained by who has access to information, and a dynamic of power is based on exclusiveness rather than inclusiveness (Internews, 2015). Thus, villagers may find it difficult to receive information due to power relations.

Catalysts are needed in communities to stimulate dialogue and facilitate concerted action and eventual solutions (Doan-Bao et al., 2018; Figueroa et al., 2002). The findings from this

research project indicate that two actors influence information related to the Buddhist Initiative which is divided into two separate blocks including the government services and the community news. The village headman disseminates information on, and by, government services mostly through *tholakhong* (the announcement speaker) and at village meetings. The trained monk uses *tholakhong* as a tool for educating people with *dhamma* and inviting them to take action. The Internews (2015) study of Myanmar's information ecosystem showed that improving the flow of information is not only a matter of using new tools for information sharing, but also of finding ways to develop the existing practices of information dissemination. Drawing on this, the trained monk uses a traditionally Buddhist method of disseminating information and knowledge by delivering a sermon and *Dhamma* talk. Furthermore, he demonstrates to the villagers how that knowledge can be put into practice, while staying close to them during the entire process. As Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) point out, Freire's liberating pedagogical approach includes dialogue, voice, and reflection. Based on Freire's approach and the data from this research, the trained monk deals with spiritual liberation, especially liberating pedagogy and reflection, and provides both spiritual development and experiential learning, so that villagers concurrently learn and gain experience.

Most information about the BDP project passes through the monk, to be disseminated to the village headman and villagers through two channels; word of mouth (face-to-face communication) and *tholakhong* (see *Figure 28 and 35*). The trained monk is a member of the BVSC network of the BDP and has a *Sangha* organisational (religious) relationship with the BDP. He therefore receives *and* reports information about the project from *and* to the BDP:

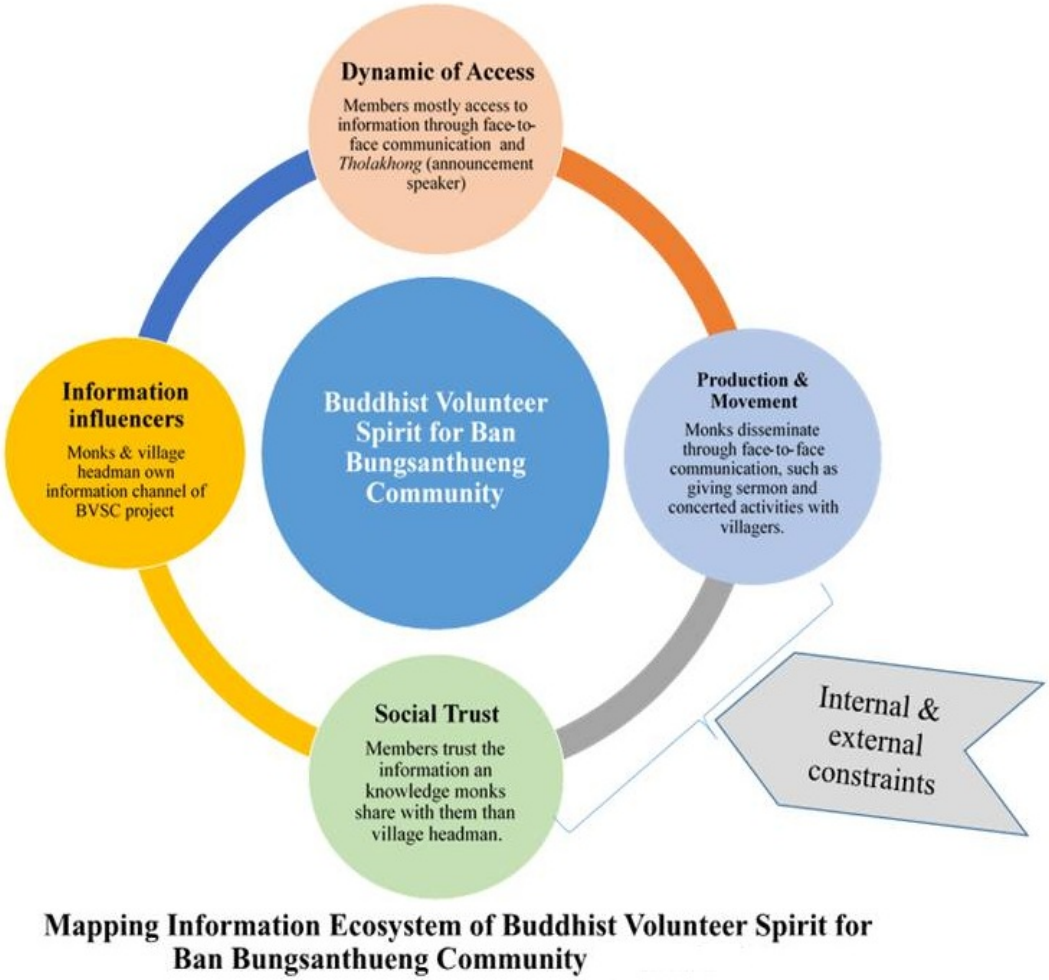
> The monk is the person who knows the information about the project and [the] BDP because he is the person who brought the project to us (BVSC-BBT_L2, September 7, 2017).

In comparison to the village headman, the monk emphasizes face-to-face communication in activities, *Vipassana* meditation and religious events.

Base on the above discussion, I now draw on the Interviews Information Ecosystem Model in order to further contextualise the information ecosystem of Buddhist Initiative. I selected four out of the eight dimensions including 1) the dynamic of information access, 2) production and movement, 3) information influencers and 4) social trust. Although all dimensions are important, a full mapping would necessitate taking them all into account. By selecting only these four aspects I want to draw attention to what is most relevant to the

Buddhist Initiative and this research. In doing this, I intend to add an extra layer of interpretation to the Buddhist catalyst for change model.

Figure 35: A diagram of information flow and access, and the influencers in the Buddhist Initiative
Source: Author



According to Bacon (2009), trust is central to the enabler's role because change requires mutual trust. This research indicates that members of the project trust the monk's leadership and knowledge. Significant factors contributing to such trust are the leadership of the monk, his method of knowledge transfer, his position as a respected person, and his moral behaviour (especially in regard to the fourth aspect of the Five Precepts — abstaining from false speech). Villagers generally have a conviction that the *Sangha* never speak falsely, so this informs their trust that the project the monk brought to the community will benefit the community in the long run. As Robinson (1999) argues, a high level of trust is key to building social capital, and trust allows various associations or groups to discuss community accounts. For instance, the members have limited information about the BDP, which they perceive as a donor:

> Only the monk knows about [the] BDP, we do not know much (September 7 and 12, 2017).

The participants seem uninterested in finding out more about this and the monk therefore remains the most trusted information source for the villagers.

As highly trusted and respected people in Lao society (Ladwig, 2006; 2008; UNICEF EAPRO, 2009), the *Sangha*'s spiritual leadership allows them to gain attention when they speak *and* ensures that people follow their instructions (UNICEF EAPRO, 2009). People communicate through everyday interaction in their communities, and that is where the role of the *Sangha* can be an important catalyst for change – by building on the social capital that has been generated by their kinship, daily interactions with the community and spiritual leadership role in community development matters. This finding supports the idea put forward by Waisbord (2001), that development communication should be more human focused, rather than media focused, and aim for strong horizontal communication.

However, the flow of, and access to, information is likely to be interrupted by the endogenous and exogenous environment. Internally, with the neutral position of the *Sangha* afforded by its separation from politics, the challenge is often for the monk to maintain neutrality when making project decisions. To contest the constraint of formal power relationships, the monk could leverage his power with the village headman by using his close relationships with the villagers to renegotiate the power and improve the situation. The monk's position would allow him to increase the villagers' participation quickly. This is evident by the following statement:

> When we have a dispute or misunderstanding between members and village administration, we can approach the monk and ask for his help to negotiate and settle such [an] issue (BVSC-M5, Personal communication, November 13, 2017).

Externally, the influence of the BDP and the donors over the monk can also impact his community development work. The findings show that the relationship between the monk and the BDP appears to be vertical (top-down) and the donors' intervention can be impacted by predetermined outcomes. These factors can impact on the entire process of the Buddhist Initiative. This corresponds with the Internews (2015) view of power relationships and other forms of social constraints which can form barriers to information access.

Essentially, internal communication flows are vital to successful community development and the role of the catalyst relies heavily on being part of these flows. This

corresponds with Waisbord (2001) findings, which mention Freire's suggestion that development practitioners should make interpersonal communication the priority approach, followed by national media and technologies. The sermon delivery, or *dhamma* talk, is one variety of horizontal and interpersonal communication. In *Ban Bungsanthueng,* interpersonal communication is more effective because of the kinship-based relationships which exist, and because the *Wat* is being used as a space for spiritual refuge and participation.

The *Sangha* can play many roles in community initiatives, such as educator, project counsellor and spiritual leader, and they each have the potential to become a catalyst for change. According to Figueroa et al. (2002) a catalyst may fulfil many roles, including as a community insider or outsider, as an agent of policies and change, and as a community worker or practitioner. In *Ban Bungsanthueng*, the monk and the village headman are required to work closely together to ensure the villagers' participation in the community and access to information. Moreover, the BDP and the donors should ensure they intervene only as facilitators, not influencers.

Buddhist ethics, dialogue and participation

This section is a discussion on the social value of moral teachings, the Buddhist method of knowledge-inquiry and community action. According to this research, Buddhist teachings of morality have often been seen as religious propaganda and are thus perceived to have little or no value for development work. This is further discussed below where I am arguing that the Buddhist values of moral teachings and ethics can serve positively under the participatory communication for social change approach. This builds on Rajavaramuni's research, which argues that Buddhists, including monks and lay followers, practice a very strong belief in social ethics Rajavaramuni (1990), as cited in Ladwig (2006, p. 18). It also builds on Queen (2000) suggestion that the four styles of Buddhist ethics practiced are discipline, virtue, altruism and engagement, and can be used as a theoretical framework for discussion.

Social values of the Five Precepts

Waisbord (2001) argues that the definition of development should not be limited to road building, electricity generation or farm productivity. True development requires a more holistic approach that is not separated from its socio-cultural and spiritual context. Findings from this research project indicate that most development agencies consider the Buddhist moral teachings as religious propaganda and choose to ignore its educational potential. Most donors have the opinion that Buddhist moral teaching activities, such as summer novice (student)

ordination camps and *Vipassana* meditation practice, have little value for broader societal development. This goes a long way to explaining why:

> The donors do not fund these activities (BDP_S4, July 25, 2017).

