

WORLD FAITHS DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE



Buddhism and Development: Communities in Cambodia Working as Partners

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About this Report

This report is the third in a series of World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) exploratory reviews of the numerous connections between faith and development in Cambodia. It focuses on the practical and spiritual roles of Cambodia's omnipresent Theravada Buddhist pagodas, the monks and nuns who live in them, and the communities that organize around them. It thus sets out to explore how the Buddhist beliefs and traditions, which are a central part of Cambodia's national ethos, apply in practice and how Buddhist and development actors have shown that they can work effectively together on shared priorities. It takes stock of the potential synergies that can come with partnerships between the Buddhist and development communities as well as the challenges these partnerships can face.

Much of this report's content draws upon primary research carried out in Cambodia by WFDD research fellows, including visits to pagodas and interviews with faith and development leaders conducted over a two-year period from mid-2009 to mid-2011. Several of these interviews are available online at <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/projects/faith-and-development-in-cambodia-interview-series>.

This report also builds on an exploration of the roles that Buddhism and Buddhist actors are playing in Cambodian development, begun with WFDD's first country-level mapping exercise, *Faith-Inspired Organizations and Development in Cambodia*. That report and other WFDD publications can be found online at <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/wfdd/publications>.

About the Author and Acknowledgements

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Acronyms

ABE	Association of Buddhists for the Environment	KEAP	Khmer-Buddhist Educational Assistance Project
AFDD	Asia Faiths Development Dialogue	LHA	Life and Hope Association
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome	MoCR	National Ministry of Cults and Religions
ARC	Alliance of Religions for Conservation	MoH	National Ministry of Health
ARV	Anti-retroviral	MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
BFD	Buddhism for Development	NAMSA	Network of Monks for Social Accountability
BLI	Buddhist Leadership Initiative	NGO	Non-governmental Organization
BSDA	Buddhism for Social Development Action	NIS	National Institute of Statistics
CELI	Community Environment and Livelihood Improvement Project	NTFP	Non-timber Forest Products
CPP	Cambodian Peoples' Party	NRM	Natural Resource Management
CSO	Civil Society Organization	OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
CYEO	Children and Youth Education Organization	PAGE	Program Advancing Girls' Education
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey	PECSA	Program to Enhance Capacity in Social Accountability
DoCR	Provincial Department of Cults and Religions	PLHA	People Living with HIV/AIDS
ELC	Economic Land Concessions	RACHA	Reproductive and Child Health Alliance
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization	SCC	Salvation Centre Cambodia
FGD	Focus Group Discussion	SEC	School Eco-club
HBF	Heinrich Boell Foundation	SVA	Shanti Volunteer Association
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ICC	International Cooperation Cambodia	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization	VEAT	Village Environmental Action Team
ISAI	Improving Social Accountability Initiative	WFDD	World Faiths Development Dialogue

Glossary

Achar	Buddhist priest
Acharthom	Head Buddhist priest
Anakun	District chief monk
Bhikku	Fully-ordained Buddhist monk
Bhikkuni	Fully-ordained Buddhist nun
Bon Phka	Cambodian Buddhist flower ceremony
Boran	Lit. "Ancient Rites" a sect of Cambodian Buddhism
Choul Chnam	Khmer new year
Dhamma	The Teachings of the Buddha
Dhammatesna	A monk's recitation of the Dhamma
Dhammayietra	Annual peace walk founded by MahaGhosananda
Dhammayut	A reformist order of Theravada Buddhism
Donchee	Cambodian nun
Kanakammekarwat	Pagoda committee
Komnankhet	Supreme Patriarch's inner cabinet of monks
Kruusoetchveng	Second vice monk in a pagoda
Kruusoetsadam	First vice monk in a pagoda
Kutloke	Monk's study room
Loke-ta	Monk
Mahanikay	Largest fraternal order within Cambodian Buddhism
Meak Bochea	Buddhist holy day commemorating the ordination of Buddha's first followers
Mekun	Provincial chief monk
Nirvana	In Buddhism, the state of perfect mental peace and happiness
Oknha	An honorific title held by wealthy and influential Cambodians
Pali	Ancient liturgical language of Theravada Buddhism
Pchum Ben	Cambodian holiday honoring ancestors
Preah Vihear	Main temple building in a pagoda

<i>Punya</i>	Buddhist concept of merit
<i>Salaachan</i>	Dining hall in a pagoda also used for speeches
<i>Salaanukuen</i>	District and provincial monk's offices
<i>Samanay</i>	Novice monk
<i>Sangha</i>	Association of Buddhist monks
<i>Sanghreach</i>	Supreme Patriarch or head of a Sangha
<i>Tachee</i>	Wat grandfather or older man living at the pagoda
<i>Thngaysel</i>	Buddhist holy day occurring at full, half and new moons
<i>Tripitaka</i>	Buddhist canons of religious scripture
<i>Visaka Bochea</i>	Buddhist holy day commemorating the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha
<i>Vassa</i>	Rainy season retreat, three month period where the travel of monks is restricted
<i>Vinaya</i>	Buddhist monastic code
<i>Wat</i>	Buddhist pagoda
<i>Yaychee</i>	Wat granny or older woman living at the pagoda

Executive Summary

Buddhism and the Cambodian Development Context

As the faith tradition of 95 percent of the population, Buddhist values, rituals, and institutions are the cornerstone of Cambodian identity, and as such, properly underpin the framing and implementation of development strategies, particularly at the grassroots level. Buddhism was decimated during the Khmer Rouge years and its revival has involved both recovered ancient traditions and responses to contemporary challenges. The report draws on extensive interviews, pagoda surveys, and secondary literature to distill the current landscape of Buddhism in the Cambodian development context.

Pagodas (or wats), both monumental and modest, are a fixture in nearly every town or village throughout the country and act as focal points of community life. *Historically centers of learning and places where the poor and afflicted could go for compassion and assistance, pagodas have offered a social safety net, particularly for orphans, elderly widows, and the homeless. Because they are a trusted resource, pagoda-linked actors can offer important support for community development projects, though in practice current engagement varies widely.*

National and international development partners see promise in working within Buddhist structures and with Buddhist actors; this potential has been demonstrated through projects on a range of development priorities. Social engagement for monks and other Buddhist actors can be challenging because of capacity constraints and contradictions with the Vinaya monastic code; this points to the need to explore the issues involved. Engagement should be approached with knowledge and care.

National Buddhist Structures

In practice, national Buddhist structures have limited ability to manage and support local pagodas, but they do shape social attitudes and must formally authorize development activities involving monastics. Steering Buddhist affairs nationally are the Sangha (monastic community) and the Ministry of Cults and Religions (MoCR), the government body that oversees administration of the pagoda network.

There are two fraternal orders within Cambodian Buddhism, the Dhammayut and Mahanikay. The Mahanikay order comprises about 97 percent of the country's ordained monks, while the rest belong to Dhammayut. The Mahanikay order has several important ideological sub-currents. While most monks shy away from explicit political actions or affiliations, these sub-currents have a bearing on a monk's social engagement, including if and how they participate in development programs.

The most important function of the Sangha structure is its role in managing matters of monastic discipline. *Great Supreme Patriarch Tep Vong is the effective leader of the Buddhist community. Venerable Bour Kry holds the lesser title of Supreme Patriarch and is head of the Dhammayut order. Their positions on certain development topics have been important, for example in the evolving stance towards monk engagement on HIV/AIDS. The Supreme Patriarchs' positions are influential particularly on taboo or politically sensitive topics.*

The MoCR is primarily responsible for the administrative dimensions of the pagoda system and other Buddhist institutions, including the

Buddhist education system. It has worked directly with multilateral development partners in the past, notably UNICEF, on HIV/AIDS. In 2002, the MoCR was the first ministry in Cambodia to adopt officially a sector policy on HIV/AIDS, the *Policy on Religious Response to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Cambodia*.

Local Buddhist Structures

The pagoda is a key cultural institution, deeply interwoven into the social context; it is a focal point of community life, a place for cultural celebrations, community meetings, and moral and academic education. In some rural areas, little other social service infrastructure exists. *Despite their importance and widespread presence, knowledge about these Buddhist institutions can be limited in some development settings.*

Pagodas vary widely in terms of the quantity and quality of structures, the wealth of the surrounding communities being a major factor. *Apart from their core facilities, pagodas may house Buddhist and public schools and other community resources such as rice banks.*

Monks are the most visible, but there are other important and influential social actors within pagodas. These include lay priests (*achar*) who lead Buddhist ceremonies, nuns (*donchee*) who are largely responsible for pagoda upkeep, and members of the pagoda committee (*kanakam-mekar wat*) who control practical and financial management at the pagoda. They are influential voices in their communities and potentially key figures in education and advocacy efforts. Many are committed to service in other practical ways; this can include roles in operating rice banks, redistributing donations of clothing and cooking supplies to those in need, and even in the construction of roads and community buildings.

Each pagoda is led by a head monk, assisted by a right and left vice monk. Monks at a pagoda may be fully ordained *bhikkhu* or novice monks (*samaney*) who are generally under 20 years of age. Novice monks outnumber fully ordained monks by nearly 10,000, with 33,007 novice monks to 23,297 fully-ordained *bhikkhu*. *The number of monks within a pagoda varies between urban and rural temples.* In Phnom Penh there are on average 46 monks per pagoda, while temples in Cambodia's rural Preah Vihear province have on average eight monks. Urban populations can support more monks, and many rural monks will relocate to urban pagodas to take advantage of educational opportunities.

Motivations to become a monk vary and include social tradition, personal development aspirations, and a desire to make merit for one's parents. Many seek access to educational opportunities that would not be available to them as lay people. For some, the monkhood represents the only path to continue their education.

Individual conceptions of a monk's social role vary. There are tensions within the *Sangha* as some seek to return to older esoteric traditions, or "spiritual" Buddhism, while others wish to build a new and "socially engaged" path. *Despite these tensions, many Cambodian monks are "socially engaged," active in many areas relevant to broader development priorities.* However, *their efforts are poorly funded and little publicized.* Engaged Buddhism is less established than it is in neighboring Thailand, but it has been an influential philosophy in Cambodia. A small but committed network of monks is dedicated to reviving and reimagining the pagoda's traditional role as a pillar of community support. They view Cambodia's 50,000+ monks as a vast but under-mobilized social resource for the country.

Development Partnerships with Buddhist Actors and Institutions

NGOs and other development organizations have, on a limited scale, engaged Buddhist actors in Cambodia since the 1990s. These partnerships have involved a range of actors including monks, nuns, and pagoda committees. The report profiles various exemplary partnerships, selected to illustrate not only the potential, but also the diverse and innovative ways in which Buddhist and development communities can work together toward common concerns. The partnerships profiled are:

Mlup Baitong, a Cambodian NGO founded in 1998, works to build capacity for community based natural resource management and promotes environmental awareness. In 2010, Mlup Baitong began working with its established network of pagodas on the Community Environment and Livelihood Improvement (CELL) Project, recruiting monks to use their weekly sermons as an important means to disseminate information on natural resource management and the environment in rural communities.

The *Reproductive and Child Health Alliance (RACHA)* is a Cambodian NGO formed in 2003 whose core programmatic foci include maternal, newborn, and child health, and family planning. RACHA worked with the Ministry of Health to develop a “Whole Health” strategy, which involves building capacity and linkages in the health system and developing the community as a resource, particularly for outreach. As part of its strategy, RACHA sought to incorporate Buddhist women and developed the Nun and *Wat* Granny program, training them to educate young mothers on breastfeeding and infant nutrition.

In Cambodia, orphans and children who have one or more parents afflicted with HIV/AIDS face discrimination, food insecurity, and significant barriers to formal education. *Save the Children's* Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) program works through local pagodas to provide families with food and educational supplies, livelihood training and access to health and psychosocial support. Working through 67 pagodas in six provinces, the project reaches over 6,000 children. Pagoda committees and *achar* provided a critically important bridge between the pagoda and surrounding communities in this project.

UNICEF launched in 1997 the Buddhist Leadership Initiative (BLI) as a regional effort to enable national Buddhist institutions and local monks to collaborate with government agencies in implementing a “Buddhist” response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In Cambodia, BLI activities have included home visits in which monks provide counseling, spiritual support, and meditation. Monks also actively incorporate messages on HIV/AIDS into sermons to help reduce stigma and discrimination within communities. As *UNICEF* looked to develop a more coordinated countrywide Buddhist response to HIV/AIDS, the MoCR with its national presence and policy influence became an important partner in the effort.

Buddhism for Social Development Action (BSDA) is one of a number of monk-led NGOs in Cambodia. In 2010, BSDA formed the Network of Affiliated Monks for Social Accountability (NAMSA) to combat corruption by addressing ineffective accountability mechanisms and barriers to public participation in governance at the commune level. NAMSA is active in three provinces where it enlists monks to act as facilitators of dialogue between citizens and government, building on the trust that communities have in monks. NAMSA illustrates the po-

tential of networking among monk-led NGOs, CSOs and other small-scale Buddhist development initiatives.

Partnership Issues and Challenges

Monks and other Buddhist actors are logical partners for many types of social programs and there are good examples of action to look to. *A common thread that emerges, begging for further scrutiny on a case-by-case basis, is the capacity of monks as development partners and the ethics of the engagement of religious figures (particularly important when an influx of money from INGO partnerships is involved).* To note:

- Monks' education levels vary widely. Their generally low education level is a common concern, particularly where they are involved in information dissemination.
- Many Cambodian men only ordain for a few short years so "turnover" presents a challenge for organizations that dedicate time and resources to train monks.
- Prior commitments and variable schedules are barriers to engagement for some monks.
- Aspects of the *Vinaya* monastic code of discipline may inhibit the participation of monks in development programs that deal with 'taboo' issues. This is particularly problematic in areas such as HIV/AIDS that allude to sexuality.
- The male-dominated nature of the pagoda has implications for projects that seek to engage local, Buddhist structures, as this affects the types of services that women and young girls can access.

- Real and effective outreach by monks and other religious figures is currently fairly limited, since their immediate audience is often limited to older members of the community.
- A major challenge for pagoda-centered development initiatives is their general lack of established tools for financial accountability and transparency.
- The issue of financial compensation, whether through salaries or *per diem* payments to monks, is one of the more contentious issues as it has the potential to violate a monk's commitment to modest living.

Ways Forward

Development models that engage local cultural institutions are fairly limited in Cambodia, but there is obvious potential for locally grounded and sustainable solutions to many development challenges. This is particularly true when development programs build on the community services these cultural institutions traditionally provide. This report highlights examples of organizations that have worked with Cambodia's Buddhist structures, their reasons for doing so, and some of the challenges and benefits encountered.

Development work resonates with many Cambodian monks, many of whom come from impoverished backgrounds. For some, entering the monkhood represents a means to education and escape from poverty, and many intimately understand the challenges facing their communities. Working on development projects can be an attractive option, not only as a means to support their communities, but

also to gain experience that they can utilize later in their careers if and when they leave the monkhood.

Besides monks, Buddhist priests (achar) and pagoda committee members who are elected from the lay community, can be ideal local development partners, as they tend to have higher levels of education and experience and can offer a bridge to the monastic community. Cambodian nuns or donchee are important female actors in Cambodian pagodas. The desire to be socially engaged varies widely across the monastic community, with diverse perceptions of monks' ideal social roles. Tensions may arise around ethics, focus, monastic discipline and political engagement of monks.

These challenges and considerations need not be barriers to collaboration. *Significant opportunities exist for partnership with Buddhist communities, and such collaboration can help to anchor development work firmly in Cambodian culture and values. On a practical level, for donors and NGOs, such partnerships have the potential to improve reach and effectiveness, and enhance sustainability of development interventions.* A better understanding of Buddhist institutions, actors, and traditions may help identify potentially synergistic partnerships that both empower local institutions and reduce reliance on external financial and human resources in development projects.

Introduction: Buddhism and the Cambodian Development Context

In Cambodia, Theravada Buddhism is the faith tradition of roughly 95 percent of the population and it is enshrined in the constitution as the national religion. Buddhist values, rituals, and institutions are the cornerstone of Cambodian identity, and as such, properly underpin the framing and implementation of Cambodia's development strategies, particularly at the grass-roots level. Pagodas (or *wats*), both monumental and modest, are a fixture in nearly every town or village throughout the country and they act as focal points of community life. Pagodas have historically been centers of learning and places where the poor and afflicted could go for compassion and assistance. Thus the pagoda has long functioned as a social safety net, particularly for orphans, elderly widows, and the homeless. Because they are a trusted resource, pagodas and those based there can offer important support for community development projects, though the current level of engagement that each has with its respective community varies widely.

Part of this variability is a result of recent historical events; the Khmer Rouge period marked a sharp discontinuity within Cambodian Buddhism, with deliberate efforts to drive out Buddhist institutions, traditions, and practices. The Cambodian *Sangha* was all but decimated; Buddhist monks and scholars were summarily executed, many pagodas were razed, and records were destroyed. Since the early 1990s, however, the Buddhist religion has experienced a powerful revival and the *Sangha* is slowly regaining capacity, though this process has been decentralized and uneven. Cambodian Buddhism today still bears traces of the "missing generation" that interrupted the cultural transmission of Buddhist values. As a result,

there is a great deal of heterogeneity among pagodas, not least with regard to understandings of a monk's social role. As the religion has revived, tensions have emerged between some who want to return to older esoteric traditions, namely "spiritual" Buddhism, and, alternatively, those who seek to build a new and "socially engaged" path for Buddhism. Because of the religion's great importance in the country, this discussion has an inescapable political element and those in positions of power do not always look positively upon social engagement by monks.

Despite these tensions, many Cambodian monks are "socially engaged," working in many areas relevant to broader development priorities, though often these efforts are poorly funded and not well publicized. While this trend may not be as established as in countries like neighboring Thailand, socially engaged Buddhist philosophy has become increasingly influential and there is a small but committed network of monks dedicated to reviving and reimagining the pagoda's traditional role as a pillar of community support. They view Cambodia's 50,000+ monks as a vast but under-mobilized social resource for the country.

Monks are not the only Buddhist actors with proven potential to contribute to local development. Buddhist priests (*achar*) and pagoda committee members who are elected from the lay community, manage pagoda funds and projects and have potential to be ideal local development partners, as they tend to have higher levels of education and experience and can offer a bridge to the monastic community. Cambodian nuns or *donchee* also represent important female actors in Cambodian pagodas.

Increasingly both national and international development partners are recognizing that working within Buddhist structures and with Buddhist actors offers the promise of enhancing the effectiveness, reach, and sustainability of development efforts in many fields. Social engagement for monks and other Buddhist actors is not without challenges, which can range from capacity constraints to contradictions with the *Vinaya* code, which sets guidelines for the daily lives and behavior of monastics. Buddhist practice is constantly evolving in Cambodia and it is important for development partners to understand both its history and current trajectory as institutions and actors take on new roles reflecting a changing society and responding to development challenges.

This report builds upon WFDD's initial country report, *Faith-Inspired Organizations and Development in Cambodia*, and its treatment of Buddhist history and traditions (see Section 3: "Buddhism and Development in Cambodia"), exploring the topic in greater depth. It begins with an overview of national and local Buddhist structures in Cambodia, with particular emphasis on the social functions of the pagoda. The goal is to draw attention to shared goals and nodes where partnerships have been formed. Several organizations have already developed partnerships with Cambodian pagodas in development projects. These efforts display a wide range of strategies of engagement, varying in both the Buddhist actors engaged and development sectors covered. The report explores five such efforts: the United Nations Children's Fund's *Buddhist Leadership Initiative*, the Reproductive and Child Health Alliance's *Nun and Wat Granny Program*, Save the Children's *Orphans and Vulnerable Children Program*, Mlup Baitong's *Buddhism and Environment Program*, and Buddhism for Social Development Action's *Network of Monks for Social Accountability*. The report synthesizes these past experiences

in order to explore the potential for engaging and collaborating more effectively with Buddhist institutions to achieve appropriate and sustainable development outcomes.