Comprehending the ethical or moral values for social development requires an understanding of basic Buddhist morality (the Five Precepts). The Five Precepts are comprised of five conditions which include abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech and intoxicants. The purpose of practicing meditation in *Vipassana* activity and observing moral teachings is to reinforce ethical and virtuous minds and to enable people to put ethics and virtue into practice in their daily lives. As Somphone (2011) points out, Buddhism cultivates mindfulness through the practice of meditation. This allows the individual to tap into spiritual power for mental strength, inner peace, moderation and the Buddhist awareness of all living things. The mention of 'virtuous and ethical minds' is based on Lao cultural practices and social norms where Buddhist values, particularly the Five Precepts (Lao: *Sila-ha*), have an influential role on the laity. In the Buddhist Initiative, each aspect of the *Sila-ha* encourages villagers to conserve nature, to recognise the relationship between humans and the environment, and to conduct community economic activities under natural conditions without exploiting or harming those natural resources. The monk uses this approach to demonstrate the value of individual and collective behavioural change. Villagers can gain Buddhist ethical and emotional virtue through observing the Five Precepts:

> *Sila-dhamma*, such as the Five Precepts, can push society to peace. The first aspect of the Five Precepts is abstaining from killing and exploiting one another; this is the security of the society. The second aspect is abstaining from stealing one another's assets which compares to asset security; people will steal others' property without this aspect. The third aspect is abstaining from sexual misconducts; this can be understood as sexual abuse or human trafficking. The fourth aspect is abstaining from false speech; this is the fame security, credibility and sincerity people have for one another in the society. The last aspect is abstaining from intoxicants; it is health security. If people have morality, we will live together in peace. If we have morality, we do not need to close the door of our house because nobody will steal one another's property (BVSC_T5, July 26, 2017).

Using morality (*Sila*) as a stimulus for change provides a strong sense of ownership of public welfare and a recognition of shared (collective) resources. It also provides people with a platform to discuss activities that are seen as inappropriate or harmful to the community's well-being, through the Buddhist way of knowing (the Fourth Noble Truths). This finding

corroborates with Payutto (1998), as cited in Servaes and Malikhao (2007), who suggests that people do not control the environment, but instead live in it harmoniously and respectfully, which is the core idea behind sustainable development. As Rodloytuk (2007) recommends, the connection of external *bhavana* requires focussing on Buddhist development research, the spiritual training (*bhavana*) must come first and foremost before stepping towards environmental activities.

Practising Buddhist ethics is a process of improving the human mind and cultivating social emotions, which, in turn, can promote social harmony. Dissanayake (2010) highlights the four Buddhist social emotions known as '*Brahma vihara*' (divine abodes), as the founding concepts of social harmony. They include loving-kindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*muditha*), and equanimity (*upekkha*). Queen (2000) has also put forward a set of Buddhist ethics based on these *Brahma vihara*, which are further discussed below.

Catalysing Buddhist ethics in knowledge inquiry and dialogue

Every community, both in developing countries and indigenous communities, has its own ethics which protect its knowledge systems and inquiry (Chilisa, 2012). Just as other religious systems have their own ethics and epistemologies, so too does Buddhism. Buddhism has its own method of comprehending reality, relationships and values, as well as its own philosophy and practices known as 'the Four Noble Truths.' For example, UNICEF EAPRO (2009) believes that the Buddhist notions of suffering and Four Noble Truths can be used to better understand the suffering and challenges of those who live with HIV/AIDS at an individual level, within the family and within the community. This involves using the *Sangha* as agents to practice the notion for change.

The Four Noble Truths are core to Buddhist ethics, and a Buddhist method of knowledge-inquiry could potentially generate dialogue about community issues and promote participation. Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) argue that the key element of participatory communication for empowerment is the reflection on the problem which then leads to action. The BA to knowledge-inquiry through practising the Four Noble Truths is a learning process, and provides a framework for villagers to discuss and express ideas in their daily interactions. This research uses the environmental consciousness initiative at *Ban Bungsanthueng* as an example.

The first aspect of the Truths is '*dukkha*' (suffering). In this research, I attempt to interpret '*dukkha*' as an 'issue or problem' that requires understanding, discussion and a

solution. Payutto (2002) defines "sufferings as non-tolerant, oppressive, disputed and deficient situations, [with] lack of meanings; and uncertainties causing untrue satisfactoriness or happiness" (p. 90). This first aspect of the Truths emphasises recognition of the issue, which from the Buddhist perspective, is called 'awakening'. Therefore, one must first become aware that certain environmental issues exist in their community before taking action. This links with the community dialogue in the first stage of the IMCFSC model which perceives community recognition of life-altering problems as essential to the successful process of social change (Figueroa et al., 2002).

The second aspect of the Truths is '*samudaya*' (the origin of sufferings). As UNICEF EAPRO (2009) indicates, *samudaya "*suggests the need to identify the underlying causes of the suffering" in order to "understand and eliminate them" (p. 2). Similarly*, samudaya* draws attention to the underlying causes and conditions of environmental issues and the impact these issues have on people's lives. Consequently, when the underlying causes are identified this leads to finding appropriate ways of stopping the problem. Figueroa et al. (2002) confirm this when they argue that a solution may be identified at the stage of problem identification, essentially because people are unlikely to think about the issue as a problem, if there is no emerging solution in response.

The third aspect of the Truths is '*nirodha*'. It identifies a way to be free from suffering. As UNICEF EAPRO (2009) states, this third Noble Truth helps communities to identify resources and mobilises individuals to collaborate and end the suffering. At this stage, both causes *and* stakeholders are identified as being part of the issue, which means this stage provides an opportunity to involve all stakeholders in the discussion for seeking a collective solution and restoring a collective well-being. Cornwall and Jewkes (1995), as cited in Parks et al. (2005), argue that humans should be regarded as agents of change instead of objects, as humans are capable of analysing a situation and planning a solution. *Nirodha* is therefore a human-focused approach as it provides a platform for assessing the current situation, brainstorming for resolutions and then planning a course of action. Figueroa et al. (2002) believe that positive outcomes can manifest very soon after a community engages in addressing a critical issue in a communication for social change process. This is because through identification of problems, critical thinking and collaboration, the group members can work towards a solution.

The monk uses the principle of the Truths to explain the linkage between causes and conditions. Somphone (2011) suggests the only way to achieve tranquillity of the mind and happiness is to pursue the essence of education through ethical and spiritual values, because education and development are interconnected and interdependent. Findings indicate that the Buddhist moral teaching approach is deeply embedded in local cultural practices and can promote social change. It is used as a tool for educating people's minds and developing spirituality which contributes to peace and solidarity which stimulates dialogue and participation. From a Buddhist perspective, human beings should be central to any development, so any development should begin with the human mind. Buddhist moral teachings are an education of the heart which cultivates ethical values, spiritual and emotional prosperity and happiness:

> One must cultivate the Four Noble Truths to free oneself from sufferings (BVSC-BBTL1, September 5, 2017).

To illustrate this further, the people of *Ban Bungsanthueng* previously thought that trees growing within their land area were their property, and it was widely accepted that it was their right to cut trees or clear the land to conduct agricultural activities. The monk encouraged villagers to explore the issue, to rethink how their actions would lead to negative impact on the environment and collective village life. The monk also leads the villagers to restore the forest by initiating the reforestation activity. This activity involved taking the sacred forest (the *Puta*'s forest) and growing the trees at the *Vipassana* meditation centre (which is community land) as a community forest. In this case, the monk used the Buddhist Five Precepts as stimulus and '*paticcasamuppada'* (interdependence of inter-being) to educate the villagers about the causes and conditions of such actions.

Collective (harmonious) action

In the above model, I repeatedly and firmly built on Freire (1970) idea that all stakeholders should be involved in the development process because it is more holistic and corresponds with the BA. In regards to the implementation of sustainable community development, the perspectives of the BDP's trainees and the *Ban Bungsanthueng* villagers, is that there are three key village institutions; *Ban* (village and residents), *Wat* (or religious bodies) and *Honghian* (educational institutions). Figueroa et al. (2002) point out that collective self-efficacy is the shared belief and confidence that a group of people who join together are capable of taking action and solving problems. In BA the three components of the community

enter into discussion and participatory planning, which then leads to concerted action. According to Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation [SDC] (2016), development communication is used to promote participation for social and political transformation, and it facilitates access to information, stimulates participation, empowers people and influences public policies. Each institution plays their roles, but the village government and monk act as a facilitator. Both actors, males in power (Witten-Hannah, 1999), need to have the trust of local groups, need to support local groups with necessary resources for local initiatives, and need to facilitate the strengthening of the community's power, so that community members can take control of their own lives.

The village headman is responsible for the coordination and procurement of all necessities required for implementing the activity. He facilitates the BVSC activities through his relationship with the district government. Witten-Hannah (1999) suggests that the government also needs to play the role of a facilitator, in order to keep local initiatives and growth promoted. The educational institutions play significant roles in educating children, raising awareness about rules of co-existence based on morality, and encouraging children to take part in various activities. Figueroa et al. (2002) point out that social cohesion is the force that encourages members of a group to stay within the group and continue contributing to a collective project. The *Sangha* are seen as a stimulus for community solidarity, and as having social capital, because they act as the glue between villagers, and between the three main institutions within the village. In line with previous studies (Bacon, 2009), Ife (2002); Witten-Hannah (1999), trust is needed for social changes, to join people and to bridge gaps in society.

Figueroa et al. (2002) suggest that leaders and members of the community should monitor their assigned work to ensure that the work is on schedule and everyone is doing their work. Through the cooperation of all stakeholders in the community, the BA is likely to be seen as a holistic approach because every member plays a leadership role and fulfils their responsibilities using the spirit of the volunteer. Sustained and efficient leadership must encourage members of the community to voluntarily participate in the program, must demonstrate a leadership vision for sharing the benefits of the program, and must plan the social change process (Figueroa et al., 2002).

The values of Buddhist ethics and solidarity are put in place at the implementation stage. The essence of participatory communication is how awareness leads to commitment and then to action (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). In the Buddhist context of Lao PDR, the concepts of

love, solidarity and harmony play a dominant role in participatory community development. In line with these BA, Freire (1970)suggests that a useful approach for the promotion of community dialogue and participation is one that is founded upon love; dialogue cannot exist without profound love, humility and human faith. Freire articulated that profound love is based on dialogue and a dialogical process because it is a love for the world and people.

The power of Buddhist ethics should not be ignored because they have a significant role in the pre-stage of communication for social change (catalyst approach), particularly through emphasis on the virtue of solidarity and harmony. Bacon (2009) defines community as a collection of all living beings interacting in the same surroundings, sharing an ethos, opportunities and goals. As a result, any actions will have an impact on others in the same environment. The ethical virtue of serving others and feelings of engagement are crucial in BA because they nurture the community members' volunteer spirit, participation and desire to mutually assist in reaching goals (Queen, 2000). Similarly, David Chappell, as cited in Queen (2000), points out that Mahayana Buddhism emphasises the threefold of Buddhist ethics; 1) avoidance of evil deeds, 2) cultivation of good deeds, and 3) serving all beings. These are enacted through regularly observing *vinaya* (monastic discipline) and *sila* (morality) and meditating on *Brahma vihara* (divine abodes) and *paramita* (perfection) in order to cultivate the commitment to serving others (*bodhisattacarya*).