Report Content and Methodology

Notes

Sections I and II of this report offer a basic introduction to Buddhist structures, institutions, and actors in Cambodia to provide context and orient the reader within Cambodian Buddhist practice. Sections III and IV provide analysis, utilizing case studies of development partnerships with Buddhist actors and institutions to explore successes and challenges in Buddhist responses to current development challenges.

Section I provides a cursory introduction to the national Buddhist structures in Cambodia. It describes the organization and divisions within Cambodia's national Buddhist community or *Sangha*, and explores the major socio-political sub-currents within Cambodian Buddhism, particularly as they relate to social engagement and development activities. The primary government body responsible for the management of Buddhist structures, the Ministry of Cults and Religions, is described. **Section II** takes a closer look at the local pagoda, describing both the physical setting and the social actors found there. It emphasizes individual motivations of pagoda actors and their understanding of their religious and social roles. It draws attention to the traditional social services pagodas offer to local communities and the Buddhist calendar that informs the rhythm of cultural life. **Section III** presents five case studies of successful partnerships between Buddhist and development actors on a range of issues, from HIV to environmental conservation. Each case study includes an *in focus* section detailing ways in which the

project builds on a traditional aspect of Buddhist practice. Finally, **Section IV** highlights important considerations and challenges that arise from the involvement of monks and other Buddhist actors in development initiatives. It offers final observations and considerations for moving forward.

Much of the report's content draws upon primary qualitative research carried out in Cambodia by WFDD research fellows, including interviews with faith and development leaders conducted over a two-year period from mid-2009 to mid-2011 (See Annex I). The study of the pagoda system is the report's most original contribution, based on semi-structured surveys carried out at pagodas in seven provinces (See Annex II). The case studies of partnerships also have involved primary research, including site visits and semi-structured interviews supplemented by internal project assessments and other key published sources. The broader Cambodian Buddhist context draws extensively from secondary sources including Ian Harris' book, *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice* (2005) as well as the John Marston and Elizabeth Guthrie edited volume, *History, Buddhism and New Religious Movements in Cambodia* (2004).

Section 1: The National Level: The Cambodian Sangha and the Ministry of Cults and Religions

Two main institutions steer Buddhist affairs at the national level in Cambodia: the *Sangha*, which can be translated as ‘association’ or ‘community,’ and refers to a monastic community of monks and nuns; and the Ministry of Cults and Religions (MoCR). The Cambodian *Sangha* structure has various functions but among the most important is its role in managing matters of monastic discipline. The MoCR is primarily responsible for the administrative dimensions associated with managing the country’s pagoda system and other Buddhist institutions, including the Buddhist education system. Despite quite weighty formal responsibilities and authority, these central institutions in practice have limited capacity; and though in theory they can exert tight control over Buddhist social actors, in practice their ability to support and manage them can be limited. As a result there is evident heterogeneity in social attitudes among monks and a range of pagoda management methods. Most socially engaged monks operate outside of the formal *Sangha* hierarchy. The financing of Cambodian pagodas is entirely decentralized and each is responsible for securing donations and managing those funds. Local communities make substantial financial contributions to support their day-to-day activities. Contributions from Cambodians living abroad also play an important role in pagoda financing, particularly for major construction projects.

Often when development partners seek to work with Buddhist actors and institutions, officially or unofficially, for service provision, advocacy, or other development-related activities, they tend first to engage local pagodas

and related structures. Given the decentralized realities that prevail today in Cambodia, this approach has been relatively successful. Even so, development partners that wish to engage for the first time with pagoda-based actors need to be cognizant of the roles of the formal national structures, which do have various real and potential roles even down to the community level. The *Sangha* hierarchy, though it tends to be rather removed from community level activities, often sets the tone for predominant attitudes about social engagement (of monks), and ultimately has final authority as to which activities are proper or improper for monks to undertake. Because the MoCR dictates some of the formal religious and administrative structures in the pagoda, it must “sign off” on any activities, whether or not they are related to a development project, that involve monks or the pagoda space. Both institutions are important for any systematic engagement of monks or other pagoda actors.

The Sangha

This section describes the leadership structure of the Cambodian *Sangha* and the distinction between the *Dhammayut* and *Mahānikāy* fraternal orders. It highlights important social sub-currents within *Mahānikāy*. Finally it discusses the responsibilities and means for information sharing and capacity building within the formal Buddhist leadership structure.

Mahanikay and Dhammayut Orders and Sub-currents in Cambodian Buddhism

In Cambodia today Buddhism has two fraternal orders, the *Dhammayut* and *Mahanikay*. The *Dhammayut* monastic order developed as a reform movement in Thailand, and the sect adopted a *Pali* language canon and a renewed dedication to asceticism (adhering more strictly to the *Vinaya* monastic code). Introduced to Cambodia in 1855 under the patronage of King Ang Duong, it is still associated with the monarchy and aristocratic elements in Cambodian society. *Dhammayut* is largely an urban phenomenon, with pagodas primarily located in Phnom Penh and provincial capitals. The *Mahanikay* order is based on much older Cambodian Buddhist traditions. In part because of its history and wider influence, the *Mahanikay* order comprises about 97 percent (54,861) of the country's ordained monks. The remaining 1,443 belong to *Dhammayut* (MoCR 2010). There are only a few aspects of dress and behavior that superficially distinguish monks from the two orders. *Dhammayut* robes are a mustard yellow color, while *Mahanikay* robes range in shades from bright orange to dark red. *Dhammayut* monks do not wear sandals during alms collection and hold their alms bowls with two hands in front of them, whereas *Mahanikay* monks hold the bowl against their left hip. There are currently 4,307 *Mahanikay* and 159 *Dhammayut* pagodas in the country (*ibid*).

Within the large *Mahanikay* order, there are several important ideological sub-currents. While most monks shy away from explicit political actions or affiliations, these sub-currents do have a great bearing on a monk's social activities, and extend to participation in development programs.

The *Boran* (lit. "ancient rites") movement of the *Mahanikay* order began around 1989 as a revival of some of the more esoteric traditions in Cambodian Buddhism. The movement contains many "non-orthodox" elements including ritual mysticism and prophecy. Many of its adherents view this style of Buddhist practice as more quintessentially Khmer and less beholden to foreign influence than other traditions (Harris 2005: 223). *Boran* temples emphasize memorization and recitation of Khmer and *Pali* prayers, which are said to bestow merit and confer worldly benefits, including financial or career success. The *Boran* movement is popular among many of Cambodia's political and military elite, including Prime Minister Hun Sen and other members of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). These leaders provide substantial donations to *Boran* pagodas in order to make merit and as a result *Boran* pagodas are some of the wealthiest in the country (*ibid*). Some *Boran* monks are also quite influential in Cambodia's *Sangha* hierarchy.

The *Mahanikay* Modernist movement (alternately known as reformed *Mahanikay*) is another influential movement in Cambodia's *Mahanikay* order. Modernist ideology has been influential in the *Mahanikay* order since the turn of the 20th century with the French-sponsored creation of new Buddhist institutes of higher learning in Phnom Penh. Modernists place much emphasis on study of *Pali* and the Buddhist Scripture (*Tripitika*), and tend to re-interpret these Buddhist teachings in socially and environmentally conscious ways. In post Khmer Rouge Cambodia, many of the country's socially-engaged monks have been associated with this movement, perhaps the most important figure being Ven. Maha Ghosananda, founder of the annual *Dhammayietra* peace march (Weiner 2003). Other important figures include socially engaged Buddhists Ven. Yos Hut and Heng Monychenda (interviews with

whom can be found at <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/projects/faith-and-development-in-cambodia-interview-series>). The *Mahanikay* Modernist movement has attracted the attention of the international development community since the early 1990s and has seen an influx of foreign funding. As scholar Ian Harris observes, the close relationship of this movement with international development actors has sparked some concern: “ironically as leading *Mahanikay* Modernists have tried to avoid the murky waters of domestic politics, they have gradually been drawn into other perilous alliances. Therefore they must strive to avoid the charge that they have become nothing more than servants of the international community” (Harris 2005: 213).

Another group that can be considered a subset of *Mahanikay* Modernism is known as the “Young Monks Movement.” This movement involves primarily junior monks and, whereas *Mahanikay* Modernists are more involved with harnessing the moral authority of the *Sangha* in development programs, these ‘young monks’ tend to engage in direct activism and are far more vocal in their opposition to the government. Ven. Loun Sovath, active in ongoing land rights protests, is a prominent example.

Most socially engaged monks (whether from the *Mahanikay* Modernist or the Young Monks Movements) do not hold prominent positions in the *Sangha* hierarchy, nor are they head monks at their pagodas. Thus, there is a sharp disconnect between the *Sangha* and the most socially engaged elements of the *Mahanikay* order, lending some complexity to efforts of development partners to collaborate more systematically with the *Sangha*.

The *Dhammayut* order is seen by some as falling in between the *Boran* and *Mahanikay* Modernist movements in terms of their attitudes

towards social engagement. The order’s leadership recently expressed interest in working on certain social issues, but the order’s history and religious prohibitions may, at least partially, restrict putting this into practice. Ian Harris notes:

“Dhammayut monks do not appear to possess the developmentalist and reformist interests of their modernist Mahanikay counterparts...senior Dhammayut figures have been invited to events sponsored by foreign NGOs, but they have shown some reluctance to attend. This reluctance can be explained in a number of ways. The order’s strict observance of monastic discipline, such as the prohibition on handling money and digging the soil, may be a factor. Another possibility is that the Dhammayut hierarchy is concerned about the adverse impact that the receipt of international funds might have on the traditions of Cambodian Buddhism. Given their greater contact with Thailand, they are likely to be more aware of this as a potentially divisive issue.” (Harris 2005: 215)

The small number of *Dhammayut* monks and their limited geographic range (*Dhammayut* pagodas are mainly concentrated in urban centers) are also impediments to social engagement in this order.

The Sangha Hierarchy

In the mid-20th century the ecclesiastic structure of Cambodian Buddhism was reformed and reorganized under the influence of modern bureaucratic arrangements imported from outside Cambodia. This was done in part to bring the Buddhist structure in line with the new administrative units in the country. The hierarchy established in this era more or less remains today, despite the upheavals of the Khmer Rouge pe-

riod. Each province has one Provincial Chief Monk (*Mekun*) and each district within that province a District Chief Monk (*Anukun*). The head monks of all the pagodas within a district vote for a District Chief Monk, and the District Chief monks in turn vote to elect a Provincial Chief Monk. Ultimately these appointees must be approved by the order's Supreme Patriarch (discussed below). The positions of *Mekun* and *Anukun* within the national hierarchy depend on the importance of their constituent units. To be eligible for these senior appointments, a monk must have spent a minimum of 20 rainy season retreats in the monastic order.

A group of high-ranking monks (*komnankhet*) form an inner cabinet and act as a bridge between the Supreme Patriarchs and Provincial Chief Monks; their role is similar to an inspector general's. Every January the Provincial Chief Monks and the *komnankhet* meet in Phnom Penh at Chaktomuk conference hall. The topics discussed usually pertain to administrative or disciplinary matters; if and when development activities become an issue the matter can be taken up in this context.

There is a system of Buddhist courts at the pagoda district, provincial and national levels. These bodies are headed by head monks, District Chief Monks, Provincial Chief Monks and Supreme Patriarchs, respectively. The Supreme Council at the national level is the ultimate authority in matters of monastic discipline and the only body that can defrock a monk. Only after this process is complete can a monk be handed over to civil authorities.

Sanghreach: The Great Supreme Patriarch and the Supreme Patriarchs

At the top of the ecclesiastic hierarchy is the Supreme Patriarch. The Supreme Patriarch is the effective leader of a Buddhist community who has legal authority to oversee the country's mo-

nastic clergy. Cambodia has had two Supreme Patriarchs since 1991, when then-King Sihanouk re-established the *Dhammayut* order and appointed Venerable Bour Kry as its Supreme Patriarch. The Supreme Patriarch of the *Mahanikay* order, Venerable Tep Vong, was elevated in 2006 to the status of Great Supreme Patriarch giving him authority over both orders. This new title bestowed on Venerable Tep Vong is viewed by some as politically motivated, giving the CPP-affiliated monk greater authority over the Cambodian *Sangha* (Harris 2005: 215).

Venerables Tep Vong and Bour Kry are each assisted by a director monk who liaises with the MoCR on many administrative matters. For example, the Supreme Patriarch and the Minister of Cults and Religions must sign and stamp their approval of a change in title of any monk, while Venerable Tep Vong, the Minister of Cults and Religions, and Prime Minister Hun Sen must approve the appointment of district or provincial chief monks.

International development partners have needed to secure the approval of the Supreme Patriarchs in order to involve monks in development programs, especially when they involve controversial topics (such as HIV and AIDS issues, land rights, and environmental monitoring, as opposed to more routine and accepted activities like education). While all development initiatives that involve monks must be approved by the MoCR, on certain topics the Ministry will defer to the Supreme Patriarch before making a decision. This was the case when monks first began working on issues surrounding HIV and AIDS in the late 1990s. Partners in Compassion, one of the first organizations to enlist monks to counsel people dying of AIDS, was initially denied permission to carry out the project by the Ministry because it might have required monks to discuss topics related to sex. The Ministry stated that a signed letter from Tep

Vong would be required to proceed with the project; after some negotiation the Supreme Patriarch approved the project, though only after it was convincingly framed as a health project.

The HIV and AIDS epidemic was long a thorny issue within the *Sangha*, but the attitudes of the Supreme Patriarchs have slowly changed over time. Ven. Tep Vong was initially opposed to the involvement of monks in projects focused on Cambodians living with HIV or AIDS, regarding the disease as karmic punishment. Ven. Bour Kry, on the other hand, believed that it was a monk's role to minister to the sick so they might die at peace. Both maintained, however, that it would be inappropriate for monks to disseminate safe-sex messages or use the pagoda as a hospice, as was common in Thailand (Harris 2005: 215). Ven. Tep Vong has since softened his stance as work by monks on these issues has become more commonplace. He now supports home-based moral education to prevent HIV infection and allows monks to distribute material support to HIV and AIDS affected families.

Venerables Tep Vong and Bour Kry differ slightly in their position about the degree to which Buddhist structures, and monks, in particular, should be socially engaged and, more specifically, involved in development activities. However, neither has emerged as a noteworthy advocate on social issues such as poverty or equity (Henke et al: 2002). The attitudes of the Supreme Patriarch are particularly important on topics considered taboo or politically sensitive. Cambodia's ongoing corruption and land rights challenges are examples of such issues.

The Ministry of Cults and Religions

Cambodia's Ministry of Cults and Religions is the government body responsible for administrative management of religious affairs. While the Ministry is involved in advising and regulating all major religions in Cambodia, its focus is more directed to the administration of the Theravada Buddhist structure. The Ministry structure mirrors the *Sangha* hierarchy (figure 1), with

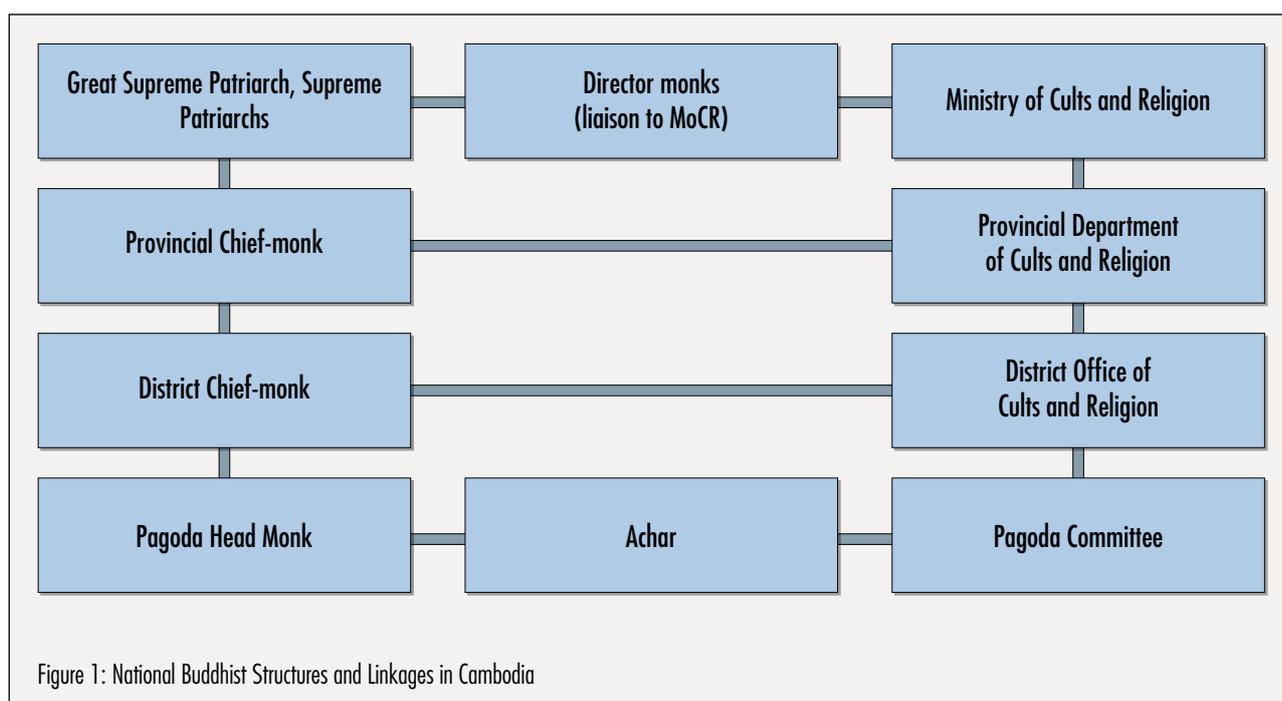


Figure 1: National Buddhist Structures and Linkages in Cambodia

offices at the district, provincial and national levels. The provincial and district offices of the MoCR are often located on pagoda grounds. The National Ministry Office is located in Phnom Penh and has 55 permanent staff, while there are over 600 employees at the provincial Departments of Cults and Religions and district offices.

The Ministry does not finance pagodas directly, but does provide training to pagoda committees on basic financial management skills and fundraising strategies. The Ministry and its provincial Departments also organize regular training sessions for monks and collaborate

closely with Great Supreme Patriarch Ven. Tep Vong; Supreme Patriarch of *Mahanikay*, Ven. Ngon Net; and Supreme Patriarch of *Dhammayut*, Ven. Bour Kry, on issues related to monk ordination and monastic elections.