Through the BA to knowledge-inquiry and harmonious implementation process, outcomes can be measured. Speaking in terms of *Dhamma*, members of the community firmly believe that they pursue Right Meditation *(Samma-Samadhi*), (Right Mindfulness *(Samma-Sati*), Right Effort *(Pali: Samma-Vayama*), Right Action *(Samma-Kamanta*) and Right Intention *(Samma-Sankappa*). This demonstrates how external *bhavana* can then link to action. Generally speaking, values of solidarity, mutual help and harmony become aspects of social capital, contributing to peace and social harmony in the community. In summary, the community achieves the goal of self-reliance and resilience because their implementation is based on mutual help and harmony. As everyone in the community has a strong sense of volunteerism the community is likely to be less dependent on external support.

2.3. Discussing contextualised indicators

The research findings show that the BDP's trained as *Sangha* play an internal catalyst role in community development in Laos. The merging of the IMCFSC with the BDP's BA to development has generated new indicators which are more holistic and contribute to

participatory communication for Buddhist development in Laos. Individual and social change indicators seek the attainment of the last of the Four Noble Truths '*magga*' (path to end suffering or the noble path), which consists of morality (*sila*), concentration (*samadhi*), and wisdom (*panna*). In this research, I only discuss contextualised social change indicators. For the indicators of individual changes refer to the *Figure 34*

Table 29: Contextualised indicators from the integration of the IMCFSC model with Buddhist development disciplines
Source: Author

BA Indicators	Indicators of IMCFSC Social Changes	Emerging Indicators
• Moral-based society • Social harmony/solidarity • Compassion • Loving-kindness • Mutual help • Self-reliance/Self-help	• Leadership • Degree and equity of participation • Information equity • Collective self-efficacy • Sense of ownership • Social cohesion • Social norms	• Moral/ethical norms • Sense of collective ownership • Social harmony • Faith, trust and equity of participation • Right Understanding (*Samm-ditthi*) • Compassionate leadership • Self-reliance

The emerging indicators for social impact need to be included in a holistic discussion about community development in Buddhist societies, because they are interrelated and highly contextual. The integrated third column, as seen above, takes into consideration the Buddhist values and the IMCFSC; these indicators share equal values.

Moral/Ethical norms

According to the findings from this research, moral norms cover many areas, yet they are all based on the Buddhist ethics, including but not limited to generosity, compassion, love, mindfulness and effort, and most of them are divine abodes (*Brahma-vihara*). Based on the research by Figueroa et al. (2002), social norms are a set of beliefs that shape people's ways of behaving and thinking, whilst also being a judgement of people's action and attitudes. As previously discussed in this chapter, the practice of belief systems in *Ban Bungsanthueng* is a blend of indigenous and Buddhist traditions. Thus, these traditions have become a standard for judging people's behaviour.

The monk works to raise an understanding and mindfulness of the environment. For instance, cutting trees and killing animals violates the first of the Five Precepts (Lao: *sila-ha*), so the forest requires protection. The moral values of this teaching are to instruct the villagers to cultivate compassion and love towards nature and other beings on earth, and to live together in harmony.

The monk also encourages women to play a more active political role in the village. Although the village norm sees power and leadership bestowed upon men, the monk provides new approaches to women's empowerment by shedding light on new form of social norms. 'Compassion' can be applied in this context, where men and society should be open to recognising women's contribution to the improvement of their family and village life. As a result, the spiritual norm of 'generosity' of spirit can lead to a re-evaluation of women's involvement in development works or politics.

Sense of Collective Ownership

A sense of ownership can be understood as people's feelings and beliefs about an issue that affects them and their community, and their way of engaging with it (Figueroa et al., 2002). The monk's approach at *Ban Bungsanthueng* has an impact on the village's harmony and sense of ownership. The value of promoting harmony within the village supports the generation of collective ownership. According to Parks et al. (2005), the CFSC process should be controlled by the community and social change activists, especially those who are identified as marginalised groups and can be empowered through a collective sense of ownership. The villagers already have a sense of collective ownership of the *Wat,* and they are therefore likely to voluntarily contribute to any work relating to the *Wat* because they have feelings of ownership and faith (belief). This finding is in line with Balit (2017) who asserts that the use of existing local communication systems, which generate dialogue and a sense of community ownership and integration, remains a key factor in the success and sustainability of any development program. This process assures that the community voice is being listened to, and local traditions, languages and cultures are being respected.

Social harmony

The term 'social harmony' plays a significant role in the Buddhist social order. The Buddhist values within this concept are '*Brahma-vihara*' (divine abodes) or social emotions. Dissanayake (2010) examined the Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka and found that the social emotions of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity articulate the concepts of social harmony. Aspects of participatory communication can work well with the concept of 'social cohesion'; according to Figueroa et al. (2002), social cohesiveness refers to the force that stimulates members to stay in the group and carry on contributing to the group's goal, and this includes having a sense of integration, connection and cooperation. For *Ban Bungsanthueng* villagers, the idea of social harmony tightly binds them together and motivates

them to stay actively engaged in village affairs, especially with regards to *Wat*-related activities or cultural traditions.

If social capital can be compared to the glue that joins people and gaps in society (Ife, 2002; Witten-Hannah, 1999) and enables concerted action to take place (Figueroa et al., 2002), the monk should also be considered part of that social capital. This argument is supported through findings which revealed the monk's active contribution to the village's social harmony, and the role of the *Wat* and *Sangha* as a mental/spiritual refuge. This value bridges the relationship gap in the village and brings people together by giving them the same access to collective assets (the *Wat* and *Sangha* in this case). This is witnessed in the number of people participating in religious events, where everyone is provided with the space to practice their beliefs.

Faith, trust, and the equity of participation

Equity of participation is measured through the participation levels of community members and stakeholders in various activities, including planning, leader selection, decision-making, resource mobilisation and management, and outcome evaluation (Figueroa et al., 2002). The degree to which people participate in the Buddhist development activities at *Ban Bungsanthueng* is driven by faith (Lao: *sattha*) in Buddhism and the *Sangha*. The term '*sattha*' itself has many meanings such as trust, confidence and hope. First and foremost, the *Sangha* builds *sattha* and trust among the members of the community. Only when the *Sangha* are trusted, will the villagers voluntarily participate in activities conducted by them (BDP-S4, July 25, 2017). According to Ife (2002) and Ladwig (2006), compassion, social obligation, trust, reciprocity and solidarity contribute to social capital. No limit of participation has been set for *sattha*, so it can also be considered as a form of social capital because it can ensure voluntary and equitable participation. *Sattha* may also be viewed as an essential element of a social network as it promotes empowerment and relationships within the community (Robinson, 1999).

Besides the faith in *Tri-ratna* or Triple Gems [Buddha, *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*], the idea that the *Wat* is a collectively owned spiritual refuge lays solid ground for community contributions to the *Wat*. The idea suggests that every member of the village has equal access to participation and utilisation of the *Wat*. The *Sangha*, as spiritual transformer or leader, contributes to promoting solidarity, and values the participation of every member. Faith and a sense of collective ownership support the flow of information, leadership and harmony.

Right Understanding (Pali: Samma-Ditthi)

Information is the backbone for building a resilient community. One of the BDP's aims for community development is to build well-being and a resilient community (Buddhism for Development Project [BDP], 2016). The level of information about an issue, that individuals within a group and between groups in the community are aware of, indicates the equity of information flow (Figueroa et al., 2002). From a Buddhist perspective, people can access information and knowledge and seek solutions through the Four Noble Truths (*Ariya-sacca*) – the Buddhist ways of knowledge, analysis and reflection, the basis of Buddhist ethics or *Sila-dhamma.* The first aspect encourages villagers to be aware of the issue (*dukkha*), the second allows them to explore the causes and conditions of the issue (*samudaya*). The third aspect examines ways to address the issue (*nirodha*), and the last aspect is the step of taking action (*magga*). Balit (2017) argues that knowledge, horizontally communicated, is beyond mere information. In these instances, faith and trust are also applied and contribute to the extent that community members can access the information and trust the information source.

The level of trust and the moral of Right Intention ranks high in the villagers' views:

> I think this project is good and benefits our village, so that is why the monk brings us to take action; otherwise, he would not (BVSC-BBT_L2, September 7, 2017).

This response implies the monk has demonstrated the Buddhist concepts of '*Samma-Sankappa*' [Right Intention], social faith and trust. *Samma-Sankappa* means the Right Intention to do good by using knowledge to process the value and equity of information; it is a dimension of the Noble Eightfold Path (*Magga*) – one aspect of the Eightfold Path that ensures equitable information. As Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) state, empowerment process is a reflection of the action and the gist of participatory communication is how awareness leads to a commitment to action. Through the practice of the *Ariya-sacca*, the villagers are not only encouraged to be aware of the issue, but to also create conditions for action.

Compassionate leadership

Based on the findings from this research, spiritual leadership is the accepted Buddhist style of leadership. The trainee *Sanghas* are trained to teach people Buddhist morality in order to raise awareness and apply the basic Buddhist precepts in their daily lives. The practice of morality is to cultivate compassion, an aspect of the Buddhist ethic of virtue (*Brahma-vihara*). The findings from the Buddhist Initiative leaders' perspectives indicate a respected person should carry the leadership in verbal and non-verbal behaviours or should be moral (*sila*). In

this case, social trust is applied in leadership as the leader should first gain trust from the community before taking the lead and involving members in community activities. Therefore, leadership is based on the moral of Right Intention, because the members of the community will trust the leader if they see that she/he has good intentions to serve the community.

The *Sangha* is a respected and trusted person in the society (Ladwig, 2008; UNICEF EAPRO, 2009). They have morality (*sila*), loving-kindness (*metta*) and compassion (*karuna*) for others. The BDP trains its own *Sangha* community to develop compassion for others and to volunteer themselves to serve their society in line with the approach '*Jit-asa-sao-Buddha-phue-soumxon'* (Buddhist Volunteer Spirit for Community [BVSC]). The values of volunteer spirit, compassion and leadership work hand-in-hand. As Figueroa et al. (2002) argue, strong leadership encourages community members to volunteer themselves to the program, demonstrates a leadership vision, shares the benefits of the program and plans a social change process. In this case, the leader takes the initiative by developing people's compassion and encouraging their desire to serve the other. (Dissanayake, 2010) refers to the Buddhist notion that all meaningful social changes must first originate within the mind of the individual.