The MoCR has worked directly with multilateral development partners in the past, notably UNICEF, in the area of HIV prevention, care and support. In 2002, the MoCR was the first ministry in Cambodia to adopt officially a sector policy on HIV/AIDS, a document known as the *Policy on Religious Response to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Cambodia*. Since then only two other ministries have adopted similar poli-

Box 1: The Buddhist Institute and Knowledge about Cambodian Buddhism

The Buddhist Institute was formally established in 1930 under the patronage of the French colonial authorities. It incorporated and expanded the Cambodian Royal Library founded by King Sisowath in 1921. The official aim of the Buddhist Institute was to reverse the “degeneration” of Cambodian Buddhism; however it was also part of a larger attempt by the French to engage and collaborate with Buddhist monks and shift their focus away from Siam, then the regional center of Buddhist learning (Edwards 2004). Its founding director, Suzanne Karpelès, was one of a handful of French academics charged with reinvigorating and reforming Cambodian Buddhism with the corollary goal of aligning the Sangha with the colonial authorities after a series of millenarian monk-led uprisings (Hansen 2004). The Buddhist Institute is considered to be Cambodia’s oldest indigenous research institution and undertook many important projects including producing the first Khmer translation of the Tripitaka. Prior to its dissolution under the Khmer Rouge, it hosted a specialized library, ethnographic museum, and two research commissions. It also published its own monthly journal called *Kambuja Surya Magazine*. In 1992, the Buddhist Institute was re-established by the MoCR. With assistance from the Shanti Volunteer Association (SVA) and the Heinrich Boell Foundation (HBF) the Buddhist Institute has been building capacity to fulfill once again many of its pre-war functions, notably initiating new research and reviving its publications department.

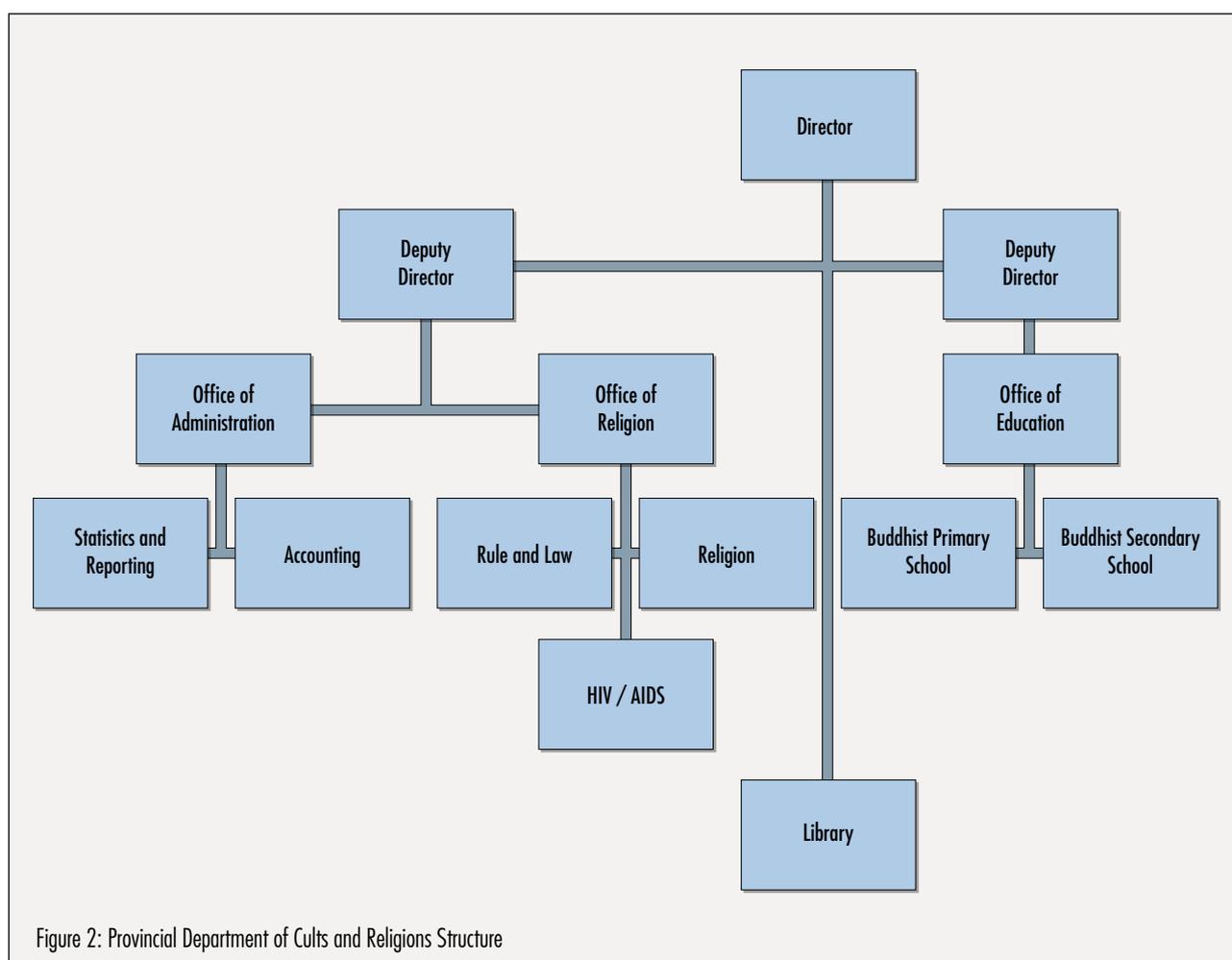
A leading challenge is the effort to recover the vast stores of data and knowledge on Buddhism that were destroyed during the Khmer Rouge era. The Buddhist Institute is translating Buddhist literature from Pali into the Khmer language to replace lost texts. Another major goal is to create a database on Cambodian Buddhism for national and international scholars supplemented by on-going fieldwork and documentation. The institute also seeks to act as a forum for national, regional and international dialogue on issues related to Buddhism and Cambodian culture. While the Buddhist Institute is envisioned as the premier cultural research institution in Cambodia, significant resource constraints do pose barriers to this goal at present.

cies: the Ministry of Women and Veterans Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labor, and Youth Rehabilitation. The *Policy on Religious Response to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Cambodia* was developed by the MoCR in conjunction with UNICEF and a group of the country's senior-most monks. UNICEF has supported policy implementation in selected communes in 10 provinces, and in these provinces Provincial Department of Cults and Religions offices have appointed staff specifically to help coordinate the Buddhist response to HIV at the sub-national level. The MoCR also manages the country's Buddhist education system, in which monks study, and mandates its curriculum.

Provincials Department of Cults and Religions

Each Provincial Department of Cults and Religions (DoCR) facility has four offices: the Office of Religion, Office of Education, Office of Administration, and Library (see figure 2). The Provincial DoCR has one director and two deputy directors, one responsible for the offices of Religion and Administration and the other for Education. The Provincial DoCR library houses works related to religion and other subjects as reference for members of the public.

Ministry staff, during conversations with the research team, argued that the knowledge and expertise of the Ministry is underutilized by de-



velopment partners, particularly at the provincial level. Choeum Chhad, Vice Director of the Administrative Office of the MoCR, explains: “There are many NGOs that work with pagodas, but only about half have a good relationship with the Ministry before they begin work. The others just come quickly to the Ministry to get approval, but they don’t have a good working relationship.” He suggested that the Provincial DoCR is a key institution, particularly for NGOs as they look to engage local Buddhist actors or complement ongoing efforts.

The Ministry identified several areas where the Provincial DoCR can play helpful roles in facilitating partnerships:

Information provision: the Provincial DoCR has the most detailed information regarding names and locations of pagodas as well as statistics related to those pagodas. While this information should in theory be shared with the National MoCR office in Phnom Penh, this does not always happen; the process is slow and cumbersome as most information is still delivered by hand. The Provincial DoCRs are also in the process of recording backgrounds and histories of each pagoda in their province (Xinhua 2010). These are being compiled at the National Ministry with plans to publish the histories of every Cambodian pagoda.

Pagoda recommendation: The Provincial DoCR offices generally have close working relationships with all the province’s pagodas, including on issues related to NGO engagement. They have knowledge of development programs already underway and through the Provincial and District Chief-monks, are familiar with the enthusiasm, knowledge, and ability of monks in each pagoda and can provide recommendations on potential pagoda partners based on criteria such as location or target populations.

Facilitation for MoU development: the Provincial DoCR can provide staff to facilitate the elaboration of a MoU between an NGO and the head monk at a pagoda.

Approval of project proposal: the National MoCR must ultimately approve most activities at the pagoda which commit significant pagoda resources. This would include any project that involves monks or takes place on pagoda grounds. The Provincial DoCR can detail requirements and assist in this approval process.

The Provincial DoCR can be an important resource for development partners but their capacity limitations are a concern. Many Provincial DoCR offices have very limited funding and are still developing managerial and administrative capacity, although this is not true across the board and capacity varies on a province-to-province basis. UNICEF has worked for over a decade to build capacity in many Provincial DoCR offices with some success. Another concern is that relying solely on Provincial DoCR recommendations can contribute to overlap with many development initiatives originating from a relatively small number of pagodas. Provincial DoCR officials are likely to guide those that inquire to pagodas with monks who are already active in social programs. Often, these pagodas already receive relatively high levels of support from their surrounding communities and other organizations. This can be a positive aspect for development partners that wish to engage socially active pagodas; or a challenging aspect for those seeking to work with under-supported populations.

Section 2: The Local Level: Inside the Pagoda

At present, sharply increased attention is going to the local social context for development work, in both strategy and project design. This reflects an effort to increase effectiveness and sustainability of development programs, but also recognition that ownership by communities is both ethically appropriate and ultimately vital to their success. In Cambodia, this has heightened attention to the indigenous cultural institutions with which development partners might engage. The Buddhist pagoda is a key cultural institution, deeply interwoven into the social context; it is a focal point of community life, a place for cultural celebrations, community meetings, and moral and academic education. This is particularly important in some rural regions of the country where little other social service infrastructure may exist. Despite its importance in Cambodian life, however, knowledge about Buddhist institutions is limited, including among the international development community. This section provides a general overview of the pagoda space and the key individuals within that space based in large part on WFDD's pagoda surveys (see Annex II). It also highlights the "calendar" of a pagoda, as an illustration of the rhythm of daily life. It draws attention to considerations relevant for development partners.

Pagoda Monastic Actors

Monks are the most prominent figures in the Cambodian Buddhist pagoda, but other important social actors spend significant time at the pagoda and influence pagoda affairs. These include lay priests known as *achar*, nuns known as *donchee*, as well as members of the pagoda committee who control practical and financial management at the pagoda. These

individuals are noteworthy not only because they are influential voices in their communities (and potentially key figures in education and advocacy efforts), but also because many are already committed to serving their communities in other practical ways. This can include operating rice banks, redistributing donations of clothing and cooking supplies to those in need, and even building roads. The following portrait of social actors within the Cambodian pagoda puts an emphasis on individual motivations and perceptions of societal roles.

Monks (Loke-Ta)

Monks are the most numerous and visible social actors within a pagoda. Their roles vary widely among Buddhist countries and also within them, and this is true in Cambodia. Cambodian monks are generally ascetics who lead a simple and meditative life centered at the pagoda in support of their spiritual practice and pursuit of *nirvana*. Monks regularly provide blessings to members of their communities and preach aspects of the Buddha's teachings.

Fully ordained monks are known in the *Pali* language (the ancient language of Buddhist scriptures) as *bhikkhus*. *Bhikkhus* shave their heads and eyebrows, wear saffron robes, and follow the *Vinaya* monastic code of discipline, which among its many directives discourages them from operating motor vehicles, handling money, and eating outside specified times. While 20 is the minimum age at which a monk can be considered for full ordination, pagodas ordain younger men as novice monks, or *samanay*. Novice monks look and behave much the same as their fully ordained counterparts, but follow 10 precepts rather than the full 227 outlined in the *Vinaya*. Theravada texts do not

prescribe a specific minimum age for novice monks, although in Cambodia, youths are generally not ordained as *samanay* before the age of 10. According to MoCR statistics for 2010, there are 56,304 monks in Cambodia. Novice monks outnumber fully ordained monks by nearly 10,000, with 33,007 novice monks to 23,297 fully-ordained *bhikkhus*.

In Cambodia, an individual's economic circumstances can have a significant influence on their decision to become a monk. The monkhood is one important means through which young men have traditionally overcome social obstacles, namely poverty. Monks often reported poverty as a contributing factor to their joining the monkhood, and others reported having lost one or both parents to accidents or disease. Many young men use the monkhood as a springboard to other opportunities once they disrobe, and may return to religious life as monks or *achar* in their elder years. Many young monks express enthusiasm about the potential of working with an NGO as this represents valuable experience for future careers.

The number of monks at a pagoda

The number of monks living at any given pagoda is regularly in flux. Monks are generally free to move between pagodas, provided they have permission from the head monk. This typically occurs as monks seek educational opportunities, often including attending a university or technical school in an urban area or *Pali* classes at a nearby pagoda. Since monks rely on the surrounding communities to provide them with food and other supplies, occasionally they are forced to relocate simply because the community cannot provide enough support for the number of monks living at the pagoda. This happens more often in rural pagodas where the villages are smaller and less wealthy. Occa-

sionally, due to the low number of *Dhammayut* monks, members of this order will relocate in an effort to keep the number of monks consistent between pagodas. Monks rarely travel during *vassa* or the "rainy season retreat" between July and August. One interviewee suggested that historically the rainy season has made traveling impractical as road conditions are poor and traveling monks could damage the newly planted rice crop as they walked through rural areas.

The number of monks within a pagoda also varies greatly between urban and rural temples. While Phnom Penh has on average 46 monks per pagoda, temples in Cambodia's rural Preah Vihear province have eight monks per pagoda on average (MoCR 2010). This disparity is, in part, due to the fact that urban populations can support more monks, but also because these urban pagodas draw rural monks who hope to take advantage of the educational opportunities that urban areas offer. Many monks in their mid-20s come to the capital to attend university; as a result the number of fully ordained *bhikkhus* in Phnom Penh is nearly double the figure for novice monks in rural areas (4,038 vs. 2,521). The opposite holds true in rural Preah Vihear province, where the number of novice monks is nearly double the figure of those who are fully ordained (196 vs. 365) (MoCR 2010). In rural areas it is also more likely for men to uphold the traditional Cambodian practice of joining the monkhood at a younger age, returning to agricultural work and marrying when they reach adulthood. Many Cambodian men are ordained as monks at some point in their lives.

The number of monks living at pagodas visited in the course of this study ranged from five to 50; most pagodas, however, had fewer than 20. Those pagodas that housed more monks typically had either a *Pali* school (occasionally operated on a seasonal basis) or a Bud-

dhist primary or secondary school on pagoda grounds, and these schools drew monks from the surrounding area.

Personal motivations for entering the monkhood

In WFDD pagoda surveys, young men shared several motivations for joining the monkhood. These motivations can be important as they inform to some extent how monks view their social role. Alongside the love of Buddhism and a desire to support and sustain the religion (mentioned by nearly every monk interviewed), personal motivations could generally be grouped into four main categories.

Social tradition: social pressure to join the monkhood as a youth. At least initially, entering the monkhood was not a completely free choice, as it is traditional in Cambodia for parents to encourage their boys to become monks at some point in their youth.

Merit making: perhaps relatedly, becoming a monk is seen as a means of making merit for one's parents (See Box 2). For some monks whose parents had passed away, becoming a monk was a means of honoring their spirits.

Personal development: a desire to develop personally by learning Buddhist morality and self-discipline. The *Dhamma* contains much wisdom that can help guide its adherents to do the right thing and become a better person more

Box 2: The Buddhist concept of Merit (punya)

In Buddhist philosophy, merit accumulates as a result of good deeds or thoughts. Merit carries over from one life to the next, eventually helping an individual achieve nirvana. It is also believed that a portion of one's accumulated merit can be transferred to deceased relatives. Merit is a compelling concept in Cambodian society, serving as an inspiration for many Buddhists who work in social ventures.

In Punyakiriyavattusuttam, or the Discourse of Merituous Actions in the *Pali* Cannon, the Buddha describes three bases for merit: giving, virtue and mental development. Monks make merit through mindfulness, chanting, and participation in Buddhist rituals. Post-canonical commentary contained in the *Atthakatha* outlines more specific methods through which lay-devotees can make merit, which are as follows:

- honoring others (*apacayana-maya*)
- offering service (*veyyavacca-maya*)
- involving others in good deeds (*pattidana-maya*)
- being thankful for others' good deeds (*pattanumodana-maya*)
- listening to Teachings (*dhammassavana-maya*)
- instructing others in the Teachings (*dhammadesana-maya*)
- aligning one's own views in accordance with the Teachings (*ditthujukamma*)

generally. Some also suggested that the monkhood has allowed them to develop skills such as concentration and resolve that benefit their professional lives after monkhood.

Access to education: educational opportunities associated with the monkhood are the primary reason many choose to seek ordination. The same kinds of opportunities would not be available to them as lay people, owing to the distance of government schools and fees associated with school supplies. For some, having previously failed or become too old to attend government schools, the monkhood represented the only option to continue their education.

A monk's daily activities

The daily schedule of a monk is highly variable, depending on both the pagoda where he lives and his individual responsibilities and aspirations. While younger monks have fewer responsibilities than the head monk, many have a busy daily routine, owing in part to the demands of the Buddhist educational curriculum. For younger monks there is an emphasis on the study of *Pali* and *Dhamma* alongside other core subjects such as Khmer literature, math, and science. The proportion of time spent on *Pali* versus other subjects depends on the pagoda and the monk's personal preference. Some novices and younger monks even study technical subjects outside of the pagoda in the evenings, including English language or computer skills.

A monk from Wat Tep Nimith in Kampong Thom Province recounts an average day at his pagoda:

"We get up in the morning at around 4:30 AM to chant. After that we review some chants or scripts of the Dhamma. At 6:00 AM, after we review our les-

sons, we take a bath, do laundry, and some monks clean the pagoda compound. Then we get together to eat. After breakfast, we do work around the pagoda like building things, repairing the compound, or building the temple. We are divided into different groups. Each group is responsible for something different. We rest at 10:00 AM. At 11:00 AM, we eat lunch. In this pagoda, we rest after lunch, but at 1:30 PM we study four subjects: English, math, Khmer literature, and Pali. We study until till 5:00PM. The monks teach, and there is one layman who lives in the pagoda who helps teach, too. Some monks go out of the pagoda to learn more English and computer skills after classes. After that, the rest of the monks chant again and maybe have coffee. Then we take time to review our lessons and then we sleep."

At Wat Tep Nimith, the surrounding villagers bring food to the monks, but many Cambodian monks also engage in regular alms collection. These are not necessarily collected on a daily basis, but often when the support is needed. Likewise, there is no set time for alms collection, though it most often occurs around 9:00 AM. One common critique of the capacity of monks to act as development partners is that they may not know enough about the problems of the communities due to their pagoda-based lifestyle. Alms collection is noteworthy as a time in which monks are most visible in their communities, although monks rarely engage in discussion with community members at this time.

Head Monk

The head monks have a great deal of social influence in their communities. They are the

source of spiritual authority within the pagoda and are largely responsible for managing the monks within.

Head monks' main responsibilities at the pagoda include:

- Management of and rule-making within the overall pagoda community
- Instruction and supervision of novice monks
- Designating monks to speak at community ceremonies or give blessings
- Management of the physical pagoda space (this includes making decisions on construction) in cooperation with the pagoda committee
- Overseeing pagoda-village relationships, including ensuring that monks are adequately fed
- Attending head monk meetings at the district level (the head monk may also attend meetings at the provincial or national levels).

Depending on the head monk's age, education, and leadership style, he may share these responsibilities to varying degrees with vice monks, *achar*, and/or pagoda committee members.

Head monks interviewed for this study ranged in age from 21 to 89. Age can have an impact on a head monk's decision-making capacity at the pagoda and level of social engagement with the community. Older monks may be authoritative sources in both spiritual and worldly matters though, in some cases, as a result of senility they may be no longer able to exercise control over the pagoda competently. Educa-

tion levels among head monks ranged from no formal schooling to a head monk who had a completed doctorate degree. Depending on their experience during the Democratic Kampuchea era and the turbulent transitional years afterwards, many who are now senior monks completely missed the opportunity to obtain an education. However, there are important exceptions; some Cambodian monks who were in monasteries abroad or who fled during the Khmer Rouge era and have since returned are some of the highest educated and most socially engaged members of Cambodia's *Sangha*. One notable example is the late Maha Ghosananda, founder of the annual *Dhammayietra* peace march, who spent these years in a forest temple in southern Thailand. He returned to become one of the most influential figures in post-war Cambodia (Weiner 2003).

The authority of the head monk can be interpreted quite differently between pagodas in Cambodia and this can influence the level of social engagement of junior monks. For example, when asked whether monks would need to have the permission of the head monk to participate in, or contribute to a development project, responses varied. Some head monks said that monks needed permission for such endeavors while others did not see the need for it. One head monk observed: "I cannot control them, but they should keep me informed." The head monk's interests and priorities can also influence the activities of junior monks within their pagoda, and views on social roles of a monk differ markedly among head monks. Some actively encouraged junior monks to become involved in their communities, while others place a much greater emphasis on Buddhist education and spiritual reflection. The following quotes illustrate the great range of interpretations of the role of a monk by head monks in the pagoda survey:

"A monk's role is to study, to pray and to collect alms and some food from the people."

"As Buddhist monks, the main thing is to follow the Buddhist principles. To be a monk means to learn the Dhamma and the Buddha's teachings and to practice following the Buddha's advice. Besides that monks can also help and work with the community."

"An important aim of monkhood is mental development in order to get rid of attachments and mental impurities."

"Monks play two main roles. The first role is to preach and teach people about the Dhamma and Buddhist principles. The second is to teach people general knowledge. The young generation is like a bamboo shoot: if they are broken, they cannot become a tall plant."

"A monk's first responsibility is for the temple. They have to keep the pagoda clean and save up money to construct new buildings."

"The first role of the monk is being educated about Buddhism and morals and to spread this to the community, but another role is helping poor people. Right now the monks here are not directly helping the poor, but people from the community often bring food for the monks; if we have more than they need we will give some to the poor families."

"In this country most people are farmers and don't have the ability to put their children through school. They can come to the wat and become a monk if they want to become educated. Even if they don't want

to become a monk they can come to the pagoda to stay. The monks will agree to let them stay and they do not have to pay any money."

Head monks are followed by vice monks; the right monk (*kruusoutsadam*) is the first vice monk while the left monk (*kruusoutchveng*) is the second. Generally, the right monk is responsible for assisting the head monk in managing the physical pagoda grounds while the left monk is responsible for documents and oversight of monks within the pagoda; these responsibilities may differ depending on the pagoda. In pagodas where head monks are of advanced age, left and right monks may have greater influence on pagoda activities.

Aside from their role within the pagoda, some head monks take on additional formal responsibilities, including serving as the Commune, District, or Provincial Head Monks, directors of NGOs, teachers of morality at public high schools, and/or professors at the Buddhist University. When head monks are absent from the pagoda, they delegate their formal responsibilities and authority to the vice monks. Head monks generally remain in the position for longer than their subordinates, though they may still disrobe, even after many years of service. When a head monk disrobes or passes away, his responsibilities pass on temporarily to the right monk until the District-chief monk selects a new head monk in collaboration with the pagoda committee.

Achar

An *achar* is a male lay-Buddhist priest who plays an important role in many ceremonies and rituals. *Achar* are often pious individuals who practice the eight precepts, and many were previously monks. Some *achar* live at the pagoda, but



Image 1: Achar with Charity Box

most live with their families and continue to practice their professions, often farming. Depending on the size of the community surrounding a pagoda, there may be two to four *achar*, elected by a community vote, one of whom community members elect as the head *achar* (*acharthom*). They also serve as the link between the monastic and lay communities since they are typically popular and trusted community figures.

Achar are knowledgeable about Buddhist scripture and after ceremonies in which monks deliver a *Dhamma* speech (*Dhammatesna*), community members often consult *achar* for further explanation or interpretation of the Buddhist teachings in lay terminology. Depending on their level of knowledge, *achar* may be involved in teaching *Pali* and *Dhamma* in the pagoda, as well as math, writing, geography and history. Their main responsibilities involve coordinating and facilitating Buddhist ceremonies, holy days (*tgneysef*), and major annual festivals including spirit ceremonies such as *Bon Phka*, a flower ceremony which serves to raise money for repairs and new buildings, or to carry out community projects (Buddhist Institute 1999).

Pagoda surveys noted a division of responsibilities among *achar*. For instance, the head *achar* may be responsible for general work in the pagoda, the first vice *achar* responsible for the ceremonies in the pagoda, and the second vice *achar* responsible for meeting the material needs of the monks. The arrangement of responsibilities among *achar* varies widely. *Achar* often work closely with the right and left monks as they share similar responsibilities. In addition to their religious duties, *achar* can help to manage pagoda finances, including charity boxes, as well as often working with the pagoda committee to approve and arrange major financial outlays. *Achar* approach government authorities on behalf of the monks to request permission to perform ceremonies, and will liaise with the Department of Cults and Religions on behalf of the monks as necessary.

From a development perspective, *achar* represent key intermediaries between the Buddhist and lay communities. Because of this unique position *achar* have played important roles in development programs that engage Buddhist pagodas in Cambodia. As well-liked and trusted community members, who often already have roles in Buddhist education, they have been effective at delivering messages on health and other topics to community members.

Pagoda Committees

The pagoda committee (*kanakammekar wat*) manages finances, construction projects, and other practical and logistical activities at the pagoda. By virtue of their responsibility for pagoda finances, the pagoda committee plays a vital role in the overall management of the pagoda. The committee purchases all necessary supplies for the pagoda and works closely with the head monks to discuss new construction plans or repairs to existing pagoda structures.

Pagoda committee members are lay Buddhists who may be literate and are trusted by the community to manage the pagoda's finances. Pagoda committee members can be women, and therefore represent one of the more influential positions women can attain in the pagoda, a space often seen as male-dominated.

Committee members are elected by the surrounding community and usually consist of between five and ten members, depending on the number of villages served by the pagoda. The MoCR does set guidelines for the leadership structure of pagoda committees, which generally comprise a manager, a vice manager and a treasurer. However, in practice, pagoda committees are diverse in size, structure, and roles. Many are made up of one representative from each of the pagoda community's constituent villages and some rotate leadership among their representatives on a monthly basis. While *achar* and pagoda committee elections are generally open to everyone in the community, the number of community members that will vote in these elections will vary.

The Provincial DoCR trains newly elected pagoda committee representatives in basic financial management. However, these trainings are held only when a new committee manager is installed. In part because of the infrequency in training and varying local capacity, the formality of pagoda committees' financial management systems differs. Some pagodas have regular financial management meetings, while the majority makes their decisions on an *ad hoc* basis. Major financial outlays, particularly for construction, are made by consensus among the head monk, *achar*, and pagoda committee members. Decisions are put to a vote when there is disagreement. Each pagoda runs on voluntary contributions from community members, primarily donated during festivals and merit-making ceremonies in the village. Some

pagodas may also anticipate larger contributions by *Oknhas* (a title bestowed on some wealthy and influential Cambodians) and members of the international Khmer Diaspora; however, as financial record keeping is inconsistent these funding sources are not often well documented. Community contributions are also occasionally used to fund community-wide initiatives and not simply the running of the pagoda. Charity boxes managed by the pagoda committee are often used for these purposes and they have been used with success in some development projects. The local Cambodian NGO Reproductive and Child Health Alliance (RACHA), for example, has encouraged the use of charity box donations to fund a village referral system to encourage poor pregnant women to give birth at local health centers.

Nuns and Wat Grannies (Donchee and Yaychee)

A nun's religious position is markedly different from a monk's within a Cambodian pagoda. In Theravada Buddhism the lineage of *bhikkhunis* (fully-ordained female monastics) became extinct somewhere around the 13th century. Without existing *bhikkhunis* available to grant ordination to aspiring nuns, the official position of the Cambodian *Sangha* is that the order cannot be reinstated. While there are active movements to reestablish the *bhikkhuni* order in countries including Thailand and Sri Lanka, the issue has not seen the same level of attention in Cambodia.

Because they cannot be ordained, the religious position of nuns, known commonly in Khmer as *donchee* and *yaychee* ("wat grannies"), is somewhat ambiguous. Some nuns dress in white robes and shave their heads and eyebrows, while others keep their hair and simply wear a white blouse. They might observe five,



Image 2: Typical Nuns' Quarters

eight, or ten precepts. Traditionally women become *donchee* late in life. As one nun living at Wat Kandal Doem in Kampong Speu explained, “We have nothing left to depend on except for Buddhism, the *Dhamma*, and monks because we do not expect to live much longer.” The goal of many nuns is to rid themselves of attachments and mental impurities and to soothe their minds in the latter years of their lives, putting great emphasis on listening to the *Dhamma* and on meditation. Since the activities of nuns do not come under the purview of the MoCR, no official statistics exist for the number of nuns in the country.

Some nuns choose to live at the pagoda in small cottages if available, while others live at home and visit the pagoda on Buddhist holy days. Nuns’ responsibilities at the pagoda, for those who reside there, generally involve cooking for the monks and cleaning the pagoda grounds on a daily basis, and on Buddhist holy days for those who do not. Each pagoda typically has a head nun responsible for managing the others, particularly with regard to these duties.

Despite the common association of *donchee* with menial work, they do in some cases hold important lay positions, such as serving on pagoda committees. The experience of nuns can vary greatly depending on their pagoda. Some nun centers place a much greater emphasis on religious education; examples include Wat Pov-eal in Battambang and the Som Bun Thoeurn Meditation Center on Oudong Mountain in Kandal Province. In both cases nuns participate in classes on Buddhist scripture and meditation practice.

Wat Grandfathers (Tachee)

Tachee or “*wat* grandfathers” have a social role similar to *donchee*. They are older men who choose to dedicate their time to the pagoda in their later years for much the same reasons as do *donchee*. *Tachee* may live at home or at the pagoda and, like *donchee*, dedicate their time to cleaning the pagoda and often make tea or coffee for the monks.

Many *tachee* and *donchee* choose to live at the pagoda because their families cannot adequately support them at home. At the pagoda they are assured shelter, food and other basic necessities. This draws attention to the pagoda’s traditional role as a social safety net for the elderly, a role that is still very important today, particularly in impoverished rural regions of Cambodia where other support mechanisms are absent.

The Pagoda Grounds

Buddhist pagodas are omnipresent in Cambodia and the physical pagoda space is an important community area, traditionally utilized for a range of spiritual and social purposes. From

Box 3: Pagoda Boys and Girls

As with the elderly, children in difficult circumstances from neighboring communities are traditionally accommodated at the pagoda. Some are orphans, but more often their parents send them to live closer to their place of study or they are simply too poor to care for them. The vast majority of the children housed in pagodas are boys, which further reflects the frequent observation that pagodas are generally male-dominated environments. An International Cooperation Cambodia (ICC) survey of pagoda children in Kandal Province found 158 boys and only nine girls living at pagodas (ICC 2004). In some cases girls are housed with and cared for by the pagoda nuns, while the boys are typically housed in separate buildings or with the monks. The same study found that the average length of stay for pagoda boys and girls is between one and two years, and very few stay beyond five years.

The role of the pagoda in childcare is relevant in the ongoing and often contentious debate on institutional vs. family/community-based care for orphans and vulnerable children. Pagoda based orphan care does not fit squarely into either paradigm, as it represents a much less formalized type of 'alternative' care in the country. Children living at pagodas can still be well-integrated into their communities, though important issues arise as to the competency and capacity of monks to act as caregivers. Beyond this, a child's situation can vary widely in terms of housing conditions and the provision of food and other basic needs, including clothes and school supplies. Residence at the pagoda does allow most children access to education. The Cambodian government's 2006 *Policy on Alternative Care for Children* acknowledges the need for a policy framework that would regulate and formalize childcare at pagodas. That policy framework has yet to materialize and will require a thorough review of the present state of childcare in Cambodian pagodas and considerable capacity building among monks, nuns and lay clergy to set the groundwork.

Global debates over orphan care are far from resolved, but most agree that there need to be a range of approaches adapted to local and cultural contexts. In Cambodia the pagoda will likely remain an important piece of the puzzle. Their roles deserve close and continuing attention.

a development point of view, the pagoda can and does act as a convenient space to provide training sessions or locate community services such as rice banks. Some pagodas offer classes for community members in English or computer skills. In some cases pagodas have even granted space for NGOs to maintain offices. Partners in Compassion, Life and Hope Association, and Buddhism for Social Development Action are just some of many NGOs and associations headquartered in Buddhist pagodas. While pagoda grounds are considered a public commu-

nity space, they fall under the head monk's supervision. Monks, as well as lay individuals and organizations, generally must discuss in detail any plans to utilize pagoda space for social or other non-religious purposes.

The number and quality of structures on pagoda grounds can vary greatly depending on the wealth of the surrounding communities, which ultimately provide money for construction and maintenance. There are cases in which wealthy *Oknha* will finance pagoda structures in com-



Image 3: Community Meeting on Sanitation Being Held on Pagoda Grounds

munities other than their own as a means to make merit. The two most important structures in the pagoda are the main temple (*preah vihear*) and the eating hall (*salaachan*) although there are other notable structures with important social functions.

The following descriptions and pictures provide some insight into the main structures and social function of pagoda buildings.

Main Temple (*preah vihear*): The main temple hosts Buddhist ceremonies such as *Visaka Bochea* and *Meak Bochea* (see section below describing the Buddhist holidays), during which the monks deliver *Dhamma* speeches. Often monks will also gather at the temple on a daily basis to listen to moral and spiritual advice from the head monk, especially during the *vassa*, the rainy season retreat.

Eating Hall (*salaachan*): This structure is where monks, nuns, and other monastic actors take their meals. In most Cambodian pagodas breakfast is taken around seven. Monks are



Image 4: Salaachan

required to take their lunch at eleven A.M. On Buddhist Holy Days (*thngeysel*), community members gather here to observe the Buddhist precepts and listen to *Dhamma* speeches.

Monks' Quarters: Pagodas typically have several buildings that serve as monks' quarters, depending on the number of monks who live at the pagoda.

Nuns' Quarters: These are typically much more modest dwellings often constructed of wood. In some cases they have an attached meditation area.

Stupas: Among the most visible components of the pagoda are the colorful *stupas* that dot the grounds. These structures are donated by families to honor deceased relatives and hold the cremated remains of family members inside. There is often also a public *stupa* for community remains. While families do not directly pay the pagoda to construct a *stupa*, they commonly help sponsor the construction of other pagoda buildings.



Image 5: Preah Vihear with Stupa in Foreground

The following structures are noteworthy given their clear ties to development-related activities, but they are not universally found at Cambodian pagodas:

Buddhist Schools: Some pagodas host Buddhist primary and secondary schools, which teach Buddhist as well as general knowledge subjects to monks, many of whom commute from their own pagodas to study. Teachers can be monks, *achar*, or government-employed teachers. These schools have equivalency with government schools so that monks can continue their education once they disrobe, and the curriculum is mandated by the MoCR. One of the pagoda's leading monks (head, right or left) is typically in charge of administering the school, but the school is managed by a board chosen by the Provincial DoCR.

Student Dormitory: Some pagodas, particularly those in urban areas, have dormitories to house students from the provinces who attend school in urban areas. Some pagodas provide food and utility costs in addition to lodging. Fe-



Image 6: Rice Bank

male students are also often allowed to stay on pagoda grounds, but they must stay with the nuns.

District/Commune/Provincial Monk Office (*sa-laanukuen*): Some pagodas host offices for the national monk leadership structure, one each at the district, commune and provincial levels. The district offices regularly hold meetings between all of the district's head monks.

Study Rooms: (*kutloke*): Some pagodas have study rooms for monks or members of the community and libraries that stock reference materials on a range of subjects.

Rice Bank: Some pagodas house rice banks to guard against food shortages in their communities. Often these emerge as an initiative of the head monk; however, in some cases, NGOs will form them in partnership with pagodas.

Table 1: Buddhist Schools in Cambodia 2010-2011 Academic Year (source MoCR 2010)

	<i>Schools</i>	<i>Students</i>	<i>Permanent Teachers</i>	<i>Contracted Teachers</i>	<i>Volunteer Teachers</i>
<i>Primary Level</i>	523	11,141	47	561	264
<i>Secondary Level</i>	30	4,537	61	40	859
<i>High School Level</i>	15	2,092	9	28	477

Buddhist Holidays

During Buddhist holidays, donation boxes are used to raise money for community initiatives. On certain holidays Cambodians donate food and other materials to monks who in turn give to less fortunate members of the community. These are also occasions when community members spend time at the pagoda and listen to monks' sermons. Monks have the widest audience at these times. Several organizations have engaged head monks to integrate messages on a range of topics into their sermons on these occasions.

The following holidays are associated with Cambodian Buddhist practice.

Buddhist Holy Days (*ThngaySel*): According to the Buddhist lunar calendar, Buddhist Holy Days occur on full, half and new moons (approximately every eight days). On these days members of the surrounding community spend time at the pagoda and observe Buddhist precepts. Most spend one to two hours at the pagoda while others choose to spend the entire day. *Achar* lead those assembled in prayer, after which a monk delivers the *Dhamma* speech. Sermons are usually delivered three times a day, at 5 AM, 6 AM and 2 PM.

***Pchum Ben*:** This holiday can be translated as "Ancestors Day." It falls on the 15th day of the 10th month in the Khmer calendar, during which a festival is held to pay respect to deceased ancestors. While not an explicitly Buddhist holiday, visits to the pagoda have become a traditional and important element of its observance. Community members take food, clothing and other items to donate to the monks as a means to make merit for their ancestors. Monks interviewed for this study stated that they often redistribute the donations received on this occasion to poorer members of the community.

***Choul Chnam (Khmer New Year)*:** The Khmer New Year typically falls around April 14, at the end of the harvest season and before Cambodia's rainy season begins. As with *Pchum Ben*, Khmer New Year is not explicitly a Buddhist holiday, yet much of its practice is centered on the pagoda. Celebrations span three days; on the first day, *Maha Songkran*, incense and candles are offered at shrines and people give thanks for Buddha's teachings by prostrating in front of his image. On the second day, known as *Virak Wanabat*, people make offerings to those less fortunate and attend ceremonies for their ancestors at the pagoda. On the final day, *Thngay Leang*

Box 4: Pagoda Schools in Cambodia

Buddhism in rural Southeast Asia has traditionally had a strong social focus with the pagoda serving as a center of community learning. In Cambodia, pagoda schools have existed since the Angkorian Era. The educational focus in this early period was largely confined to Buddhist scriptures; however, pagoda schools also taught subjects including architecture, as well as practical skills like carpentry. Beginning in the 20th century, French colonial authorities began to experiment with reform and modernization of the traditional Buddhist education system (largely because they feared the influence of the expanding Thai pagoda school system). The French set about formalizing the curriculum to include subjects such as arithmetic, geography, history, and biology as well as standardizing teacher training for monks.



Image 7: Buddhist Primary School

They established Buddhist institutes of higher learning such as Preah Sihanouk Raj Buddhist University in Phnom Penh, greatly influencing the development of 'modern' Buddhism in the country.