Self-reliance

Self-reliance is an emerging approach to communication and development. Findings from the interviews with the BDP's spiritual masters, staff members and leaders of the Buddhist Initiative suggest that the highest goal that the BDP wants to achieve is self-reliance. The BDP trains its *Sangha* to serve the community and be its human resource. Some trainees are selected to be trainers at the training centre and in their communities, rather than using external agents.

At *Ban Bungsanthueng*, the monk demonstrates ways of self-reliant living. Self-reliant living has spiritual value and encourages people to stay self-sufficient. Dissanayake (2010) defines self-reliance as a dependence on the natural and human resources of a given country, and a willingness to identify developmental problems, set goals, and design strategies based on cultural norms and traditions. There are two activities that are self-reliant. The women's handicraft initiative is highly sustainable because the work is based on traditional wisdom that has been transferred down generations and uses resources available in the village. The monk empowers this group by facilitating brainstorming sessions and offering financial advice. The monk has clearly stated that this activity is entirely run using local resources (both knowledge and materials) that are environmentally sustainable.

The development approach of self-reliance includes integrated village or grass-roots development, contribution to decision-making processes, effective use of natural resources and maintenance of ecological balance, and a willingness to rethink issues in regards to the implication of developments (Dissanayake, 1984). The Buddhist environmental movement is not only about maintaining environmental balance but also about maintaining cultural values and traditions. The conservation of forests through tree and marsh ordaining can contribute to food security and environmental balance in the future. The *Ban Bungsanthueng* monk is confident that after four to five years of conservation, any villager will be able to access the natural resources under the condition that they don't use the resource excessively to ensure sustainable self-sufficiency.

3. Chapter Summary

Buddhist teachings and monks have long been involved in community life. The temple has played a vital role in the history of the village. It has been a spiritual base and also a significant influence over the village's welfare. Today, Buddhist beliefs and practices in the village co-exist harmoniously with the village's longstanding traditional belief system. This co-existence often makes it difficult for others to differentiate between Buddhist rituals and indigenous rituals (animism). Buddhism (plus traditional beliefs and practices) can be seen as participatory because the *Wat* (which represents collective ownership) is a space for every member to access and participate in.

The BVSC network is the cornerstone of the BDP's approach to social development. It demonstrates the essence of Buddhist teachings and ethics and puts them into practice. The BDP can be regarded as a catalyst for change because it facilitates changes in the *Sangha* community and changes to societal perceptions of the *Sangha* role in the Lao PDR. However, the understanding and knowledge gap between trainee monks and nuns remains critical and must be improved because it hinders their ability to deliver knowledge to other members of the community. The issues of equity and inclusiveness in the trainee recruitment process are significant challenges that the BDP need to improve on, and they also need to ensure that selected trainees are genuinely representing their community.

There are three catalyst roles the *Sangha* plays in community development. The monk is trained to be a spiritual transformer, for disseminating development information by using moral teachings techniques within the community. According to Ladwig (2006), the sermon is a very useful medium for spreading information. Furthermore, the monk is an information influencer

and a highly trusted person in the community. As an initiator and part of the BDP network, the monk plays a central role and information about the project passes through them. The religious value, faith and leadership of the monk contributes to the villagers' confidence and trust in the monk. In short, the Buddhist catalyst focuses explicitly on internal factors, or community insiders, to stimulate social change.

Buddhist ethics are the backbone of BA and can integrate with the IMCFSC model in many regards. The ethics promote dialogue through a Buddhist epistemology (the Four Noble Truths), and promote participation based on faith, a sense of collective ownership, solidarity and Buddhist virtues. Villagers take the lead in exploring the nature of the issue and inter-being, as well as then take action as individuals or as a group. Through combining the two approaches (BA and IMCFSC), seven indicators have been developed; 1) moral norms, 2) social harmony, 3) faith, 4) trust and equity of participation, 5) Right Understanding (*Samma-ditthi*), 6) sense of collective ownership, and 7) compassionate leadership and self-reliance. Thus, this research argues that Buddhism, the BDP and the BVSC network (or *Sangha*), can all be catalysts for social change, in the Buddhist context in Lao PDR.

Chapter Six: Research Conclusion

This research aimed at exploring the role of Buddhist monk'/nun's engagement in community development as catalysts for social change and sustainable development in Lao People's Democratic Republic. It took as a case study the Buddhism for Development Project implementing at *Ban Bungsanthueng*, Nongbok District, Khammouane Province. It applied Buddhist approaches to development as used by the Buddhism for Development Project [BDP] (2012) and the Integrated model of measuring the process of applying the participatory communication approach and its outcomes [Catalyst model] developed by Figueroa et al. (2002), as conceptual frameworks. This research made an attempt to integrate the catalyst model with the Buddhist approaches in order to contextualise a suitable community development model for the Buddhist context of Laos.

It applied an ethnographic methodological approach in its five months fieldwork in the *Wat-pa-Nakhoun-noi Vipassana* Meditation Centre [BDP's Training Centre] and Buddhist Volunteer Spirit for *Ban Bungsanthueng* community [the Buddhist Initiative]. The geo-social mapping suggested by Chuengsatiansup (2016) was employed during field work observations to assist me in mapping geographical and social spaces of *Ban Bungsanthueng* community and valuing participatory approaches by working with members of the community. I also employed in-depth interviews with BDP's spiritual masters, core staff members, and key leaders of the Buddhist Initiatives as key informants. The focus group discussions were conducted with trainee monks and nuns at the BDP's Training Centre and members of the Buddhist Initiatives at the *Ban Bungsanthueng*. The research was guided by the following key research question and sub-questions:

- **What role can the BDP's trained *Sangha* play as catalysts for social change and sustainable development in Lao People's Democratic Republic?**

Sub-questions:

1. What aspects of participatory communication aspects are manifesting in Buddhist development approach implemented at *Ban Bungsanthueng* community?
2. What sustainability and self-reliance goals has the community achieved as a result of the Buddhist development initiatives?
3. What challenges do the Buddhist monks/nuns experience in their community development practice in *Ban Bungsanthueng*?

4. How can the Integrated Model of Communication for Social Change [the Catalyst Model] be integrated with the Buddhist Approaches to Development?

Considering the research topic, aim and questions, this chapter summarises the key findings of the thesis, recommendations for the BDP and its BVSC network, the strengths and limitations of this research as well as directions for future research in Buddhist approaches to community development in Lao PDR.

1. Thesis overview and closing thoughts

This section provides a summary of participatory communication aspects in Buddhist approaches, the achievement of a level of sustainability and self-reliance, and practical challenges of the community.

1.1. Participatory communication aspects of Buddhist development approaches

What aspects of participatory communication are manifesting in Buddhist development approach at Ban Bungsanthueng community?

- ***The collective asset and responsibility of the Wat are participatory in nature:*** The *Wat* is a centre of communication and participation. The concept of the *Wat* as collective asset and responsibility [Lao: *leung-suan-luam*] promotes love, solidarity, sense of ownership, and collective self-efficacy in the community, where kinship shapes the community network contributing to social harmony, peace, resilient and self-reliance. The concept ensures equal access to community-based resources and information. Furthermore, it also acts as a cultural and political hub for the community by providing space and facilitating cultural and political activities. The evidence shows that the Buddhist development approaches by *Sangha* have also supported and improved awareness for political participation through engaging in community socio-cultural activities.
- ***Buddhist ethics and morality as a stimulus for dialogue and participation:*** Buddhist ethics engender dialogic communication and participation. Based on the fact that *Ban Bungsanthueng* is a Buddhist community with animistic beliefs, people firmly adhere to the village norms based on these two belief systems. People start discussions if they see any inappropriate behaviour that is against the village norms and might affect their collective welfare. The monk uses Buddhist ethics, especially moral teachings [*sila-dhamma*], to educate villagers, raise people's awareness of existing common issues and stimulate laypeople to seek a solution and make decisions jointly. This approach can be seen to be participatory and holistic because it emphasises people-oriented changes, cultural values and spiritual transformation and

involves multiple stakeholders in the village. It sets out to equip people with correct knowledge of the reality of nature and how nature relates to a human being to make them understand interdependency through the principle of Right Understanding [Pali: *samma-ditthi*]. As a result, individuals or groups can be spiritually transformed through the cultivation of compassion and love for nature and other beings. The *Sangha* stimulates people's contribution to participatory learning processes through the Buddhist ways of knowledge-inquiry or analysis called 'the Four Noble Truths' which link and identify causes and conditions related to problems and solutions.

- ***Jit-asa-sao-Buddha-phue-soumxon [BVSC] is participatory, and acts as a stimulus for change:*** The BDP's Buddhist Volunteer Spirit [Lao: *jit-asa-sao-Buddha*] approach can also be considered participatory because these terms embrace equity and inclusiveness. The BVSC is a development network which includes, but not limited to, a Buddhist *Sangha* community[19] and the general public, such as youth members, students, and laity, facilitated by the BDP. The network is substantially growing and has become now a Buddhist Volunteer Spirit network taking grass-roots actions for change in various communities throughout Laos. Thus, this approach is seen as promoting participation and communication for social change.

Aspects of participatory communication are shown in Buddhist approaches through the collective asset and responsibility of the *Wat*, Buddhist ethics and morality [Pali: *sila*], the Four Noble Truths [Pali: *ariya-sacca*] and Buddhist Volunteer Spirit Network [Lao: *jit-asa-saoBuddha*]. In short, Buddhist approaches engage in participatory communication for spiritual liberation and transformation, contributing to social transformation.

1.2. Level of sustainability and self-reliance

What sustainability and self-reliance goals has community achieved as a result of the Buddhist development initiatives?

- ***Environmental Consciousness Initiatives****:* Buddhism aims to liberate from suffering and promote self-reliant living under the condition of and in harmony with nature. The environmental consciousness initiative has satisfactorily achieved its aims regarding people's awareness, self-reliance (self-help) and collective action which greatly contribute to the sustainability of the initiative. According to evidence from this research, the initiative, set upon the cultural aspects of Buddhist and traditional beliefs and values such as faith, trust, solidarity

[19] *Sangha c*ommunity includes novices, monks, nuns and white ascetics with observing different level of moral disciplines (*Sila*)

and harmony, forms long-term social capital and sustainable development. Buddhist ethics, morality, and traditional norms have stimulated community awareness and participation in environmental dialogue and action. Thus, the enforcement and promotion of the Buddhist principles of morality, solidarity, mutual help, and harmony and traditional belief values in the community are a useful tool, participatory in nature, to bring positive change in the community.