Many parents of the era preferred to send their boys to pagoda schools over government schools because they believed this would confer more merit on the family (young women were not permitted to attend either school at the time). However, as secular education became established as the primary avenue for social advancement, the importance of the pagoda school gradually diminished. This coincided with other social services, such as medical and architectural advice, childcare and banking, shifting away from the pagoda and toward French-established modern secular systems. The waning social influence of the pagoda contributed in part to anti-colonial sentiments among elements of Cambodia's monastic community (Harris 2005: 127).

In the years after the Khmer Rouge, with the decimation of much of the country's infrastructure, the Buddhist pagoda found renewed importance as an educational center. A new network of Buddhist schools was required to train new monks as the Buddhist structure was rebuilt. Practical skills such as computer literacy, English and sewing classes are being taught at some pagodas to community members. Government schools have also been established on or near pagoda grounds, though the pagoda does not have a direct role in their management. There is still a deep association between education and Buddhism in Cambodian culture and there are many monks dedicated to continuing this tradition. For example, Wat Damnak in Siem Reap, already home to the Centre for Khmer Studies Library (the largest public library outside of Phnom Penh), has just recently established the Kossamak Nearyroath Institute of Buddhist Studies, further solidifying the pagoda's position as a center for higher education in the country.

Box 5: The Buddhist Precepts

Buddhist precepts are the most basic Buddhist code of ethics for lay devotees. They are not formulated as strict dictates, but rather training rules to facilitate practice of the religion. Typically they are observed at the pagoda on holy days such as *Tgney Sel*. Most lay men and women observe the first five precepts, those who wish to practice more strictly will follow eight, and novice monks and nuns will follow all 10 precepts.

1. Refrain from causing harm or taking life.
2. Refrain from taking that which is not given (stealing).
3. Refrain from un-chastity (sensuality, sexuality, lust).
4. Refrain from wrong speech (lying, deceiving or using hurtful words).
5. Refrain from taking intoxicants.
6. Refrain from taking food at inappropriate times (after noon).
7. Refrain from singing, dancing, playing music or viewing entertainment programs.
8. Refrain from wearing perfume, cosmetics and other decorative accessories.
9. Refrain from sitting on high, soft or otherwise luxurious beds and chairs.
10. Refrain from accepting money.

Saka, people clean images of the Buddha and sprinkle perfumed water on their elders in hopes of luck and prosperity.

Visaka Bochea: This is the annual celebration of the birth, enlightenment and death of Buddha and is the single most important Buddhist holiday. In Cambodia it falls on the full moon *Uposatha* day, either in the fifth or sixth lunar month (usually April or May). Cambodians visit the temple to listen to *Dhamma* speeches given by monks and perform other merit-making activities. Monks interviewed for this study suggested there is less focus on *Visaka Bochea* in Cambodia, despite its religious importance, because there is less entertainment associated with the holiday than for *Pchum Ben* or Khmer New Year.

Meak Bochea: This holiday commemorates the ordination of Buddha's first followers who gathered spontaneously to listen to the Buddha's teaching. It falls on the full moon of the third lunar month, usually in February. During this important Buddhist holiday many Cambodians visit the pagoda to observe the Buddhist precepts and listen to *Dhamma* speeches.

Section 3: Buddhist and Development Partnership

Case Studies

This section details a few notable NGO-pagoda partnerships in Cambodia, providing some background on the projects and the methods of engagement. Each project engages pagodas in a unique way, involving different Buddhist social actors or different components of the Buddhist structure. Each case study highlights key experiences and lessons learned.

Mlup Baitong: Buddhism and Environment Program

Mlup Baitong (translated as Green Shade), a Cambodian NGO founded in 1998, works to promote environmental awareness and conservation. The organization was founded at a time when Cambodia's environmental resources were being rapidly depleted as a result of largely illegal logging and mining, with ineffective government oversight. A 2006 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) study found that between 2000 and 2005, Cambodia had the third highest rate of deforestation globally. In this same period, the country lost 29.4 percent of its primary old-growth forest (FAO 2006). Deforestation and associated environmental degradation have disproportionate effects on vulnerable, forest-dependent populations. Over 80 percent of Cambodia's population lives in rural areas, heavily dependent on the local environment for their livelihoods through farming, fishing and non-timber forest product (NTFP) collection (World Bank 2011). Despite a 2002 moratorium on logging, illegal land encroachment and economic land concessions (ELCs) for private economic ventures, put pressure on environmental resources and the populations that depend on them.



Image 8: Ven. Than Tet CELI Coordinator at Wat Phnom Twoem Ta Ah in Kampong Speu Province

Mlup Baitong's strategy is centered on community-based natural resource management as a means to encourage sustainable and equitable use of Cambodia's environmental resources. The organization's activities involve training, education and advocacy with a view to empower disadvantaged rural and forest dependent communities to defend and conserve their local environment. Mlup Baitong's decade-long effort to promote equity and sustainability in natural resource use is based on a grassroots strategy that engages key individuals and institutions important to the cultural life of rural Cambodians. This includes community leaders, schoolteachers, and monks. Mlup Baitong argues that monks "play a critical role as intermediaries and role-models for environmental education," and because of their key social position, engaging monks has a "multiplier effect" on the message of sustainability that they disseminate (Mlup Baitong 2010).

Mlup Baitong thus sees monks playing powerful roles in disseminating environmental messages, based on their social influence and the moral authority they command in rural communities. In 2004, Mlup Baitong sponsored a pioneering conference, together with the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), on how to better engage the Buddhist *Sangha* in conservation efforts. The conference drew monks from Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, and across Cambodia to Phnom Penh to share their experiences, discuss strategies, and drum up enthusiasm for environmental conservation among Buddhist social actors. The conference helped to inspire the Association of Buddhists for the Environment (ABE) in Cambodia and served to inform and strengthen Mlup Baitong's own Buddhism and Environment Program. Mlup Baitong has since developed a small network of 14 environmentally engaged pagodas, ten in Kampong Speu province and four in Kampong Thom province. These pagodas serve as settings for the dissemination of environmental information and they host community workshops. The pagoda grounds serve as tree nurseries and Mlup Baitong partner monks distribute or plant upwards of 18,000 trees annually. They direct attention to improving the environment around the pagoda itself so that these public spaces can serve as models of environmental sustainability throughout the country.

Since 2010 Mlup Baitong uses its established network of pagodas for the Community Environment and Livelihood Improvement (CELL) Project. The CELL project draws a direct relationship between the degradation of Cambodia's natural resource base and insecurity of rural livelihoods, the stated objective being "to contribute to the poverty alleviation of Cambodia through rights based empowerment of rural communities to manage their natural resources sustainably while obtaining improved livelihoods" (Mlup Baitong 2010). CELL targets

68 villages between the provinces of Kampong Speu, Kampong Thom and Steung Treng. The three specific objectives of the project are to:

1. **Improve livelihoods** of disadvantaged forest-dependent communities, especially women, through **Self Help Groups**;
2. **Empower rural communities** to understand and exert their land rights and actively participate in planning and implementation of **Community Forestry** projects; and
3. **Improve community, environment and sustainable management of natural resources** by rural communities through Community Environmental Action Teams: 32 School-eco clubs (SECs) and 68 Village Environment Action Teams (VEATs).

Monks are primarily engaged in the third objective, where they are involved in the formation and leadership of the VEATs. Given their positions as influential social actors, monks are well-placed to encourage broader village participation in these community groups. Another benefit of a monk's involvement in VEATs is their ability to access and influence commune council members, who are instrumental in including environmental initiatives in commune development plans. Mlup Baitong prefers to work with head monks given their greater influence and respect in communities, though head monks often find their responsibilities too time consuming to participate fully in such projects. In this case the right or left vice monks may be invited to attend trainings.

Through CELL, pagodas also host workshops and tree plantings, engaging junior monks and lay Buddhist leaders, including *achar*. The monks' involvement encourages the community to participate in the project, but the project

also helps to involve community members in pagoda affairs. As Than Tet, right monk and *Dhamma* instructor at Wat Phnom Twoem Ta Ah in Kampong Speu suggests, “It is an attractive relationship from the monk’s perspective. Mlup Baitong gets people from the community involved with the pagoda. The workshops are held in the pagoda so the participants come here. When people come they feel relaxed and happy. They feel like they are gaining some merit and they get knowledge of the pagoda as well.”

In focus: The monk’s sermon as a means to disseminate information

Part of Mlup Baitong’s programmatic strategy is to expose communities to environmental messages through a variety of grassroots social avenues. These messages can include general environmental information, knowledge about sustainable NTFP extraction, and practical techniques for environmentally sustainable development, such as home gardening, composting, waste management, and tree-nursery management. Village leaders, schoolteachers, and monks are important figures for disseminating information in the CELL project because they command high levels of respect and trust in their communities. The Executive Director of Mlup Baitong, Va Mouern, noted: “For Mlup Baitong, religion has been a very important vehicle for our message.” In the CELL project, an important means for message transfer are the monk’s *Dhamma* speeches or *Dhammatesna*, particularly during Buddhist holy days of *Thngay Sel*. During these days, members of the community gather at the pagoda to observe the Buddhist precepts, pray, and listen to *Dhamma* speeches as a means of gaining merit. These *Dhamma* speeches, according to the CELL project outline, “are effective to reach many community members and to encourage

them to change their behavior and to improve their environment,” adding that “monks are highly respected and community members listen to their messages” (Mlup Baitong 2010). Indeed, a major reason why monks are considered knowledgeable and respected as teachers is their role in learning and disseminating the *Dhamma*; thus these teachings have importance in the Cambodian context.

Within Buddhist philosophy, *Dhamma* is often taken to mean the “truth” and it commonly refers to the teachings of the Buddha, as they help one to understand this truth. Monks interviewed view both learning and instructing the community in the *Dhamma* as their primary responsibility. In the Buddhist context, *Dhamma* speeches are roughly analogous to a sermon and they are usually given by those monks who are skillful at public speaking. The topics for *Dhamma* speeches are generally chosen by the monks themselves and can last anywhere from 15 minutes to two hours, depending on the topic and the monks’ enthusiasm. *Dhamma* speeches are given primarily on Buddhist holy days at the pagoda, though in some circumstances they are given elsewhere; for example, monks who are invited to bless a home or speak at weddings or funerals will deliver *Dhamma* speeches. Some monks give speeches on the *Dhamma* at high schools or universities, as well. In many cases, because some of the concepts involved in these speeches may be difficult for the audience to understand clearly or because some key terminology may be in the *Pali* language, lay leaders including *achar*, pagoda committee members, and occasionally *donchee* will help explain the concepts and terminology to the audience after a monk finishes his *Dhamma* speech.

Incorporating important social messages into the *Dhamma* speech has been an effective approach in some contexts, but one that is not

without notable challenges. One concern is that *Dhamma* speeches are somewhat limited in who they reach. The audience is primarily composed of older community members who regularly visit the pagoda on Buddhist holy days. This highlights the need for multiple information pathways, including engagement of schoolteachers and village leaders to spread environmental and other development-related messages to younger people.

Another concern relates directly to the *Dhamma* itself. Buddhist teachings such as the Four Noble Truths or the Eightfold Path offer a philosophical framework over which conservation logic can be placed; however, there is little in the teachings themselves that directly reflects modern environmental thought. Indeed, most modern development concerns could barely have been fathomed in the Buddha's time and of course are not explicitly dealt with in the *Dhamma*. This presents a challenge in that monks often deliver *Dhamma* speeches very literally, including only the Buddha's teachings. One head monk explained: "When we say the *Dhamma* we don't include these types of [development] messages, we only say the true *Dhamma* of the Buddha." Certainly, as many socially engaged monks have shown, there is ample scope to connect Buddhist teachings to an array of social concerns; however, some monks do not see these connections as appropriate or desirable given their understanding of the monk's role in society. The head monk from Wat Toul Preah Vihear in Kampong Cham, for example, explained, "I want to give advice, but this is not my job. My job is to teach mercy and compassion. Improving the life of the community is the job of the village chief."

Other monks see their role quite differently. Ven. Mao Kuen of Wat Preah Vihear Thom in Prey Veng suggests that, "the idea of monks improving the life of the community came from

Buddha's teachings. He advised people to have compassion and help one another." Despite their more progressive interpretation of a monk's role, Ven. Mao Kuen and those involved in Mlup Baitong's CELI project still do not integrate social messages and advice into the *Dhamma* itself. They prefer to take time after the speeches to discuss these issues and share information on topics ranging from environmental protection to sanitation to HIV discrimination. Part of their intention is to help assembled community members relate the teachings of the Buddha to the modern Cambodian social context. Mlup Baitong's Buddhism and Environment program has demonstrated that monks can be an important channel for disseminating information on development related topics within communities.

RACHA: Nuns and Wat Grannies Program

The Reproductive and Child Health Alliance (RACHA), a Cambodian NGO established in 2003, evolved from a collaboration between USAID Cambodia and three Global Health Bureau projects that operated from 1996 to 2003 (SEATS, BASICS, and Engender Health). RACHA's core programmatic foci include maternal, newborn, and child health, family planning, HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria. The organization has more recently expanded its focus to include related health concerns surrounding avian influenza, nutrition, water and sanitation. Since its establishment, RACHA has built a program reaching 3,801 villages in seven provinces, with beneficiaries totaling close to three million Cambodians. RACHA has worked with nuns and wat grannies since 2000 (before RACHA was officially established as an independent NGO) because they saw a need to en-

gage female voices within the pagoda network to disseminate information related to women and children's health. These efforts eventually became what is now known as RACHA's Nun and *Wat* Granny Program.

Deficiencies in newborn and child health, one of RACHA's six primary focus areas, are of particularly grave concern in Cambodia. The under-five mortality rate is one of the highest in Asia at 54 deaths per 1,000 births according to the country's most recent Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) (NIS 2011). Nutritional deficiency is a major contributor to childhood morbidity and mortality; 28 percent or nearly three in ten Cambodian children under the age of five are "underweight"¹, while 11 percent are considered "wasted"² (*ibid*). Though the overall rate of under-five childhood mortality has declined since the 2005 DHS survey (from 83 to 54 deaths per 1,000), nutritional deficiency is a persistent problem. The percentage of underweight children has remained constant at 28 percent since the 2005 DHS study, while the number of children considered wasted has risen from eight to eleven percent (NIS 2006; 2011).

In addressing concerns like childhood nutritional deficiency, RACHA sees its role as primarily that of a capacity builder. The organization works extensively through the Ministry of Health (MoH) at Health Centers at the district,

1 "Under-weight refers to low weight-for-age, when a child can be either thin or short for his/her age. This reflects a combination of chronic and acute malnutrition". (Mother and Child Nutrition 2011)

2 "Wasted refers to low weight-for-height where a child is thin for his/her height but not necessarily short. This carries an immediate increased risk of morbidity and mortality. Wasted children have a 5-20 times higher risk of dying from common diseases like diarrhea or pneumonia than normally nourished children." (Mother and Child Nutrition 2011)



Image 9: RACHA Wat Grannies at Wat Kampong Kraisang in Pursat Province

provincial, and national levels to develop a set of key child health interventions. However, the challenge facing RACHA and the MoH is building local capacity to implement these interventions in rural areas. To overcome this challenge, RACHA and the MoH have adopted a "Whole Health" strategy, which involves building capacity and linkages in the existing system and developing the community as a resource, particularly for outreach. RACHA argues, "in this relationship the community and the health center share responsibilities in developing multiple health communication channels, developing feedback mechanisms, and delivering outreach services including immunization, antenatal care, and health education/promotion" (RACHA 2011).

Some topics that are vital to improving child nutrition, like breastfeeding practices, can be embarrassing for many women in rural communities. To overcome embarrassment in discussing such topics, it was important to de-stigmatize them by using "multiple channels of communication" to disseminate the messages. Four main

channels have been developed so far: Village Health Support Groups, village shopkeepers, traditional birth attendants, and nuns and *wat* grannies (*donchee* and *yaychee*). Dr. Khoy Dy, RACHA's provincial coordinator in Pursat Province observed that, "the culture in Cambodia is such that people do not want to listen when people talk about sex, but by having four channels to talk about health it removes the stigma because people are talking about these topics all the time, everywhere. In the first year of our program, 2000, it was very difficult to even talk about breastfeeding. Now, all these topics are normal for all people to talk about, and that has just happened in the past 10 years."

Through RACHA's Nun and *Wat* Granny program, each participating village elects two women to be trained by RACHA on topics including early and exclusive breastfeeding, education, and promotion (particularly lactation management and correct care for sick children), HIV, Control of Diarrheal Disease strategies, and Acute Respiratory Infections, as well as when to refer mothers to their local health center. In 2010 RACHA had 2,576 trained nuns and *wat* grannies working in three provinces. The nuns and *wat* grannies are volunteers but receive a small stipend during training activities. They also receive a black bag featuring an image of a woman breastfeeding an infant for them to carry information and educational materials while they conduct door-step education in their villages. This bag identifies them to the community as participants in the Nun and *Wat* Granny program. Their initial training lasts three days, with the final day devoted to a practice teaching session. Subsequent teaching sessions consist of groups of two or more nuns teaching groups of four to ten mothers, either at the pagoda or in a private home. Nuns use a series of picture cards to explain key concepts and distribute reference leaflets for mothers to take home. Occasionally the nuns are support-

ed by RACHA staff or a member of the local health center. Nuns and *wat* grannies commonly conduct one-on-one sessions with women who are unable to attend the larger classes. They also share information outside of formal class settings and, importantly, refer women to local health centers when necessary.

In focus: Engagement of nuns and wat grannies—women in the pagoda

Because the network of Buddhist pagodas extends even into the most rural and impoverished regions of Cambodia, key target areas for child health interventions, it was a key component of the Whole Health strategy. While it may seem uncontroversial or even natural for monks to speak to their communities on issues related to the environment, talking to young women about breastfeeding techniques could be seen as inappropriate and possibly even a violation of the *Vinaya* monastic code. On a practical level, the topic is beyond the expertise of the average monk. Likewise women naturally feel more comfortable speaking with nuns as opposed to monks on such topics. Nuns and *wat* grannies present a credible female voice to address these concerns from within the pagoda community; as older women respected in the community who typically have experienced childbirth, they could enlist young mothers and educate them about breastfeeding and other issues of child health. However, RACHA has experienced several challenges inherent in engaging these groups over the 10-year history of the program.

Cambodian women traditionally become *donchee* late in life, seeking to dedicate themselves to the *Dhamma* and find peace in their later years; this differs markedly from the motivations that drive men to join the monkhood at a young age, in part to have access to edu-

cational opportunities. When the RACHA Nun and *Wat Granny* program began a little over a decade ago, it initially sought to target older nuns who were living on the pagoda grounds. It quickly became apparent that classes would be more effective if they involved younger nuns. A 2007 review (Crookston et al: 2007) of the program highlighted four key challenges of working with older women in RACHA's Nun and *Wat Granny* Program:

1. Older nuns reported being tired and unable to meet the demands of the program.
2. *Wat grannies* were hesitant to speak about breastfeeding and other sensitive issues in the pagodas.
3. Older nuns had high rates of illiteracy.
4. Given their age, younger nuns are more familiar with the mothers in their respective villages.

Dr. Khoy Dy affirmed these challenges, drawing attention to Cambodia's recent political history as an exacerbating factor:

"Older women can sometimes be difficult to work with. They get sick and they can't remember the information. You have to remember the Cambodian context; during 30 years of civil war, there was no education, so people did not know how to learn and remember. This presents a challenge when working with women who grew up in this era."

Over the years, RACHA was able to recruit younger nuns between the ages of 25 and 35 who were better able to meet the program's demands, were more willing to discuss the topics, and were more enthusiastic about working on health issues. Despite the enthusiasm of these

new RACHA nuns, the ambiguous nature of their religious position does affect the power of the message they transmit and their ability to assemble an audience. Unlike monks, nuns are not traditionally viewed as teachers or as highly educated, particularly in matters related to the *Dhamma*. Because nuns are not ordained they do not have access to the same educational opportunities as do monks. It follows that the messages that nuns deliver are not received with the same confidence as had a monk delivered them. In Cambodian society, as in other Theravada countries, nuns do not have what some call the same "charisma of office" that monks enjoy, making them more marginal social figures. One monk at *Wat Ka Vichey* in Pursat province who works with RACHA commented,

"It is much easier for me than it is for the wat grannies. Many people come to hear my sermon and I can include messages about HIV and AIDS. They must listen and heed what I say. It is also much easier for a monk to collect money. These things are all much more challenging for the wat grannies."

Despite the challenges, nuns working with the RACHA program are enthusiastic about spreading these important health messages. Most indicated that they would continue the work as long as they were physically able and hoped to pass the role on to their daughters. RACHA's Executive Director, Chan Theary, observed: "We have donors who would come to look at our nun and *wat granny* programs and ask us, 'Why are all the nuns and *wat grannies* so young? Well that's because they are not the nuns and *wat grannies*, they are their grandchildren who have learned the message from their elders'." Over the years these women have raised the profile of RACHA nuns in their communities, gaining a reputation for being highly knowledgeable on health matters.

Save the Children: Orphans and Vulnerable Children Project

The HIV epidemic in Cambodia has undergone a dramatic shift in the past decade, with a nationwide decrease in the HIV-prevalence rate among the general adult population, from the epidemic's high of 2.4 percent in 1998 to 0.8 percent in 2010 (NCHADS 2011). While the overall infection rate has declined markedly, many families are still adversely affected by the disease and receive little state support. Orphans and children who have one or more parents afflicted with the disease face discrimination, food insecurity, significant barriers to formal education, and may be forced into orphanages or other institutional care facilities.

Save the Children Australia (which recently combined operations with Save the Children Norway to form Save the Children Cambodia) saw its challenge as mobilizing support for these children and developing community-based care mechanisms that might provide an alternative to institutionalization. The pagoda became a focal point of the strategy, building upon its role as a traditional social safety net in Cambodian communities. Save the Children began to engage pagodas to support orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in 2003. Its current OVC project has been running since 2008, with funding from the Global Fund, Elton John AIDS Foundation, and Habitat for Humanity. The project currently reaches 6,176 children, 2,928 of them girls, and works with 67 pagodas in six provinces (Siem Reap, Kampong Cham, Prey Veng, Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and Takeo). In each pagoda they work with monks, achar and pagoda committee members to provide services that aim to lessen the burden on HIV-affected families, and thereby help children to remain in their



Image 10: Ven. Mao Kuen Save the Children Monk Coordinator Wat Preah Vihear Thom in Prey Veng Province

own homes or with close relatives. Through the pagoda, the project provides support in the following areas:

- **Nutrition:** provision of food supplied by the World Food Program to vulnerable families in need of immediate assistance;
- **Health:** provision of support to enable OVC and family members to undertake health checks and receive necessary treatment;
- **Education:** provision of support so children can attend school and have the necessary school materials and transportation to ensure attendance;
- **Shelter:** construction or rehabilitation of housing to ensure safety and wellbeing of children and family members;
- **Psychosocial:** provision of counseling and support where trauma has been prevalent;

- **Livelihoods:** provision of livelihood training (farming, animal rearing, sewing, etc.) and start-up capital to parents/caregivers to work towards self-reliance.

Representatives from pagodas working with Save the Children visit several families each week to deliver food and other supplies, and make sure that children are attending school and accessing necessary health services. They also assist families in developing and maintaining micro-finance initiatives. Once a family is considered to be self-sufficient, as determined by their progress against community-determined indicators, the pagoda will shift support to another family.

Several other project activities are based at the pagoda, including meetings for Women's Groups and Children's Clubs. Women's Groups comprise caregivers, often grandparents or extended family members, who meet to share their experiences and discuss their own entrepreneurial initiatives. Children's Clubs are a counseling group for children living with HIV and those affected by the disease. Both serve as group therapy and a means to disseminate information.

Save the Children chooses to work with monks who are committed to volunteer social work and want to develop skills in community organizing and implementing development projects. After they identify partner pagodas, Save the Children program officers conduct an initial community-level stakeholder meeting to assess community needs and visions for the future. Given taboos within the Sangha surrounding HIV, Save the Children faced early challenges to engaging pagodas on these issues, and decided to establish a MoU for the project with Great Supreme Patriarch, Ven. Tep Vong. They report that this agreement has made partnership at the grassroots level easier.

Sustainability is a major project concern and a reason for engaging existing community structures such as pagodas in the first place. Each Save the Children OVC project cycle is five years long. Near the end of the project cycle, Save the Children develops an exit strategy with community stakeholders to ensure that pagodas have sufficient capacity to continue the initiatives without Save the Children's support.

A unique feature of this project is their utilization of the pagoda committee (*kanakammekawat*) as a means to manage the project at the pagoda level. However, rather than engaging a pagoda's existing pagoda committee, the organization forms a parallel Save the Children OVC pagoda committee. Each Save the Children OVC pagoda committee is led by a monk coordinator and includes three to five laypeople. They are most often *achar* or pagoda committee members, but may also be nuns or members of nearby communities who volunteer their participation.

The reasoning behind the formation of these parallel committees, rather than training existing committees, is that by involving individuals who may be better suited to and more interested in working with these issues, it becomes easier to build capacity within the committee. Also, it ensures that project management does not distract from the responsibilities of the existing pagoda committee, whose members may not have time to dedicate to these efforts. Nonetheless, this arrangement does have the potential to undermine existing structures, particularly if financial management capacity is only built within the new committee. Discussions with Save the Children partner pagodas, however, noted significant overlap in membership between the two pagoda committees.

In focus: The pagoda committee and achar as key linkages between the pagoda and surrounding communities

The Save the Children OVC project, because of its focus on developing community support mechanisms, draws attention to the important linkages between a pagoda and the surrounding communities. A common critique of a monk's ability to act as a social worker is that traditionally their focus is inwards, and they are often removed both physically and socially from the community. As critical as monks are in delivering messages and changing public perceptions about HIV, when it comes to identifying families and vulnerable children in communities, they are at a disadvantage. Monks seldom have enough intimate and up-to-date knowledge about surrounding communities to do so, in large part because they focus on their responsibilities within the pagoda. Monks often rely on lay Buddhist leaders for information about communities and to coordinate activities outside of the pagoda. *Achar* and pagoda committee members, who are often elected precisely because they are well liked and knowledgeable about their communities, provide a vital link. The head monk at Wat Chet Chan, a Save the Children partner in Siem Reap Province, observed: "The *achar* are like the front line; they are the ones who first identify families affected by HIV and then come and report it to the monk coordinator. Then we return as a group to look into the family situation."

Because of their familiarity with community needs, *achar* and pagoda committee members in some pagodas are proactive in bringing needy people to the pagoda; this suggests that they can also to a large extent drive the level to which a pagoda provides community services. In some pagodas, *achar* and pagoda committees may lead their own initiatives. For example, at Wat Kdai Andet in Kampong Thom

Province, the *achar thom* has organized several pagoda-based associations with the support of the pagoda committee, including a form of collective health insurance for the elderly and a rice bank.

Since *achar* and pagoda committee members already have financial responsibilities, working through this existing system can bolster sustainability in such pagoda-based initiatives. Prang Chanty, OVC coordinator for Save the Children, argues that working through pagoda committees has been a natural partnership: "It is good because they already keep the financial records and they can learn accountability and transparency. They also manage the donation boxes. [Cambodian] people believe that if you donate to monks you will receive merit and benefits in the next life. They collect this money and use it for the OVC to buy school supplies or a bicycle for children who live far from school, even to support micro-enterprises like chicken raising. They are very busy, but they have the commitment."

A further advantage of engaging pagoda committees is that through them, women are most actively engaged in pagoda affairs. It is one of the few places within the pagoda where women exercise significant decision-making authority, and in some cases, women may outnumber men on pagoda committees. At Wat Sa Makee Reja, Wat Raramin Kampong Speu province, the pagoda's five-person committee was made up entirely of women. At Wat Sovan Weilei Tonle Wat in Kampong Cham, a female pagoda committee member serves as the head monk's assistant and interprets his sermons for villagers with questions, a role traditionally reserved for the *achar*.

UNICEF: Buddhist Leadership Initiative

The United Nations Children’s Fund’s (UNICEF) Buddhist Leadership Initiative (BLI) in Cambodia has its origins in a regional program began in 1997 that looks to enable local Buddhist monks and national Buddhist institutions to collaborate with government agencies in order to implement a contextual Buddhist response to the HIV epidemic.

Regionally the BLI has five objectives:

1. To reduce the level of discrimination experienced by people living with HIV/AIDS
2. To improve the level of care and support for people living with HIV in the community
3. To reduce community vulnerability to HIV
4. To develop *Sangha* capacity to address HIV and community welfare
5. To manage the Buddhist Leadership Initiative effectively

UNICEF initiated the BLI in hopes of building on innovative grassroots Buddhist responses to the HIV epidemic in Thailand. In 1997, UNICEF Thailand began supporting *Sangha Metta*, a Chiang Mai based NGO, to train monks in awareness raising, prevention education, and provision of spiritual support for people living with HIV or AIDS. The training also focused on utilizing Buddhist scripture to preach tolerance and acceptance within communities. Using *Sangha Metta* as a technical trainer, UNICEF introduced the BLI model to Yunnan Province, China in 1998, Lao PDR in 2001, Vietnam in 2002 and Myanmar in 2003. The goal has been to

expand the Buddhist response to HIV “from a few isolated groups of committed monks and nuns to a high-profile national and sub-regional phenomenon” (UNICEF EAPRO 2009).

In Cambodia, building on the important role faith leaders have traditionally played in providing community support to vulnerable families and children, the MoCR rolled out the Buddhist Leadership Initiative (BLI) in 2004. This government and faith-based partnership mobilizes Buddhist monks to take a leading role in community-level care and support to assist vulnerable households, including households affected by AIDS. Over the past decade, BLI activities in Cambodia have spread to 14 provinces and now involve 45 districts, 188 communes, 886 villages and 387 pagodas.

While the BLI was envisioned as a coordinated regional response to the HIV epidemic, its implementation has been largely decentralized, and activities vary between and within BLI countries. A focal point of the initiative is training and capacity building within the *Sangha* and local government bodies. This strategy develops a range of interventions for prevention, advocacy, care and support that can be prioritized and implemented in keeping with the local context. In Cambodia, BLI activities focus on care and support to the most vulnerable families and their children affected by HIV. In recent years the BLI has expanded to include other vulnerable children, as well. It includes home visits in which monks provide counseling, spiritual and material support, and meditation. Monks further offer regular support sessions at pagodas for adults living with HIV and separate educational sessions for vulnerable children. They also provide financial and material support, as well as health center referrals. Monks also actively incorporate messages on HIV into sermons to help reduce the prevailing stigma and discrimination within communities.

Box 6: Buddhist Scripture and the HIV epidemic

HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination can present some of the greatest challenges to both combating the spread of the disease and supporting individuals and families affected by it. Misconceptions about the disease can present barriers to community support, cause exclusion from or poor treatment within education or healthcare settings, and also discourage HIV testing. Throughout Southeast Asia there has been considerable success in drawing on Buddhist scripture to promote compassion and combat HIV/AIDS related discrimination.

The Buddhist conception of HIV is often rooted in the core principle of the Four Noble Truths: 1: suffering or *Dukkha*; 2: the cause of suffering or *Samudaya*; 3: the cessation of suffering or *Nirodha*; and 4: the path leading to the cessation of suffering, or *Magga*. From UNICEF's perspective these teachings "provide an excellent framework for promoting love, compassion and care, and mobilizing community support and acceptance of people who are suffering from HIV and AIDS. They also play a significant role in demystifying the myths surrounding HIV and AIDS and in creating an environment of tolerance, respect and knowledge" (UNICEF EAPRO 2009). As interpreted through a Buddhist philosophical perspective, HIV infection represents suffering and according to the Four Noble Truths, the root cause of suffering is ignorance. From this perspective the only way to bring about the cessation of suffering related to the disease is through education and heightened awareness.

In Theravada Buddhist countries like Cambodia, monks have employed several Buddhist scriptures from the *Pali* Cannon to change social attitudes about HIV. A 2009 Regional Review of the BLI identified the four most frequently employed Buddhist scriptures as follows:

- *Brahmavihara*: a meditation on the Four Immeasurables
 - » Loving Kindness: the wish that all sentient being without exception be happy
 - » Compassion: the wish that all sentient beings be free from suffering
 - » Empathetic Joy: rejoicing in the happiness and virtues of all sentient beings
 - » Equanimity: not distinguishing between friend, enemy or stranger, but regarding all sentient beings as equal
- *Metta Sutta*: a discourse praising the virtues of loving kindness
- The Story of Suppabudha: the story of a leper who could see the *Dhamma*
- The Story of Puttigatta-Tissa: the story of the Buddha tending to a sick monk who had been abandoned due to his disease

In Cambodia the most frequently used scripture is the *Brahmavihara*. The teaching serves as the organizational mantra for Salvation Center Cambodia (SCC), a Buddhist-inspired NGO that works to eliminate discrimination against people living with HIV or AIDS.

A key component of UNICEF's BLI strategy, in Cambodia and elsewhere, is collaboration with the MoCR in an effort to build local capacity to address HIV issues. While the national Ministry is a key strategic partner, project implementation is decentralized to the provinces. Provincial DoCR offices are primarily responsible for planning, monitoring and financial management of the BLI, including identification of target areas and monks to be trained through the initiative. Provincial DoCR offices coordinate closely with other government departments and NGOs at the sub-national level to ensure complementary approaches and avoid duplication.

With the changing nature of the HIV epidemic in the country, the initiative has been regularly adapted to respond to new priorities. In 2011, UNICEF supported the National AIDS Authority and the MoCR to conduct a national review of faith-based responses to HIV in the country. The review identified good practices and how faith-based organizations have played a key role in the national response. Importantly, the national review noted that families and children who benefit from faith services welcome and appreciate the support. In 2012, UNICEF will support the government to conduct an in depth assessment of the BLI initiative to determine its future course.

In focus: Systematic engagement through the Ministry of Cults and Religions

While implementation of the BLI is highly decentralized, at its core it is a coordinated response, which requires standards for program monitoring, evaluation, and reporting as well as financial accountability. The foremost challenge has been determining which local institutions are best positioned to manage the initiative, and developing capacity in those in-

stitutions. When the BLI started in Cambodia in 2004, UNICEF partnered with Buddhist NGOs such as Partners in Compassion and SCC that were already working on HIV issues to train local monks (along the lines of Thailand's BLI implementation). Individual pagodas would manage funding through BLI working groups. Early on, in the BLI's *Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation Framework*, project management was identified as a key challenge (UNICEF EAPRO 2003). As the BLI was developed in Cambodia, focus soon shifted to building capacity within Provincial DoCR offices, which would become the primary implementing partners, with the national MoCR having an overall coordination and oversight role.

Ulrike Gilbert Nandra, HIV Specialist for UNICEF Cambodia, suggests that a reason for the shift was limited financial management capacity in pagodas as well as the limited links to national coordination efforts by the government. Gilbert-Nandra observes that, "in the early years the pagodas established pagoda working groups, but the mechanism to support them in becoming more accountable and transparent in terms of management and funds eventually became fatigued. They had boxes to collect donations and they would make their own contributions, but these funds are not only used for HIV-related activities but a range of community-based activities."

The MoCR has the authority to oversee the work conducted in pagodas and offers more established management mechanisms than do rural pagodas. However, moving management responsibility to the MoCR brought on a new set of administrative challenges. The Ministry does have notable capacity issues, especially at departmental levels, plus it remains comparatively underfunded with respect to other ministries. In 2010 the MoCR received US\$3.7 million in recurrent expenditures, the lowest figure of

any Cambodian Ministry (NGO Forum 2009). Over the past decade, UNICEF has worked to build capacity, particularly within provincial DoCR offices, developing planning, monitoring and reporting tools. Likewise, UNICEF has encouraged many of the offices with which they partner to appoint and train existing staff as focal persons for coordinating the Buddhist response to the disease in their provinces. In spite of these strides, Ulrike Gilbert-Nandra suggests that key challenges remain: “While the support by the monks to vulnerable households appears to be valued by communities, a critical challenge remains with the Ministry of Cults and Religions and its provincial departments having limited managerial and financial resources. The initiative continues to depend largely on UNICEF for technical and financial support.”

Despite the challenges the strategy has seen some notable successes. At the national level, cooperation with the Ministry has contributed to changing attitudes within the *Sangha* about HIV. When the BLI first began in Cambodia, Great Supreme Patriarch Ven. Tep Vong viewed AIDS as karmic punishment and contended that Cambodia’s AIDS epidemic had been overinflated by CPP critics (Harris 2005: 215). In 2000, the MoCR and Cambodia’s National AIDS Authority organized a national conference on HIV, featuring monks from Thailand, including those working with Sangha Metta. This conference brought issues surrounding HIV into the mainstream within the *Sangha* and began a national discussion on appropriate and potential roles for monks. In 2002, the MoCR adopted the *Policy on Religious Response to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Cambodia* (the development of which was funded and facilitated by UNICEF). The policy was Cambodia’s first sector response to HIV/AIDS and the first policy document in the world to outline a religious response to the disease. However, as the course of HIV/AIDS has changed in the region, some

argue that the policy needs to be updated; rather than focusing so heavily on prevention, focus should shift to care and support.

The BLI developed a strong foundation for other development partners to collaborate with Buddhist leaders on HIV and other development challenges in the country. Yet, UNICEF is still one of the few development organizations that partner with the MoCR in any systematic way. Currently the partnership between UNICEF and the MoCR is being jointly reviewed to assess progress and challenges.

BSDA: The Network of Affiliated Monks for Social Accountability

Corruption, both petty and grand, is a well-known and pervasive challenge in Cambodia. Transparency International’s 2010 Corruption Perceptions Index, which measures citizens’ perceptions of corruption in their countries, ranks Cambodia in a ten-way tie for 154th out of 178 countries (Transparency International 2010). Historical and socio-economic factors contribute to the problem. Decades of civil war and political violence have left the country with fragile governance systems. Uncoordinated and donor-led aid also contributes to governance and accountability problems; with the mosaic of parallel services provided by the development community, many Cambodian citizens are unsure where the responsibilities of the government lie. What is clear, though, is that corruption disproportionately affects Cambodia’s poorest citizens. It limits the availability of and access to many basic services, including education, healthcare and justice.

In 2010, Buddhism for Social Development Action (BSDA) formed the Network of Affiliated

Monks for Social Accountability (NAMSA) to combat corruption by addressing ineffective accountability mechanisms and barriers to public participation in governance at the commune level. The project is part of BSDA's Improving Social Accountability Initiative (ISAI), which received support from the World Bank's Program to Enhance Capacity in Social Accountability (PECSA).