- ***Women's Handicraft Initiative*** **[BT-WHI] at** ***Ban Bungsanthueng*** has high potential to sustain and expand its network after completing its two year-term donor funding. The group works with their traditional knowledge and utilises internal resources. This knowledge is of long-standing practise and is transferred to the next generation in the community. The involvement of the Buddhist Initiative and donors is to facilitate the development and expansion of their existing knowledge to preserve and sustain this local knowledge for future generations. Leadership and a sense of ownership and self-efficacy in this group are the highest among the groups under the Buddhist Initiative. It's important to keep in mind that these values can be affected by factors of group solidarity and harmony.
- ***Organic farming***: based on the findings, this activity has achieved a medium level of sustainability and self-reliance due to limited resources. This initiative requires a bigger budget, and existing community resources are not sufficient. It is too early to evaluate this initiative because it is in the experimental stage. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that this project initiative has high potential to achieve its sustainability and self-reliance goals, such as integrated organic farming.
- ***BVSC Cowshed [Animal culture]:*** this appears to have achieved the lowest level of sustainability and self-reliance because it requires a bigger budget and faces spatial constraints. The concept of collective animal culture appears to be effective; however, the cost of buying cows or buffaloes is high. This becomes a primary challenge for the Buddhist Initiative because it has received a limited budget. The support of the monk in this project initiative is also limited by the *Sangha* rules or morality because the *Sangha* does not promote killing, so raising an animal for trade is in violation of the *Sangha* morality.

The community has achieved a high level of self-reliance for environmental and women's initiatives, while organic farming and BVSC cowsheds initiatives have achieved medium and low levels. However, it is too early to evaluate the self-reliance goal of the two latter initiatives because they are still at an experimental stage.

1.3. Barriers and challenges for Buddhist monks/nuns

What challenges do the Buddhist monks/nuns experience in their community development practice in Ban Bungsanthueng?

BDP's Training Centre

- ***Equity and inclusiveness of the trainee recruitment process****:* Evidence from the research demonstrates the challenges BDP faces in selecting its trainees. There is an unequal number of monks/nuns representing each community, district or province with some provinces dominating, having more seats than the others, and some communities or provinces not represented at all. This presentation challenge is having an impact on the participatory approach of the BDP.

BVSC of*Ban Bungsanthueng* (the Buddhist Initiative)

- ***Information access and equity:*** This research shows that there is an inequity of access to information among members of Buddhist Initiative community and an issue of power relationship that imposes barriers to sustainability and the realization of self-reliance goals. As this research revealed, members of the project have limited access to information about the project with most receiving information only from the monk, which is not sufficient. Members feel uneasy seeking information from the village headman whose duty it is to share information with the community but who does not always do so. This affects the sense of ownership, trust, and sustainability of the project.
- ***Power relationship:*** The power relationship between the monk and village headman is unequal. Village government is seen as the formal leader and development actor at the village level, while the monk's interventions are considered as an alternative. This presents monks with a challenge when it comes to decision making on project activities, which sometimes raises the question of trust. With the community members feeling uneasy about seeking information through the village administration, and excessive interference by village government in the communication process of the group, project ownership and leadership are compromised.

1.4. Integration of the IMCFSC Model with Buddhist approaches to development

How can the Integrated Model of Communication for Social Change [the Catalyst Model] be integrated with the Buddhist Approaches to Development?

The attempt to integrate IMCFSC Model with Buddhist approaches has resulted in a communication for social change process that presents a more holistic model, which meets the standards of local Buddhist communities. The Buddhist catalyst role comes as an internal stimulus or agency for spiritual transformation through practising internal and external *bhavana* [development]. This aims to build the virtues of compassion, solidarity, and social trust prior to stepping towards the first stage of community dialogue. Buddhist community dialogue uses Buddhist ethics or morality as a stimulus for identifying issues through the Buddhist way of knowledge-inquiry of 'the Four Noble Truths'. The Noble Truths embrace four stages of analysis including sufferings *(dukkha)*, origins of suffering *(samudaya)*, the cessation of suffering *(nirodha*), and path to the end of suffering *(magga*). These stages suggest a strong sense of Buddhist social ethics such as solidarity and harmony in action, which can be considered as potential community power in achieving community goals.

Through integrating the two approaches, the emerging outcome is a new contextualised set of indicators for individual and social change. *Magga* is the highest outcome of this model. Individuals experience changes in both spirituality and wisdom. *Magga,* understood as the Noble Eightfold Path, includes three main dimensions, morality *(sila*), concentration *(samadhi*), and wisdom *(panna*). These three dimensions have aspects of the Path as sub-dimensions. Firstly, *Sila* includes Right Speech (*samma-vaca*), Right Action (*samma-kammanta*), and Right Livelihood (*samma-ajiva*). Secondly, *Samadhi* encompasses Right Concentration (*samma-samadhi*), Right Mindfulness (*samma-sati*), and Right Effort (*samma-vayama*). Finally, Panna includes Right View/Understanding (*samma-ditthi*) and Right Intention (*samma-sankappa*). With this individual change, a community and its members can experience holistic changes in 1) moral/spiritual norms, 2) social harmony, 3) faith, trust and equity of participation, 4) right understanding (*samma-ditthi*), 5) sense of collective ownership, 6) compassion leadership and 7) self-reliance.

1.5. Answering the main research question

What role can the BDP's trained Sangha play as catalysts for social change and sustainable development in Lao People's Democratic Republic?

Based on the findings and integration of the IMCFSC model with a Buddhist approach to development and communication, the following catalyst roles are identified as part of the BDP's Buddhist Volunteer Spirit of Community trained *Sangha* approach at *Ban Bungsanthueng*:

- ***Spiritual transformer:*** The trained monk of the BDP development initiatives at *Ban Bungsanthueng* plays a spiritual transformation role. This role follows the Buddhist principles of mental development that are at the heart of human development. Buddhism, BDP, and the *Sangha* engagement in community development are considered to be part of a holistic spiritual approach. The trained monk promotes solidarity, and harmony based on the Buddhist virtue of compassion, love, and good morality. The monk re-enforces moral teachings [*sila-dhamma*] and the feeling of cultivating goodness as social norms for engendering positive change in the community.
- ***Internal agent for change:*** The Buddhist catalyst model puts emphasis on internal resources or agents. As this research has demonstrated, the majority of participants of BVSC training course represent local communities, including the *Wat*, district, and province, as well as secular community leaders, while the BVSC network covers villagers and youth members. Further, village development is focused on internal cooperation between three village institutions, the *Ban*, *Wat* and *Honghian*. This provides evidence that Buddhist agents can play an internal catalyst role for change.
- ***Socially trusted information influencer:*** evidence shows that the monk and village headman influence the flow of information and knowledge related to the Buddhist approaches and community development. However, the monk is the most trusted source of information because of his 'right speech', and by availability in sharing information through interpersonal communication. The *Dhamma* delivery is the most effective way to share information and knowledge in a horizontal way, which fits well in rural Buddhist communities where kinship shapes community relations and networks. This approach also provides a platform for rural villagers, particularly adult women who appear to have limited access to information. This research found that accessing information and knowledge through interpersonal interaction within the community provides the most effective way for dialogic communication for social change.

In conclusion, this key analysis and summary has indicated the answer to the main research aim at exploring the role of Buddhist monks/nuns' engagement in community development as catalysts for social change and sustainable development in Lao People's Democratic Republic. It contributes to the field of communication for social change, particularly for Lao PDR. In general, this thesis concludes that Buddhism, BDP and its BVSC network, notably the trained monk, play a catalyst role for change. Firstly, Buddhist ethics and morality are a stimulus for dialogue and participation for change and sustainable development.

Secondly, BDP plays a catalyst role in having an impact on social perceptions of the social engagement of the *Sangha*, building the BVSC Network and facilitating the process of communication for social change of the network in various communities throughout Laos. Through the exploration of the Buddhist initiatives and integration of the IMCFSC Model with Buddhist approaches, this thesis has come to the conclusion that the trained monk (BVSC *Sangha* network) plays an internal catalyst role, as a spiritual transformer [catalyst] and socially trusted information influencer. The monk uses Buddhist teachings and principles to engender positive changes at both individual and societal level using the Four Noble Truths as a tool, and the Noble Eightfold Path *(magga)* is reinterpreted as the highest goals of spiritual and intellectual changes.

2. Recommendations

Based on the researched evidence, BDP and its BVSC network (or *Sangha*) is recommended to take the following into consideration:

2.1. Buddhism for Development Project

- ***Ensure the equity and inclusiveness of the trainee recruitment process****:* Evidence from the research demonstrates the challenges BDP faces in selecting its trainees. There is an unequal number of monks/nuns representing each community, district or province with some provinces having more seats than others, while others are missing. This is undermining BDP's participatory approach. BDP is required thus to look carefully at its trainee recruitment process because it has an impact on community participation. It needs to ensure fair representation for all.

2.2. BVSC monk at *Ban Bungsanthueng*

Based on the evidence, the trained monks [BVSC *Sangha*] are recommended to:

- ***Communicate better the goals, values and information related to the project****:* The research indicates that community members do not know enough about the initiative's goals and values. They have participated because of their trust in the monk and in collective responsibility. Nonetheless, unclear communication of goals/values can impact community's trust and the sustainability of the project in the future. It is strongly recommended that the BVSC *Sangha* ensures that effective and inclusive communication practices take place in their communities.

- ***Bring all stakeholders to dialogue and participatory evaluation:*** Although the Women's handicraft group has achieved a high level of sustainability and self-reliance, group

harmony and internal and external intervention can affect the sense of ownership, collective self-efficacy and sustainability of the group. It is recommended that the monk is required to bringing all stakeholders together to listen, discuss, and re-evaluate the progress of each initiative, and seek a solution to strengthen ownership of group communication processes, in which the monk or village administration play a facilitating role.

- ***Organise participatory evaluation and learning activities***: The evidence from this research indicates that members of the women's handicraft group lack confidence in their knowledge communication skills. It is highly recommended that the monk or village administration is required to organise participatory and innovative learning activities, for example, participatory evaluation of the project and exchange activities between neighbouring villagers and other interested community or groups. This is to stimulate a sense of collective ownership and participation.

3. Strengths and limitation

This research aimed to explore the catalyst role played by the Buddhist Volunteer Spirit for Community (or the trained monk) and Buddhism for Development Project in community development in Laos. It collected evidence that helps to understand better the communication for social change processes within the Buddhist approaches and values in community development. This research not only identified the value of moral teachings and Buddhist ethics as a manifestation of a Buddhist approach to participatory communication but also identified the challenges BDP and its BVSC network currently face. On the other hand, this research has its limitations. Firstly, time was the most significant limitation of this research because observing and studying a community requires not only time but also that the researcher be in the community at the right time. During the research fieldwork, I experienced a challenge with collecting data because it was not the right season for project activities. This limited my observation of community activities because it was difficult to access the place of activities, for instance, the ordained forest. Secondly, it is challenging to evaluate the entire Buddhist Initiative project because it includes many activities. This and the fact that Buddhism is an integral part of the community, thus hard to separate from other activities increased the complexity of this research.