The idea for NAMSA originated at a PECSA conference; BSDA Executive Director Ven. Thoeurn Vandong attended and saw an opportunity for monks to promote social accountability and influence the development of good governance in their communes. His concept was to enlist monks as facilitators of dialogue between citizens and government, building on the trust that communities place in monks. Ven. Vandong comments, "the community is very comfortable telling monks about their needs; if they need a road, a school, or a healthcare center, they will ask the monks for help." Ven. Vandong emphasizes that the Khmer Rouge era had a devastating effect on citizens' faith in government and, "even though [Cambodia] has transitioned to a democratic system, people are still afraid. They don't trust the government and they don't speak out about what they need. Even now the government is very difficult to engage. The government speaks and the people listen but they don't give their own ideas. This is a very big problem in the country now." Monks are well-positioned to act as mediators in participatory governance schemes, as trusted and respected community members with unique access to those in positions of political power.

In its first iteration, which ran from April to October 2010, the NAMSA project was implemented in three provinces: Kampong Cham, Siem Reap, and Takeo. It focused primarily on government services in the health sector. NAMSA monks worked closely with Commune



Image 10: NAMSA Monk Team for Siem Reap Province

Councils to evaluate the performance of their representatives and health services in the commune. NAMSA monks achieved this by using the "four tools of social accountability" developed by BSDA. These four tools correspond to a set of activities undertaken by NAMSA monks.

1. **Participatory Planning.** This tool attempts to increase public participation in micro-development planning. NAMSA monks selected two to three individuals from each village to meet with the commune council to discuss problems and prioritize solutions that would then be incorporated into local development plans.
2. **Access to Information.** This tool is based on the assumption that a well-informed public is critical to good governance. NAMSA monks installed public information boards (occasionally using trees) in target villages, where they posted relevant information on health, politics, and important national or local events. Information sessions were also organized

at the pagoda with representatives from the Commune Council or the Department of Health.

3. **Citizen Report Cards.** This tool aims to capture opinions about government services that citizens only feel comfortable making anonymously. NAMSA monks distributed cards at community information meetings and house-to-house. They installed information boxes in each village to collect the cards, which they did on a monthly basis with Commune Council and Health Center representatives.
4. **Citizen's Dialogue with Government.** This tool involved regular meetings between community members and representatives from local Commune Councils, moderated by NAMSA monks. Each meeting typically focused on one issue. Widespread community attendance was strongly encouraged.

NAMSA also aims to contribute to better linkages among socially-engaged monks and their organizations in Cambodia. The 2010 ISAI progress report suggests: "Currently, organizations which are led by monks do not always work together closely, despite their shared vision. [NAMSA] will be concerned with combining local NGOs which are led by monks to meet, discuss, and find solutions to resolve commune social issues through cooperation work and partnership" (BSDA 2010). BSDA, which is headquartered in Kampong Cham, partnered with a local Buddhist NGO in each of the other two target provinces: BSDA Takeo, led by Venerable Hour Sokrath in Takeo province, and Life and Hope Association (LHA), led by Venerable Hoeurn Somnieng in Siem Reap Province. Although PECSA funding has expired for NAMSA, Ven. Vandong hopes to establish new funding channels and continue to expand

the initiative, focusing future efforts on the education system. Ven. Vandong believes that networking among Buddhist NGOs will be critical to the continued success of NAMSA: "The first thing I want to do is create a network to connect monks working with civil society. Now several monks have NGOs or associations that are working in the community, but they never share their experience; that's why I want to connect them. I'll write emails and ask what they are doing and learn about the problems in their communities. Then I will see if they would like to work together on this project."

In focus: Buddhist NGOs, CSOs and Associations networking in Cambodia

NAMSA represents one of the more formalized grassroots efforts to build networks and joint capacity among Cambodia's many Buddhist development organizations. Since the 1991 peace agreement, a number of socially engaged monks have formalized their work by establishing NGOs. These organizations work in various sectors, but many focus on health, education and environmental issues. Several Buddhist NGOs were active in conflict resolution and peace-building, though there has been less focus on these topics given greater political stability in recent years. The following table lists the most established of these organizations.

While there are few monk-led organizations with a national profile, there are countless small-scale CSOs and grassroots initiatives that have evolved in Buddhist pagodas. Many of the monks behind these efforts are relatively unconcerned with publicizing their efforts. Ven. Yon Seng Yeath, Vice Rector of The Buddhist University, observed: "we don't have pamphlets to show how many monks do this or that, but every temple is engaged in social activities; this is a fact. We recognize that when the lay people are poor the monks will die; we will

Table 2: Monk-led Development Organizations in Cambodia

Organization	Founder	Headquarters	Provinces Active	Areas of Focus
Association of Buddhists for the Environment (ABE)	Founded at a Sangha general assembly. Executive Director: Ven. Hiek Sopheap	Phnom Penh	Monk membership from all 23 Cambodian provinces	Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Livelihoods
Buddhism for Development (BFD)	Heng Monychenda	Wat Anglongvil Battambang	Bantey Meanchey, Oddar Meanchey, Pailin, Siem Reap, Kampong Thom, Preah Vihear	Human Rights, Education, HIV, Rural Livelihoods, Good Governance
Buddhism for Social Development Action (BSDA)	Ven. Thoeurn Vandong	Wat Nokor Kampong Cham	Kampong Cham, Takeo, Kratie	Education, Health, Good Governance, Climate Change, Livelihoods
Children and Youth Education Organization (CYEO)	A group of monks in Phnom Penh. Executive Director: Ven. Cheng Chhorvanny	Wat Saravantejo Phnom Penh	Kampong Thom	Education
Human Resource and Natural Development (HRND)	A group of five monks including Ven. Mean Someth		Siem Reap	Education, Agricultural Livelihoods and the Environment
Life and Hope Association (LHA)	Ven. Hoern Somnieng	Wat Damnak Siem Reap	Siem Reap	Education, Livelihoods, Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Nutrition
Santi Sena	Ven. Nhem Kim Teng	Wat Prey Chlak Svay Rieng	Svay Rieng, Prey Veng, Kratie	Natural Resource Management, Community Livelihoods, Children's Rights and Education

starve!" Nhek Buntha, Director of the Buddhist Association, an organization that works to build capacity in the Cambodian *Sangha*, argues that this lack of publicity contributed to the perception that other faith groups do more work in development: "That's why the Christians are so popular, they are able to announce their activities well."

The fact that monks generally do not seek wider recognition for their efforts hinders networking efforts among engaged Buddhists. Even with established organizations such as those listed above, networking and collaboration occur on a largely *ad-hoc* basis. Many socially engaged monks are not part of the formal *Sangha* hier-

Box 7: Pending Law on NGOs and Associations and its Potential Effect on Buddhist Development Organizations

In August 2010, Cambodia's Ministry of the Interior announced that an inter-ministerial committee had drafted legislation aimed at regulating the NGO sector in the country. The draft law was eventually made public in December 2010, stirring up controversy, most notably because it gave the government sweeping powers to suppress the activities of civil society groups. On January 10th 2011, a public workshop was held to address concerns of civil society groups, NGOs, donors and other members of the international community. A second draft was released in March 2011, but both Cambodian and international partners argued that it did not adequately address concerns raised at the initial workshop. A third draft released in July 2011 has once again been returned to committee for re-drafting.

The provision with the greatest potential to affect Buddhist or monk-led initiatives is a ban on activities of all unregistered associations and NGOs (Article 6). Critics have suggested that the law's broad definition of "association" could include any group of Cambodian nationals who gather together for any purpose. Only a fraction of monk-led social initiatives are legally organized as NGOs or associations; most are informal and could be required to register with authorities or barred from providing social services or carrying out other community activities. Registration as an NGO or association would place a significant burden on pagodas, many of which may not have the capacity to do so. The conditions for denial of registration are also not clearly elaborated in the latest draft. With the ruling party often in disagreement with some activist elements in the Cambodian *Sangha*, passage of the law could have important implications for monk-led initiatives.

archy, and do not take part in national meetings such as the annual monks' summit. While such meetings have potential to connect active monks and share experiences, such social activities are rarely topics of discussion. Understandably, religious and disciplinary concerns dominate proceedings. Maha Ghosananda's Dhammayietra Center once acted as an important information-sharing node for Cambodia's socially engaged Buddhists, but the center has become dormant, as international financial and administrative support has receded (Poethig 2004). As Ven. Nhem Kimteng, founder of Santi Sena explains, most networking now takes place locally: "Right now we don't have the umbrella group of Buddhist NGOs. A few years ago we had the peace center of Maha

Ghosananda, but now it doesn't work. We have the small local networks; for example, in Svay Rieng I've formed a group of small Buddhist NGOs. Heng Monychenda has also formed a small group."

Joint efforts such as NAMSA show the importance of national networking; particularly as development partners are more inclined to support broader initiatives that include such partnerships. Ven. Vandong argues that networking was vital to securing PECSA funding: "Since NAMSA was a BSDA initiative and really just the idea of one monk, donors didn't have confidence in the initiative in the beginning." Networking, information sharing and the development of best practices can help smaller-

scale, monk-led initiatives to access funding for grassroots initiatives. Still the effect that donors have on the priorities and strategies of grassroots Buddhist initiatives is a complex issue and one that deserves careful attention. Scholar Kathy Poethig believes the failure of the *Dhammayietra* Center is illustrative of this point: “The symbiotic relationship between the Cambodian staff of the *Dhammayietra* Center and expatriate donors who also consider themselves allies has at times been confused and conflicting. This is a common feature of North-South NGO partnerships, but it challenges the notion that local movements, especially in the south, can be unhampered by global interests” (Poethig 2004: 210).

Section 4: Challenges and Considerations in Partnerships

Monks and other Buddhist actors can be logical and powerful development partners and many are already engaged, whether formally or informally, in many development initiatives, five of which are described above. A common thread that emerges from this review, and which begs for further scrutiny on a case-by-case basis, relates to the capacity of monks as development partners and the ethics of the engagement of religious figures (particularly important due to the influx of money that comes with INGO partnerships). The following represent some of the key challenges and important considerations emerging from discussions with stakeholders in such partnerships.

Education and Capacity Concerns

Monks' education levels vary widely and are often cited as a concern and obstacle. It is particularly important if a project involves complex messages on subjects like community health. Ven. Loern of NAMSA suggested that rural monks' general lack of basic education can be an impediment, though not altogether insurmountable: "All of the monks in the community have a low level of education; some have only completed grade one, so I try to share my knowledge with them as much as I can." Even as a university student, he admits that, "even for me this is my first time doing any work in social accountability and my knowledge is still growing as well." The task of disseminating information can be challenging for many monks, as it involves not only understanding technical issues with which they are unfamiliar, but also capably translating these concepts into messages that are accessible to members of their communities.

In the course of engaging monks to support vulnerable families and their children affected by HIV through the BLI, UNICEF's HIV specialist in Cambodia, Ulrike Gilbert Nandra, observed that "the knowledge of the monks has to be regularly updated in terms of best approaches to supporting families and children affected by HIV. [For example] if children are born with HIV, monks would be in a good position to encourage the family to access health services. Thus it is important that monks, health care workers and social workers work closely together." This points to the importance of developing rigorous information-sharing channels.

Cambodia's older generation of monks have especially low education levels, as their lives were profoundly disrupted by the Khmer Rouge regime; however, there is an enthusiasm among many younger monks to pursue higher education. Access to education is a major motivator for many young men to join the monkhood. Likewise, there is a similar eagerness among many monks to become involved in some of the more technical development issues, in order to develop skills that they might be able to use after they leave the monkhood. In recent years, the Buddhist education system has attempted to build capacity and meet this demand.

The Buddhist education system was officially reinstated in 1993 after authorities recognized that in order to rebuild the *Sangha*, it was important to have educated monks who could run temples competently. More recently, however, the emphasis has shifted to academic and technical subjects beyond Buddhist doctrine and *Pali* language (though some suggest these impart the maturity and discipline on which academic success is built). Preah Sihanouk Raja

Buddhist University in Phnom Penh, originally founded in 1954, was revived in 1997 to offer upper secondary education to monks. It began offering Bachelor's degrees in 1999. The university currently has four faculties and one center; the Faculty of Philosophy and Religions, the Faculty of Education and Information Technology, the Faculty of Khmer Literature, the Faculty of Pali-Sanskrit and Foreign Languages, and the Center of Teacher Training.

Several organizations provide financial assistance to allow monks to pursue higher education. A major focus of organizations like Khmer Educational Assistance Program (KEAP), LHA and the Buddhist Association is to provide university scholarships to monks who have shown academic promise as well as financial need. LHA's Wat Damnak in Siem Reap, already home to the largest public library outside of Phnom Penh, has recently established the Kossamak Nearyroath Institute of Buddhist Studies. LHA founder Ven. Somnieng believes that educating monks is vital to Cambodia's development and he remains confident that social change will begin in the pagoda:

"[As they] become the leaders of the temple they'll become agents of change in their communities. The leaders of the temples with Bachelor's degrees from [Kossamak Nearyroath Institute], maybe they'll become the leader of the governing district of the temple or even the head of the district. This is how we can change. We cannot start from the top, so we'll start from the bottom, and we'll spread our seeds everywhere. I believe that we can really change the country, but we have to work on education if we want to make a big change in the next 15 to 20 years."

While a great number of monks are now pursuing higher education, this trend is largely

confined to urban areas (although rural monks do migrate to take advantage of these opportunities). Education levels among monks are still low in rural areas where most development programs take place.

Training and Monk "Turnover"

In Cambodia, many young men remain in the monkhood for only a few years. This is a traditional aspect of Cambodian Buddhist practice; young men will ordain briefly during their teenage years in order to make merit for their parents. This "turnover" presents a challenge for organizations that choose to dedicate time and resources to train monks who may soon disrobe. Thus development partners need constantly to select replacements and conduct new trainings on an ongoing basis. Head monks tend to spend a much longer period in the monkhood (sometimes their entire lives), which is one reason why many development partners prefer to engage them. Other stable actors in the Cambodian pagoda include pagoda committees, *achar*, and nuns, all of whom exhibit long-term dedication to their pagodas.

The issue of turnover is particularly important in more decentralized programs in which monks are essentially responsible for project implementation, as is the case with Save the Children's OVC project. The OVC program prepares for such a contingency by ensuring that each monk coordinator has a secretary monk who is fully trained and able to take over as coordinator if the need arises.

Turnover is common among monks who choose to work on programs such as Save the Children's OVC project because many choose to participate in such projects to gain skills to use

in their professional lives. Prang Chanthy, OVC Coordinator for Save the Children, comments:

“All the monk coordinators have bachelors or masters degrees because they are the monks who would like to learn to organize projects. It is easy for us to build their capacity; they want to learn to implement projects because they have their own aims as well. After they leave the monkhood they have the skills to find a job.”

While turnover might be an impediment for projects seeking to engage pagodas, more generally it can be considered a boon for Cambodian society because monks often bring this knowledge and experience to bear elsewhere, even in their own initiatives. This holds true for nuns as well, as Dr. Khoy Dy of RACHA points out: “When they leave the program that knowledge is not lost, they bring it with them and it continues to spread.”

Competing Priorities for Monks

When asked about their willingness to participate in development projects, several monks responded that prior commitments and variable schedules might present a barrier to participation. This was reflected in Save the Children’s OVC Coordinator Prang Chanthy’s observation that, “the big challenge for us is that [monks] do not have much time. They overlap their time with us... [however] we are not monks. We try to let them do what is their private life.” Head monks and monks with official responsibilities within the pagoda have particularly busy schedules, as do monks studying outside the pagoda. The qualities that make these monks ideal development partners: authority within the pagoda, influence in surrounding communities, comparatively high levels of education,

and commitment to remain in the monkhood for extended periods, are the same qualities that can potentially make monks too busy with pagoda affairs to play significant roles in development initiatives.

Working on development projects could also mean sacrificing important relationships and commitments within the pagoda, and/or delegating pagoda management responsibilities. For Ven. Vandong of BSDA, establishing an NGO changed his role at Wat Nokor dramatically:

“Before I became executive director of BSDA I had a lot of responsibilities for the temple. I was chief of monks in the monastery. I took care of the young monks, taught them about morality, made sure that they got enough food from the community and that they were going to school. Since I began taking on so much work at BSDA, I have delegated my responsibilities to a colleague. I still work as an advisor for the temple, whenever there is a difficult decision to be made they seek my counsel, for example, and I join in these meetings. I don’t have a defined position now, but I do have some influence.”

Ven. Somnieng, the Executive Director of LHA at Wat Damnak in Siem Reap, had formerly worked for Salvation Centre Cambodia on HIV/AIDS programs. He found working for an external NGO even more detrimental to relationships at the pagoda:

“I had lost some on-the-ground relationships with my monks and my people because I was not here. I could talk to people at certain times throughout the day, but then at night I went to my University until nine, then I’d come back. I was a leader at the temple, I was a student by night, and

I was a social worker at SCC, so it was not easy. Then I thought: If I worked in my temple I would have more time. I handed SCC to other people I worked with and I started LHA in 2005."

Junior monks do have considerably more free time than do senior monks with dedicated responsibilities, a fact several recent studies have noted. International Cooperation Cambodia's September 2004 *Survey of the Level and Quality of Child Care in the Temples of Kandal Province, Cambodia* found that "although the monks have religious duties to attend to throughout each day, as well as necessary chores, they do have considerable amounts of time in which they are free to do as they wish." Community Forest International's March 2005 report, *Buddhism and the Role of the Pagoda in Community Forestry Development in Cambodia*, goes further by suggesting that, "monks in some pagodas have developed lethargic lifestyles and it may be difficult to motivate them to take action."

Despite the amount of free time they may have, monks understandably vary in the degree to which they give priority to social engagement. Several monks interviewed commented that being a monk requires a strong commitment to learning the *Dhamma*, saying that this "is why we became monks." Other monks, in addition to their spiritual responsibilities, give priority to academic training and spend significant time commuting to university. There are certainly a significant number of monks in Cambodia keen to partner on development initiatives, but it is important to recognize the diversity of their priorities.

The *Vinaya* Monastic Code and Taboo Topics in Development

Aspects of the *Vinaya* monastic code of discipline can present barriers to the participation of monks in development programs that deal with some 'taboo' issues. For example, Buddhist monks are required to remain celibate and there are also significant restrictions on discussion of or allusion to sex. This is largely to prevent misunderstandings or rumor, but the consequences can be quite severe, including expulsion from the monkhood. Much of the early opposition to monks working on HIV issues from the *Sangha* centered on this restriction. As with *Sangha* leaders, even members of the engaged community were uncomfortable with the idea of monks discussing such subjects. Heng Monychenda of BFD found that when he spoke out on HIV issues on Cambodian television as a monk in the mid-1990s, "people could not understand why I would talk about that topic... A lot of people complained and scolded me, saying that I cannot be a monk and talk about HIV." Over the years, the official position of the Supreme Patriarchs on monks working on HIV-related issues has softened, but societal attitudes still vary.

Politics can be an equally taboo subject for monks. Some influential figures within the Cambodian *Sangha* hold that involvement in public protests violates a monk's commitment to abstain from "divisive speech." The involvement of monks in such protests can have serious consequences. Recently, Supreme Patriarch Ven. Non Nget banned junior monk Ven. Loun Sovath from residence in any Cambodian pagoda after he participated in a series of land rights protests in support of displaced families. In his directive dated April 26, 2011 he writes: "He has been involved in politics, he has joined protests with villagers and gone everywhere

with human rights activists, which is an abuse of Buddha's rules" (Heng: 2011). Even voting, which is a guaranteed constitutional right for monks, has long been a thorny issue. Grand Supreme Patriarch Ven. Tep Vong instituted a voting ban for monks that lasted nearly a decade after many were involved in protests following the 1998 elections that brought Prime Minister Hun Sen to power. These sensitivities and taboos can affect a monk's ability and desire to engage or advocate on controversial issues such as governance.