4. Suggestions for future research

This research paves the way for future research in Buddhist approaches to development and communication. Future research on this topic is suggested to:

- ***Focus on specific activities*:** Based on the limitations given above, I suggest future research focuses on a specific initiative or activity that can enable in-depth evaluation of the impact and outcomes.
- ***Consider time and pre-study of the community:*** Being an insider to the community and the Buddhist religion afforded me better access to information and understanding of the community. Thus, future research on Buddhist development initiatives is strongly encouraged to use an insider or assistant internal to the community with an understanding of the Buddhist principles and concepts and the spatial and social dimension of the researched community.

Evaluate the impact of Buddhist ethics for social change: This research provides a background for future research on this subject. To my knowledge, no previous effort has been made to provide a contextualized model for Buddhist community development and social change. As a result, I suggest others situate any future research in the context of how Buddhist ethical values can engender communication for social change.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval Letter

Tuesday 11th July,

Dear Toung Eh Synuanchanch,

Your file number for this application: **2017-1034**
Title: E*xploring the role of Buddhist monks/nuns engagement in community development as a catalyst for social change and sustainable development in Lao People's Democratic Republic: A case study of Buddhism for Development Project at Ban Beungsanthueng, Nongbok District, Khammouane Province*

Your application for ethics approval has been reviewed by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC) and has been approved for the following period:

Start date: 11 July 2017
Finish date: 10 July 2018

Please note that:

1. The above dates must be referred to on the information AND consent forms given to allparticipants.

2. You must inform UREC, in advance, of any ethically-relevant deviation in the project.This may require additional approval.

You may now commence your research according to the protocols approved by UREC. We wish you every success with your project.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Adams
Deputy Chair, UREC

cc: Asher Lewis

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Appendix 2: Organisational Consent Forms

2a: Consent Form of Buddhism for Development Project

Buddhism for Development Project
P.O.Box 5801, Tel/Fax:+85621 453944. +85620 2222 8440.
E-mail: bdp.laos@yahoo.com

No. 095 / ดพจ

Vientiane, Lao PDR, Date. 31/7/2017

Organisational Consent

I. Ven. Sithonh Xayavongsone president of Buddhism for Development Project gives consent for Mr. Toung Eh Synuanchanh to undertake research in this organisation and the development initiatives carrying out at Ban Beungsanthueng, Nongbok District, Khammouane Province by this organisation's trained Buddhist monks as discussed with the researcher.

This consent is granted subject to the approval of research ethics application no. 2017-1034 by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee. Please see the attached copy of the application approval letter.

Signature: .....

Sithonh XAYAVONGSONE

Date: 28 - 7 - 2017

2b: Consent form of Ban Bungsanthueng community and temple

Organisational Consent

- Refer to the Ethics Approval Letter of Unitec Research Ethics Committee No. 2017-1034
- Refer to the Approval Letter of Buddhism for Development Project No. 093/BDP dated July 31, 2017

I……. (*Name*), ……..(*position in community*) of ……. (*Community*) give consent for ***Mr. Toung Eh Synuanchanh*** to undertake research on development activities are being implemented by the Buddhist monks and villagers in this community as discussed with the researcher. This consent is being given for whatever purpose it may serve.

[Signed and Sealed]

ສາທາລະນະລັດ ປະຊາທິປະໄຕ ປະຊາຊົນລາວ

ສັນຕິພາບ ເອກະລາດ ປະຊາທິປະໄຕ ເອກະພາບ ວັດທະນາຖາວອນ

ແຂວງ ຄຳມ່ວນ

ເມືອງ ໝອງບົກ

ບ້ານ ບຶງສານເທິງ

ເລກທີ: 355/ມປ.

ວັນທີ: 14.8.2017

ເອກະສານຢືນຍອມ

- ອີງຕາມເອກະສານຕົກລົງອະນຸຍາດໃຫ້ລົງເກັບກຳຂໍ້ມູນເພື່ອການສຶກສາຄົ້ນຄ້ວາຈາກຄະນະກຳມະການຈາລີຍະທຳການຄົ້ນຄ້ວາ ຍູນີເທັກ (Unitec Research Ethics Committee) ເລກທີ 2017-1034
- ອີງຕາມໜັງສືຂໍອະນຸຍາດ ຈາກຫ້ອງການໂຄງການພຸດທະສາສະໜາ ເພື່ອການພັດທະນາ (ຄ.ພ.ພ) ເລກທີ 093/ຄພພ, ລົງວັນທີ 31/07/2017

ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າ, ທ່ານ ສຳນຽງ ແສງສອນດີ, ນາຍບ້ານໆ ບຶງສານເທິງ, ເມືອງ ໝອງບົກ, ແຂວງ ຄຳມ່ວນ ຕົກລົງເຫັນດີອະນຸຍາດໃຫ້ ທ້າວ ຕຸງເອ ສີນວນຈັນ ລົງເກັບກຳຂໍ້ມູນຄົ້ນຄ້ວາຢູ່ພາຍໃນບ້ານ ຂອງພວກຂ້າພະເຈົ້າ ຕາມທາງທີ່ໄດ້ປຶກສາຫາລື ແລະ ເຫັນດີກັບຜູ້ກ່ຽວແລ້ວ.

ດັ່ງນັ້ນ, ຈຶ່ງໄດ້ອອກເອກະສານຢືນຍອມສະບັບນີ້ໃຫ້ຜູ້ກ່ຽວໄວ້ເພື່ອເປັນຫຼັກຖານ.

ນາຍບ້ານໆ ບຶງສານເທິງ

ສຳນຽງ ແສງສອນດີ

ສາທາລະນະລັດ ປະຊາທິປະໄຕ ປະຊາຊົນລາວ

ສັນຕິພາບ ເອກະລາດ ປະຊາທິປະໄຕ ເອກະພາບ ວັດທະນາຖາວອນ

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ແຂວງ ຄຳມ່ວນ

ເມືອງ ໜອງບົກ

ບ້ານບຶງສາມເຫຶງ

ວັດໄພໄຊ

ເລກທີ:.....

ວັນທີ: 14/08/2017

ເອກະສານຢືນຍອມ

- ອີງຕາມເອກະສານຕົກລົງອະນຸຍາດໃຫ້ລົງເກັບກຳຂໍ້ມູນເພື່ອການສຶກສາຄົ້ນຄ້ວາຈາກຄະນະກຳມະການຈາລີຍະທຳການຄົ້ນຄ້ວາ ຍູນິເທັກ (Unitec Research Ethics Committee) ເລກທີ 2017-1034

- ອີງຕາມໜັງສືຂໍອະນຸຍາດ ຈາກຫ້ອງການໂຄງການພຸດທະສາສະໜາ ເພື່ອການພັດທະນາ (ຄ.ພ.ພ) ເລກທີ 093/ຄພພ, ລົງວັນທີ 31/07/2017

ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າ, ພຣະ ພິທັກ ສົມພົງ, ເຈົ້າອາທິການວັດໄພໄຊ ບ້ານ ບຶງສາມເຫຶງ, ເມືອງ ໜອງບົກ, ແຂວງ ຄຳມ່ວນ ຕົກລົງເຫັນດີອະນຸຍາດໃຫ້ ທ້າວ ຖຸງເອ ສີນວນຈັນ ລົງເກັບກຳຂໍ້ມູນຄົ້ນຄ້ວາກ່ຽວກັບກິດຈະກຳການພັດທະນາທີ່ຈັດຕັ້ງປະຕິບັດຮ່ວມກັນລະຫວ່າງພຣະສົງ ແລະ ຊາວບ້ານ ຢູ່ພາຍໃນວັດ ແລະ ບ້ານ ຂອງພວກຂ້າພະເຈົ້າ ຕາມທີ່ໄດ້ປຶກສາຫາລື ແລະ ເຫັນດີກັບຜູ້ກ່ຽວແລ້ວ.

ດັ່ງນັ້ນ, ຈຶ່ງໄດ້ອອກເອກະສານຢືນຍອມສະບັບນີ້ໃຫ້ຜູ້ກ່ຽວໄວ້ເພື່ອເປັນຫຼັກຖານ.

ເຈົ້າອາທິການວັດ

Appendix 3: Participant Information Form

Participant Information Form

My name is Toung Eh Synuanchanh. I am currently enrolled in the Master of International Communication in the Department of Communication Studies at Unitec New Zealand and seek your help in meeting the requirements of research for a thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to explore a Buddhist participatory communication and the role of Buddhist monks/nuns in community development as a catalyst for social change in Lao PDR by taking Buddhism for Development Project as a case study.

I request your participation in the following way: participating in the interview. These interviews shall be audio recorded for purpose of the research only, including Master thesis, conference, international journal publishing.

Your name will not be identified in the thesis, except name of your organisation. The results of the research activity will not be seen by any other person in your organisation without the prior agreement of everyone involved. Your are free to ask me not to use any of the information you have given, and you can, if you wish, ask to see the thesis before it is submitted for examination.

I hope you will agree to take part and that you will find your involvement interesting. If you have any queries about the research, you may contact my principal supervisor at Unitec, New Zealand.

My supervisor is A/Prof Evangelia Papoutsaki, phone 09 815 4321 ext 8746 or email epapoutsaki@unitec.ac.nz

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2017-1034

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 11th July 2017 to 10th July 2018. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome

ຂໍ້ມູນສຳລັບຜູ້ເຂົ້າຮ່ວມ

ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຊື່ ຕຸງເອ ສິນອນຈັນ. ປະຈຸບັນກຳລັງສຶກສາຢູ່ພາກວິຊາການສື່ສານ ທີ່ ສະຖາບັນ ຢູນິເທັກ ເຕັກໂນໂລຊີ (Unitec Institute of Technology), ປະເທດ ນິວຊີແລນ, ໃນຊັ້ນປະລິນຍາໂທ ສາຂາ ການສື່ສານລະຫວ່າງ ປະເທດ. ເພື່ອເຮັດໃຫ້ການຮ່ຳຮຽນນັ້ນສຳເລັດ, ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຈຶ່ງຂໍຄວາມຮ່ວມມື ແລະ ການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອຈາກທ່ານໃນການສຶກສາຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້ໃຫ້ສຳເລັດຜົນ ເຊິ່ງເປັນສ່ວນໜຶ່ງທີ່ສຳຄັນເປັນຢ່າງຍິ່ງຕໍ່ຍົດວິທະຍານິພົນຈົບຊັ້ນປະລິນຍາໂທ ຂອງ ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າ.

ຈຸດປະສົງຫຼັກ ຂອງໂຄງການຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້ແມ່ນເພື່ອສຶກສາການສື່ສານວິຖີພຸດແບບມີສ່ວນຮ່ວມ ແລະ ບົດບາດໃນການ ພັດທະນາຊຸມຊົນ ຂອງພອຣສິງ ແລະ ແມ່ຂາວໃນການເປັນຜູ້ນຳພາການພັດທະນາແບບຍືນຍົງໂດຍທີ່ໄດ້ນຳເອົາໂຄງການ ພຸດທະສາສະໜາເພື່ອການພັດທະນາມາເປັນກໍລະນີສຶກສາ.

ສະນັ້ນ, ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຈຶ່ງຢາກຂໍການຮ່ວມມື ແລະ ການມີສ່ວນຮ່ວມໃນໂຄງການຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້ດັ່ງຕໍ່ໄປນີ້: ເຂົ້າຮ່ວມການສຳພາດ ແລະ ສົນທະນາເປີກຫາລີ. ການສຳພາດເຫຼົ່ານີ້ຈະໄດ້ຖືກບັນທຶກສຽງໄວ້ເພື່ອຈຸດປະສົງທາງການສຶກສາຄົ້ນຄ້ວາເທົ່ານັ້ນ ລວມທັງຍົດວິທະຍານິພົນຈົບຊັ້ນປະລິຍາໂທ, ກອງຊຸມທາງວິຊາການຕ່າງໆ ແລະ ພິມເຜີຍແຜ່ຜົນໄດ້ຮັບຕາມວາລະສານ ນາງຊາດຕ່າງໆ.

ຊື່ຂອງທ່ານ, ຍີກເວັ້ນແຕ່ຊື່ຂອງວິງການຈັດຕັ້ງຂອງທ່ານ, ຈະບໍ່ໄດ້ຖືກເກັບເປັນຄວາມລັບ ແລະ ຈະບໍ່ຖືກລະບຸໄວ້ໃນບົດລາຍ ງານການຄົ້ນຄ້ວາ ຫຼື ເອກະສານອື່ນໆທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງ. ຜົນໄດ້ຮັບຂອງໂຄງການຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້ຈະບໍ່ມີການເປີດຜົນຕໍ່ບຸກຄົນອື່ນໆໃດ ໜຶ່ງໃນວິງການຈັດຕັ້ງ ຂອງທ່ານ ໂດຍທີ່ບໍ່ໄດ້ຮັບຄວາມເຫັນດີ ແລະ ຍິນຍອມຈາກທຸກໆຄົນທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງ. ທ່ານສາມາດຂໍໃຫ້ ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າບໍ່ນຳໃຊ້ຂໍ້ມູນໃດໆທີ່ທ່ານໄດ້ໃຫ້ ແລະ ຖ້າຫາກທ່ານຕ້ອງການ, ທ່ານຍັງສາມາດຂໍເບິ່ງບົດວິທະຍານິພົນດັ່ງກ່າວ ກ່ອນການຍື່ນເພື່ອການກວດສອບ.

ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຫວັງເປັນຢ່າງຍິ່ງວ່າທ່ານຈະເຫັນດີຕົກລົງເຂົ້າຮ່ວມ ແລະ ທ່ານຈະພິບສິ່ງທີ່ນ່າສົນໃຈຈາກການເຂົ້າຮ່ວມຄັ້ງນີ້. ຖ້າທ່ານຫາກມີຄຳຖາມໃດໆກ່ຽວກັບການຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້, ທ່ານອາດຕິດຕໍ່ພົວພັນຫາອາຈານທີ່ເປີກສາຫຼັກ ຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້າໄດ້ຢູ່ ທີ່ສະຖາບັນ ຢູນິເທັກ (Unitec), ປະເທດ ນິວຊີແລນ.

ອາຈານທີ່ເປີກສາ ຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້າແມ່ນ ຮອງສາສະດາຈານ ອີວັນຈີເລຍ ປາປຸດສະກີ (Evangelia Papoutsaki), ໂທລະສັບ: 09 815 4321 ຕໍ່ສາຍ 8746 ຫຼື ອີເມວ: epapoutsaki@unitec.ac.nz

ຂໍ້ນທະບຽນຄະນະກຳມະການຈັນຍາທຳການຄົ້ນຄ້ວາ ຢູນິເທັກ (UREC) ເລກທີ: ####-####

ການສຶກສາຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້ໄດ້ຮັບການອະນຸມັດຈາກຄະນະກຳມະການຈັນຍາທຳການຄົ້ນຄ້ວາ ຢູນິເທັກ (UREC) ນັບແຕ່ວັນທີ 11/07/2017 ຫາ 10/07/2018. ໃນກໍລະນີທີ່ທ່ານຫາກມີຂໍ້ຕ້ອງຕິ ຫຼື ການສະຫງວນໃດໆກ່ຽວກັບການປະພຶດດ້ານຈັນຍາທຳ ຂອງການສຶກສາຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້, ທ່ານອາດຕິດຕໍ່ພົວພັນຄະນະກຳມະການນີ້ຜ່ານທາງເລຂາທິການ ຂອງຄະນະກຳມະການຈັນຍາທຳ ການຄົ້ນຄ້ວາ ຢູນິເທັກ (UREC) ໄດ້ (ໂທລະສັບ: 09 815-4321 ຕໍ່ສາຍ 8551). ທຸກໆບັນຫາທີ່ທ່ານໄດ້ສະເໜີຂຶ້ນມາຈະໄດ້ ຮັບການປະຕິບັດແບບປິດລັບ ແລະ ສືບສວນຫາຄວາມຈິງຢ່າງເຕັມທີ່ ແລະ ທ່ານຈະໄດ້ຮັບແຈ້ງກ່ຽວກັບຜົນໄດ້ຮັບ ຂອງບັນຫາ ດັ່ງກ່າວ.

Information for participants

Research Title:"Exploring the role of Buddhist monks/nuns engagement in community development as catalyst for social change and sustainable development in Lao People's Democratic Republic: A case study of Buddhism for Development Project in Ban Bungsanthueng, Nongbok District, Khammouane Province."

Synopsis of project

This proposed research aims to explore Buddhist participatory communication and the role of Buddhist monks in community development at Ban Bungsanthueng community as catalyst for social change in Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). This research will also attempt to integrate a Buddhist approaches to development with catalyst model for social changes to explore potential similarities and the feasibility of integrating or aspects of them into a communication for social change (participatory) model that suits Buddhist community development in Lao PDR.

The researcher shall collect your views on what information and communication channels that Buddhism for Development Project and Buddhist monks/nuns uses to empowering and strengthening community development in Ban Beungsanthueng community in particular, and in Laos in general.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This does not stop you from changing your mind if you wish to withdraw from the project. However, because of your schedule, any withdrawals must be done within two weeks after we have interviewed you.

Your name and information that may identify you will be kept completely confidential. All information collected from you will be stored on a password protected file and only you, the researcher and the supervisors will have access to this information.

Please contact us if you need more information about the project. At any time if you have any concerns about the research project you can contact my principal supervisor:

My supervisor is A/Prof Evangelia Papoutsaki, phone 09 815 4321 ext 8746 or email epapoutsaki@unitec.ac.nz

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2017-1034

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 11th July 2017 to 10th July 2018. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

ຂໍ້ມູນສຳລັບຜູ້ເຂົ້າຮ່ວມ

ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຊື່ ຕຸງເອ ສິນວນຈັນ. ປະຈຸບັນກຳລັງສຶກສາຢູ່ພາກວິຊາການສື່ສານ ທີ່ ສະຖາບັນ ຢູນິເທັກ ເຕັກໂນໂລຊີ (Unitec Institute of Technology), ປະເທດ ນິວຊີແລນ, ໃນຊັ້ນປະລິນຍາໂທ ສາຂາ ການສື່ສານລະຫວ່າງ ປະເທດ. ເພື່ອເຮັດໃຫ້ການຮ່ຳຮຽນນັ້ນສຳເລັດ, ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຈຶ່ງຂໍຄວາມຮ່ວມມື ແລະ ການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອຈາກທ່ານໃນການສຶກ ສາຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້ໃຫ້ສຳເລັດຜົນ ເຊິ່ງເປັນສ່ວນໜຶ່ງທີ່ສຳຄັນເປັນຢ່າງຍິ່ງຕໍ່ຍົດວິທະຍານິພົນຈົບຊັ້ນປະລິນຍາໂທ ຂອງ ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າ.

ຈຸດປະສົງຫຼັກ ຂອງໂຄງການຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້ແມ່ນເພື່ອສຶກສາການສື່ສານວິຖີພຸດແບບມີສ່ວນຮ່ວມ ແລະ ຍົດຍາດໃນການ ພັດທະນາຊຸມຊົນ ຂອງພຣະສົງ ແລະ ແມ່ຂາວໃນການເປັນຜູ້ນຳພາການພັດທະນາແບບຍືນຍົງໂດຍທີ່ໄດ້ນຳເອົາໂຄງການ ພຸດທະສາສະໜາເພື່ອການພັດທະນາມາເປັນກໍລະນີສຶກສາ.

ສະນັ້ນ, ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຈຶ່ງຢາກຂໍການຮ່ວມມື ແລະ ການມີສ່ວນຮ່ວມໃນໂຄງການຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້ດັ່ງຕໍ່ໄປນີ້: ເຂົ້າຮ່ວມການສຳພາດ ແລະ ສົນທະນາເປີກຫາລີ. ການສຳພາດຫຼ່ານີ້ຈະໄດ້ຖືກບັນທຶກສຽງໄວ້ເພື່ອຈຸດປະສົງທາງການສຶກສາຄົ້ນຄ້ວາເທົ່ານັ້ນ ລວມທັງຍົດວິທະຍານິພົນຈົບຊັ້ນປະລິຍາໂທ, ກອງຊຸມທາງວິຊາການຕ່າງໆ ແລະ ພິມເຜີຍແຜ່ຜົນໄດ້ຮັບຕາມວາລະສານ ນາໆຊາດຕ່າງໆ.

ຊື່ຂອງທ່ານ, ຍົກເວັ້ນແຕ່ຊື່ຂອງອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງຂອງທ່ານ, ຈະບໍ່ໄດ້ຖືກເກັບເປັນຄວາມລັບ ແລະ ຈະບໍ່ຖືກລະບຸໄວ້ໃນຍົດລາຍ ງານການຄົ້ນຄ້ວາ ຫຼື ເອກະສານອື່ນໆທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງ. ຜົນໄດ້ຮັບຂອງໂຄງການຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້ຈະບໍ່ມີການເປີດຜົນຕໍ່ບຸກຄົນອື່ນໆໃດ ໜຶ່ງໃນອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງ ຂອງທ່ານ ໂດຍທີ່ບໍ່ໄດ້ຮັບຄວາມເຫັນດີ ແລະ ຍິນຍອມຈາກທຸກໆຄົນທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງ. ທ່ານສາມາດຂໍໃຫ້ ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າບໍ່ນຳໃຊ້ຂໍ້ມູນໃດໆທີ່ທ່ານໄດ້ໃຫ້ ແລະ ຖ້າຫາກທ່ານຕ້ອງການ, ທ່ານຍັງສາມາດຂໍເບິ່ງຍົດວິທະຍານິພົນດັ່ງກ່າວ ກ່ອນການຍື່ນເພື່ອການກວດສອບ.

ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຫວັງເປັນຢ່າງຍິ່ງວ່າທ່ານຈະເຫັນດີຕົກລົງເຂົ້າຮ່ວມ ແລະ ທ່ານຈະພິຈາລະນາການເຂົ້າຮ່ວມຄັ້ງນີ້. ຖ້າທ່ານຫາກມີຄຳຖາມໃດໆກ່ຽວກັບການຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້, ທ່ານອາດຕິດຕໍ່ພົວພັນຫາອາຈານທີ່ເປີກສາຫຼັກ ຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້າໄດ້ຢູ່ ທີ່ສະຖາບັນ ຢູນິເທັກ (Unitec), ປະເທດ ນິວຊີແລນ.

ອາຈານທີ່ເປີກສາ ຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້າແມ່ນ ຮອງສາສະດາຈານ ອີວັນຈີເລຍ ປາປຸດສະກີ (Evangelia Papoutsaki), ໂທລະສັບ: 09 815 4321 ຕໍ່ສາຍ 8746 ຫຼື ອີເມວ: epapoutsaki@unitec.ac.nz

ຂໍ້ນທະບຽນຄະນະກຳມະການຈັນຍາທຳການຄົ້ນຄ້ວາ ຢູນິເທັກ (UREC) ເລກທີ: ####-####

ການສຶກສາຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້ໄດ້ຮັບການອະນຸມັດຈາກຄະນະກຳມະການຈັນຍາທຳການຄົ້ນຄ້ວາ ຢູນິເທັກ (UREC) ນັບແຕ່ວັນທີ 11/07/2017 ຫາ 10/07/2018. ໃນກໍລະນີທີ່ທ່ານຫາກມີຂໍ້ຄ້ອງຕິ ຫຼື ການສະໜອນໃດໆກ່ຽວກັບການປະພຶດດ້ານຈັນຍາທຳ ຂອງການສຶກສາຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້, ທ່ານອາດຕິດຕໍ່ພົວພັນຄະນະກຳມະການນີ້ຜ່ານທາງເລຂາທິການ ຂອງຄະນະກຳມະການຈັນຍາທຳ ການຄົ້ນຄ້ວາ ຢູນິເທັກ (UREC) ໄດ້ (ໂທລະສັບ: 09 815-4321 ຕໍ່ສາຍ 8551). ທຸກໆຂໍ້ນຫາທີ່ທ່ານໄດ້ສະເໜີຂຶ້ນມາຈະໄດ້ ຮັບການປະຕິບັດແບບປິດລັບ ແລະ ສືບສອບຫາຄວາມຈິງຢ່າງເຕັມທີ່ ແລະ ທ່ານຈະໄດ້ຮັບແຈ້ງກ່ຽວກັບຜົນໄດ້ຮັບ ຂອງຂໍ້ນຫາ ດັ່ງກ່າວ.

Appendix 4: Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title: "Exploring the role of Buddhist monks/nuns in community development as a catalyst for social change and sustainable development in Lao People's Democratic Republic: A case study of Buddhism for Development Project at Ban Bungsanthueng, Nongbok District, Khammouane Province."

I have had the research project explained to me and I have read and understood the information sheet given to me.

I understand that I don't have to be part of this research project should I chose not to participate and may withdraw at any time prior to the completion of the research project.

I understand that everything I say is confidential and none of the information I give will identify me and that the only persons who will know what I have said will be the researchers and their supervisor. I also understand that all the information that I give will be stored securely on a computer at Unitec for a period of 10 years.

I understand that my discussion with the researcher will be taped and transcribed.

I understand that I can see the finished research document.

I have had time to consider everything and I give my consent to be a part of this project.

Participant Name: ……..……..……

Participant Signature: …….. Date: ……

Project Researcher: …… Date: ……

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2017-1034

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 11th July 2017 to 10th July 2018. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

<u>ແບບຟອມຍິນຍອມເຂົ້າຮ່ວມ</u>

ຊື່ໂຄງການຄົ້ນຄ້ວາ: ການສຶກສາບົດບາດການພັດທະນາຊຸມຊົນ ຂອງພຣະສົງ ແລະ ແມ່ຂາວໃນການເປັນຜູ້ນຳພາການພັດທະນາແບບຍືນຍົງໃນສປປ ລາວ: ກໍລະນີສຶກສາໂຄງການພຸດທະສາສະໜາເພື່ອການພັດທະນາ ທີ່ ບ້ານ ບິງສານເທິງ, ເມືອງ ໜອງບົກ, ແຂວງ ຄຳມ່ວນ.”

ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າໄດ້ຮັບຄຳອະທິບາຍໃຫ້ຮູ້ກ່ຽວກັບໂຄງການດັ່ງກ່າວນີ້ ແລະ ກໍ່ໄດ້ເຂົ້າໃຈຂໍ້ມູນຕ່າງໆຢູ່ໃນເອກະສານຂໍ້ມູນທີ່ໄດ້ມອບໃຫ້ແກ່ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າເປັນຢ່າງດີ.

ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າເຂົ້າໃຈດີວ່າ: ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າບໍ່ຈຳເປັນຕ້ອງເຂົ້າຮ່ວມ ແລະ ສາມາດເລືອກທີ່ຈະບໍ່ເຂົ້າຮ່ວມໃນໂຄງການຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້ກໍ່ໄດ້ ແລະ ອາດຖອນໂຕຈາກໂຄງການດັ່ງກ່າວນີ້ໄດ້ທຸກເວລາກ່ອນທີ່ໂຄງການດັ່ງກ່າວນີ້ຈະສຳເລັດ.

ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າເຂົ້າໃຈດີວ່າ: ທຸກໆສິ່ງທີ່ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າເວົ້າແມ່ນເປັນຄວາມລັບ ແລະ ບໍ່ມີຂໍ້ມູນໃດໆທີ່ເຂົ້າພະເຈົ້າໄດ້ໃຫ້ຈະສາມາດລະບຸຖືວ່າ ຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້າ ແລະ ບຸກຄົນຜູ້ທີ່ຈະຮູ້ສິ່ງທີ່ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າໄດ້ເວົ້າອອກໄປແມ່ນມີພຽງແຕ່ນັກຄົ້ນຄ້ວາ ແລະ ທີ່ ເປີກສາ ຂອງລາວເທົ່ານັ້ນ. ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຍັງເຂົ້າໃຈອີກວ່າ: ຂໍ້ມູນທັງໝົດທີ່ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າໄດ້ໃຫ້ຈະຖືກເກັບຮັກສາໄວ້ຢ່າງປອດໄພ ໃນລະບົບຄອມພິວເຕີ້ ຂອງສະຖາບັນ ຍູນິເທັກ ເຕັກໂນໂລຊີ (Unitec Institute of Technology) ເປັນເວລາ 10 ປີ.

ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າເຂົ້າໃຈວ່າ ການສຶກສາຫາລີ ຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້າກັບນັກຄົ້ນຄ້ວາຈະຖືກບັນທຶກສຽງ ແລະ ຖອດຄວາມອອກມາເປັນຕົວໜັງສື.

ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າເຂົ້າໃຈວ່າ ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າສາມາດເບິ່ງເອກະສານບົດຄົ້ນຄ້ວາທີ່ສຳເລັດແລ້ວໄດ້.

ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າໄດ້ມີເວລາພິຈາລະນາທຸກໆສິ່ງ ແລະ ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າໄດ້ໃຫ້ຄວາມຍິນຍອມໃນການເຂົ້າຮ່ວມໂຄງການຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້.

ຊື່ຜູ້ເຂົ້າຮ່ວມ: _____

ລາຍເຊັນຜູ້ເຂົ້າຮ່ວມ: _____ວັນທີ: _____

ນັກຄົ້ນຄ້ວາ: _____ວັນທີ: _____

ຂໍ້ນທະບຽນຄະນະກຳມະການຈັນຍາທຳການຄົ້ນຄ້ວາ ຍູນິເທັກ (UREC) ເລກທີ: 2017-1034

ການສຶກສາຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້ໄດ້ຮັບການອະນຸມັດຈາກຄະນະກຳມະການຈັນຍາທຳການຄົ້ນຄ້ວາ ຍູນິເທັກ (UREC) ນັບແຕ່ວັນທີ 11/07/2017 ຫາ 10/07/2018. ໃນກໍລະນີທີ່ທ່ານຫາກມີຂໍ້ຄ້ອງໃຈ ຫຼື ການສະຫງວນໃດໆກ່ຽວກັບການປະພຶດດ້ານຈັນຍາທຳ ຂອງການສຶກສາຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້, ທ່ານອາດຕິດຕໍ່ພົວພັນຄະນະກຳມະການນີ້ຜ່ານທາງເລຂາທິການ ຂອງຄະນະກຳມະການຈັນຍາທຳ ການຄົ້ນຄ້ວາ ຍູນິເທັກ (UREC) ໄດ້ (ໂທລະສັບ: 09 815-4321 ຕໍ່ສາຍ 8551). ທຸກໆບັນຫາທີ່ທ່ານໄດ້ສະເໜີຂຶ້ນມາຈະໄດ້ຮັບການປະຕິບັດແບບປິດລັບ ແລະ ສືບສວນຫາຄວາມຈິງຢ່າງເຕັມທີ່ ແລະ ທ່ານຈະໄດ້ຮັບແຈ້ງກ່ຽວກັບຜົນໄດ້ຮັບ ຂອງບັນຫາດັ່ງກ່າວ.

Declaration

Name of candidate: .....

This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project **entitled**: **Exploring the role of Buddhist monks/nuns' engagement in community development as catalysts for social change and sustainable development in Lao People's Democratic Republic: A case study of Buddhism for Development Project at Ban Bungsanthueng, Nongbok District, Khammouane Province** is submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of International Communication.

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

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- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.
  Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: 2017-1034

Candidate Signature: …… Date: June 8, 2018

Student number: 1459025

Full name of author: Toung Eh Synuanchanh

Full title of thesis/dissertation/research project: "Exploring the role of Buddhist monks/nuns' engagement in community development as catalysts for social change and sustainable development in Lao People's Democratic Republic: A case study of Buddhism for Development Project at Ban Bungsanthueng, Nongbok District, Khammouane Province"

Department of Communication Studies

Degree: Master of International Communication **Year of presentation:** 2018

Principal Supervisor:Assoc Prof Evangelia Papoutsaki Associate Supervisor: Dr Giles Dodson

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