Even comparatively uncontroversial subjects, such as rural livelihoods, can present unexpected conflicts with the Vinaya monastic code. BS-DA's Executive Director, Ven. Vandong, found that community members complained when monks, facilitating livelihood groups in Kampong Cham, discussed slaughter in the course of discussions on animal-raising. Killing an animal is considered a "downfall" according to the Vinaya. He explains:

"For meetings on NRM and livelihoods there is talk about fish, chicken and pig raising and some people complained that monks were talking about killing pigs, for example. Most people were happy but some people do not like to hear monks talking about these topics. Of course these things happen in the community, but we still want to be sensitive. So that's why this year I changed the program's focus; we will use the monks for social accountability in the education system. This topic is not so confrontational and really within a monk's traditional focus."

Ven. Vandong's decision to shift the NAMSA's focus to education, an area that falls within monks' traditional purview, was partially influenced by public perceptions (as opposed to official theological rulings or views) of topics,

which are taboo for monks to take up. LHA's Ven. Somnieng suggests that these perceptions are rooted in the idea that monks are guardians of tradition and often at odds with modernity, stating: "When we talk about something like human trafficking and we talk about the sex trade, when we talk about HIV, then people say: 'These are the modern issues and the temples and the monks should not be part of this.' We try to educate them. Even five years ago in Wat Damnak, some people were a little worried about what we were doing because they didn't understand. Now, [the community] has gotten to know what we're doing and they are big supporters of the program."

On the other hand, the inclusion of monks and lay clergy in HIV programming, such as the BLL, has shown that attitudes can change through creative engagement. Cambodia's country-wide effort to combat HIV appears to be a success story with a nationwide decrease in the HIV-infection rate among adults aged 15-49, from an estimated 2 percent in 1998 to approximately 0.5 percent in 2010 (NIS 2011). Support from the Sangha has been instrumental to the effort. Monks are taking up other controversial topics or causes, despite real or perceived contradictions in the Vinaya. Potential engagement with monks begs for careful study and analysis, mindful of the taboos surrounding certain topics both in the Sangha and local communities.

Gender Issues at the Pagoda

The male-dominated nature of the pagoda has implications for projects that seek to engage local, Buddhist structures, as this affects the types of services that women and young girls can access at a pagoda. The Vinaya monastic code places significant restrictions on a monk's

interactions with young women. Many monks seek to avoid circumstances in which a violation of this discipline may occur, which usually means limiting their interactions with women. There is some difference of opinion within the *Sangha* on the extent to which women can access pagoda-based social services, for example, whether girls can be permitted to stay on pagoda grounds, either as orphans or simply to live in closer proximity to school. A 2005 research report for Save the Children found that 32 percent of monks in their survey area believed it was forbidden for girls to stay on the pagoda grounds (Ramage et al.: 2005). Because there is no opportunity for female ordination in Theravada Buddhism, Cambodia currently has no network of nunneries, which would be analogous to the current pagoda system and provide alternative services to young women.

Some pagodas, however, do make an active effort to include young women in pagoda life, offering them opportunities similar to those available for young men. Wat Damnak in Siem Reap is a notable example; the pagoda houses around 20 young women at any given time in the nuns' quarters. Most of them take part in Life and Hope Association's Program Advancing Girls' Education (PAGE), in which they receive scholarships for high school and attend a sewing program in the pagoda. The PAGE program and others like it demonstrate what is possible, and indeed, that there is a clear intention among some monks to change attitudes within the *Sangha* about providing opportunities for women. Ven. Somnieng of LHA suggests, "We provide PAGE opportunities because we see that all temples are only providing opportunities for boys. Boys alone cannot make a better society. In order to have a balanced society we have to have equal opportunity; in order to have equal opportunity, we as a temple have the responsibility to be a part of

that." Gender issues do remain a challenge, particularly within rural pagodas, but some development partners have already demonstrated that thoughtful and positive engagement with female actors through the pagoda, including nuns and female pagoda committee members, is possible.

Issues of Reach in Messages Delivered by Monks and Lay Clergy

This report draws attention to the fact that monks are influential and trusted figures in Cambodian society and thus can be very effective at delivering messages or changing social attitudes. However, there is question as to the reach of messages delivered by monks and other religious figures since their immediate audience is often limited to older members of the community. These older community members are more active in pagoda life and observation of Buddhist rituals than the younger generation. At the time of the last Cambodian General Census, over 56 percent of Cambodia's population was 24 years old or younger (NIS 2010). Without engaging this key demographic in Cambodia, effectiveness of development projects is unlikely.

A 2009 regional assessment of UNICEF's BII described monks' difficulty reaching youth: "While a large share of monks across the samples had conducted IEC and other outreach activities to promote HIV prevention in their communities, interventions targeting youth or addressing risk behaviors were considerably less frequent" (UNICEF EAPRO: 2009). Focus group discussions (FGDs) with community members suggested that youth were more comfortable discussing sexual and reproductive health issues with friends or family members than with



Image 11: Monk Giving a Talk to Donchee

monks. The study found that monks and lay clergy were less influential in the lives of youth.

“The FGDs among youth in Cambodia confirmed that their parents and close relatives have more influence on their lives than religious persons. Most community members noted this fact in their focus group discussions. This was also confirmed by monks in their focus groups, with nearly all saying that only a few young people come to them for advice or help. However, some youth stated that their older relatives and parents would get advice from monks, and would use it to educate them. Clergy have indirect effects.” (UNICEF EAPRO: 2009)

Other interviewees also supported this observation; Ven. Leh Chanah, who has partnered with Buddhism for Development Kampong Thom, mentioned that he works to get messages to youth through their parents: “I notice that on the Buddhist holy days, it is only the old people who visit the pagoda to offer food or listen to the monks. Of course I talk to the old

villagers, but I ask the parents to go back and tell their children about what I have said.” Ven. Yon Seng Yeath, Vice-Rector of The Buddhist University, notes: “I fear that the young generation is finding it difficult to understand the way that we preach now. In the past, let’s say 100 or 200 years ago, if we were talking about the Buddha, everyone was inspired, but nowadays it doesn’t work.”

Young monks in Cambodia are exploring ways to reach out to the younger generation and make Buddhism more immediately present in their daily lives. Monks in several provinces produce self-funded radio programs in which they teach *Pali* and Buddhist Scripture and answer callers’ questions on a range of Buddhism-related topics. Of these new Buddhist radio programs, Ven. Yos Hut of Wat Lanka in Phnom Penh observes: “Many young people certainly listen to them.... unfortunately, they seem to prefer music to learning about Buddhism!” While efforts to harness new media channels have met with some success, social services (particularly practical education such as computer literacy and English classes) offered by pagodas are likely to be the most effective means through which monks can reach youth at present.

Financial Accountability and Transparency in the Pagoda

A major challenge for both pagoda-led development initiatives and development partners looking to engage local pagodas in project implementation is their general lack of established tools for financial accountability and transparency. These are key concerns, particularly if the pagoda committee is to manage outside funds. Traditionally, pagoda committees have not conformed to the same rigorous accounting



Image 12: Pagoda Committee Members Counting Donations after a Ceremony

practices expected of development organizations (though most pagoda committees keep a running ledger of large expenditures). Despite this fact, communities do place substantial financial trust in pagoda committee members, often more than they place in local government authorities. BSDA's Ven. Vandong suggests: "If you look at the commune council building, it is very small because it doesn't receive a lot of money, but if you look at the temples, they are very big and ornate because people trust monks with their money."

Ven. Vandong, who is a champion of social accountability, suggests that because of this trust, the pagoda has a great opportunity to serve as a model of best practices in financial management for local government institutions. Of course, this would first require building the capacity of pagoda committees. "We have NAMSA to promote social accountability, but in the pagoda we don't have a good system ourselves. If we want to advise the commune council we have to set up a best practice ourselves. This is an effective strategy because it

works through the cultural context." Ven. Vandong has already begun speaking with head monks at the provincial level in Kampong Cham about strategies to build this new system. As with NAMSA, there is scope for this initiative to spread through his socially engaged Buddhist network. It is also possible for NGOs or other development partners to support this process. However, it will be important, as Ven. Vandong points out, to work through the "cultural context," rather than simply adhere to foreign accountability practices, if the hope is to build an effective and sustainable system.

Financial Compensation, Monks, and the *Sangha*

The issue of financial compensation, whether through salaries or *per diem* payments, is one of the more contentious issues surrounding the involvement of monks in development projects. Compensating monks financially is problematic because it contradicts one of the most basic principles of monastic life: modest living. Even the term *bhikkhu* (monk) derives from the *Pali* for *beggar*, although it is often translated as "one who lives by alms." The fact that a monk is collaborating with a development partner can give community members the impression that their actions are financially motivated, which could threaten the traditional system of pagoda finances. Ven. Loeurn, the leader of NAMSA in Siem Reap, related one such example from his own experience: "A villager once told me that monks that do this kind of work get a salary, so he didn't want to provide food to monks that have a salary." Although this was a mistaken impression, it is still potentially harmful. Most development partners only provide *per diem* payments to cover a monk's travel expenses and food, although even this limited compensation can become a contentious issue.

Some interviewees suggested that *per diem* payments give monks an improper motivation to join particular projects or trainings over others, with some making decisions on the basis of organization's relative *per diem* rates. There are stories of monks refusing to attend trainings because the *per diem* payment was smaller than they had received in the past. Some organizations might also provide other types of incentives that further build expectations and contribute to motivations that some consider antithetical to the teachings of the Buddha. Ulrike Gilbert Nandra of UNICEF observes, "some NGOs may offer high incentives such as providing motorbikes, or stipends which are not aligned with government rates. This is problematic as different incentives may impact on motivation and create competition."

In many ways, the issue of financial compensation cuts to the heart of the complexities surrounding engagement of monks and/or other Buddhist figures as partners in development projects. Many socially engaged Buddhists believe that pagodas should already be dedicated to social service provision regardless of external financial incentives. Sek Sarom, formerly of the *Dhammayietra* center, suggests, "donations from outside can help, but they can also hurt. I think when we talk about spirituality and faith, money is not so important. I think people need to wake up and work for their own community. I think we can start without money. If you do good work, the money will come."

There is also the potential for external development funds to exacerbate religious and political divisions within the Cambodian *Sangha*, such as those between *Boran* and *Mahanikay* Modernist movements. Intentionally or not, by supporting socially active monks, international development institutions project their own notions of what it means to be a monk. Money as always is a double-edged sword. It can make

action possible but it must be used with wisdom and care. For the past two decades, development partners have had significant influence in Cambodian society. Particularly when dealing with local cultural institutions, this influence can be controversial. This report details efforts in which external funding has contributed to effective and innovative development projects at Cambodian pagodas, but it is important for development partners to remain mindful of the extent of their influence. The method of pagoda engagement and funding provision will be central considerations in this regard.

Moving Forward

In Cambodia, development models that engage local cultural institutions have only been tested on a limited scale, but have shown potential for locally grounded and sustainable solutions to a variety of development challenges. This is particularly true when development partnerships build on the community services that these cultural institutions traditionally provide. This report highlights examples of organizations that have worked through Cambodia's Buddhist structures, their reasons for doing so, and some of the challenges encountered.

This report has explored some of the traditional social services and community functions of the local pagoda in Cambodia. It has also set out to describe the overall structure and the key social actors within Cambodian pagodas. It is important to bear in mind that while pagoda structures and management systems are officially dictated by the MoCR and the activities of monastics overseen by the national *Sangha*, the reality of Cambodian pagodas is highly contextual. Nonetheless, there are some important insights to be gained from such a review. These insights can contribute to a better understanding of the cultural context in which development interventions take place, but beyond this, highlight the fact that Buddhist actors and institutions have the potential to be powerful development partners, as the case studies have shown.

In the development partnerships profiled in these case studies, each Buddhist actor or institution has their own particular strengths that development partners have recognized as important to achieving their strategic goals. Mlup Baitong has recruited monks who use their weekly sermons as an important means to promote environmental awareness in rural communities. RACHA, with programs that focus pri-

marily on women and children, saw the need to collaborate with Buddhist women. They have engaged nuns and *wat* grannies in order to educate young mothers on breastfeeding and infant nutrition. In Save the Children's OVC program, pagoda committees and *achar* provide a critically important link with surrounding communities. They help to identify families adversely affected by HIV or AIDS, arrange support and monitor their progress. UNICEF's Buddhist Leadership Initiative looked to develop a more coordinated countrywide Buddhist response to the HIV epidemic; the MoCR, with its national presence and policy influence, became an important partner in the effort.

Finally there are several monk-led NGOs, CSOs and small-scale development initiatives, of which BSDA's NAMS project is one. Supporting such monk-led initiatives is attractive to many development partners as it helps to avoid overly "instrumentalizing" Buddhist actors in their own projects. The number of development endeavors being undertaken by monks does seem to be growing. Indeed, Buddhist monks, which constitute over 50,000 individuals, are the most numerous Buddhist actors in Cambodia and can be particularly effective in development roles. As a result of their revered position in Cambodian society, they have unique access to and influence over many diverse segments of the country's population. They can use their unique influence to advise community members, resolve conflicts and work to change public attitudes.

Development work does seem to resonate with many Cambodian monks, many of whom come from impoverished backgrounds themselves. For these monks, entering the monkhood represents a means to access education and thereby lift themselves out of poverty. Many intimately

understand the challenges that face other members of their communities and express a commitment to share the benefits that the monkhood has provided them. Working on development projects is attractive to many monks, not only as a means to support their own communities, but also to gain experience that they can utilize in their careers if they leave the monkhood. Certainly the desire to be socially engaged varies widely across the monastic community, as demonstrated by the diverse perceptions of the social role of a monk detailed in this report. This is one of many concerns when the spiritual world of Buddhism and the temporal world of development collide, which also relate to individual capacity, monastic discipline and even politics.

These challenges and considerations are important and warrant further study, but they should not be seen as major barriers to collaboration. Significant opportunities exist for partnership between Cambodia's development and Buddhist communities and such collaboration can help to firmly anchor development in Cambodian culture and values. On a practical level, for donors and NGOs, such partnerships can improve reach, increase effectiveness, and enhance sustainability of development interventions. A better understanding of Buddhist institutions, actors, and traditions can further shed light on the potential for synergistic partnerships that both empower local institutions and reduce reliance on external financial and human resources in development projects. It is hoped that this report has drawn attention to the need for further exploration of the current and potential roles that Buddhist communities play in Cambodian development.

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Annex I. List of Interviews with Key Resource Persons

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Date</i>
Ven. Salueth Bun	Director	Monk's Community Forest	October 20, 2010
Theary Chan	Executive Director	Reproductive and Child Health Alliance (RACHA)	September 20, 2010
Ven. Chorvany Chheng	Executive Director	Children and Youth Education Organization (CYEO)	October 13, 2011
Mony Chim	Branch Manager	Buddhism for Development Kampong Thom (BFDKT)	February 17, 2010
Chhad Choeum	Vice Director, Administrative Office	Ministry of Cult and Religion (MoCR)	June 28, 2011
Ven. Sokuntwat Doung	Monk Team Leader	Salvation Center Cambodia (SCC)	April 10, 2011
Dr. Khoy Dy	Provincial Coordinator Pursat	Reproductive and Child Health Alliance (RACHA)	April 26, 2011
Ulrike Gilbert-Nandra	HIV Specialist	United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	September 29, 2009 / May 27, 2011
Monychenda Heng	Executive Director	Buddhism for Development	August 24, 2010
Sopheap Hiek	Executive Director	Association of Buddhist for the Environment (ABE)	September 8, 2009
Ven. Somnieng Hoern	Executive Director	Life and Hope Association (LHA)	October 21, 2010
Ven. Sovanratana Khy	Vice Rector / Head Monk	The Buddhist University / Wat Mongkulvan	October 29, 2009
Symoeurn Kim	Nun	Som Bun Thoeurn Meditation Center	May 1, 2011
Ven. Nhem Kimteng	Executive Director	Santi Sena	November 15, 2009
Ven. Chanah Leh	Head Monk	Buddhism for Development Kampong Thom (BFDKT)	February 16, 2010
Chet Liang Len	Nun	Som Bun Thoeurn Meditation Center	May 1, 2011
Ven. Loeurn	Provincial Coordinator Siem Reap	Network of Monks for Social Accountability (NAMSA)	May 7, 2011

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Date</i>
Khom Ly	Director	Buddhism for development Kampong Thom (BFDKT)	February 16, 2010
Ven. Kuen Mao	Head Monk / Monk Coordinator Prey Veng	Wat Preah Vihear Thom / UNICEF	June 8, 2011
Wayne Matthyse	Co-founder	Partners in Compassion	April 22, 2010 / June 10, 2011
Ven. Someth Mean	Executive Director	Human Resource and Natural Development (HRND)	April 30, 2010
Chandara Mom	Provincial Director Prey Veng	Department of Cult and Religion (DoCR)	June 8, 2011
Chantha Mom	Field Officer Kampong Speu	Mlup Baitong	June 7, 2011
Buntha Nhek	Director	The Buddhist Association	September 26, 2009
Ukshi Nuon	Nun	Wat Sompov Meas	November 16, 2009
Peter Gyallay Pap	Executive Director	Khmer Educational Assistance Project (KEAP)	November 1, 2009
Chandara Prak	Nun	Som Bun Thoeurn Meditation Center	May 1, 2011
Chanty Prang	OVC Coordinator	Save the Children Cambodia	December 9, 2010
Sam An Ros	Deputy Director	Santi Sena	May 10, 2010 / June 20, 2011
Vandin San	Co-founder and Executive Director	Partners in Compassion	April 23, 2010 / June 10, 2011
Se Vorn	Organizer	Dhammayietra Peace Walk	June 16, 2011
Sarom Sek		The Dhammayietra Center	October 14, 2009
Ven. Bunthoen Sok	Head Monk	Wat Nunda Nuny	November 16, 2009
Ven. Tet Than	Vice Head Monk / Monk Coordinator	Wat Phnom Twoem Ta Ah / Mlup Baitong	June 7, 2011
Ven. Vandong Thoeurn	Executive Director	Buddhism for Social Development Action (BSDA)	December 3, 2009 / May 26, 2011
Moeurn Va	Executive Director	Mlup Baitong	May 6, 2011
Ven. Seng Yeth Yon	Vice Rector	The Buddhist University	October 23, 2009
Ven. Hut Yos		Wat Lanka	August 4, 2010

Annex II. Pagoda Surveys

<i>Pagoda Name</i>	<i>Province</i>	<i>Date</i>
Wat Tep Nimih	Kampong Thom	December, 2010
Wat Preah Tiet	Kandal	December 10, 2010
Wat Ka Vichey	Pursat	April 26, 2011
Wat Kampong Kraisang	Pursat	April 26, 2011
Wat Phum Stoeng	Pursat	April 26, 2011
Wat Sbovrich	Pursat	April 26, 2011
Wat Damnak	Siem Reap	May 7, 2011
Wat Bantey Srei	Siem Reap	May 9, 2011
Wat Chet Chan	Siem Reap	May 9, 2011
Wat Sovan Weilei Tonle Wat	Kampong Cham	May 26, 2011
Wat Toul Preah Vihear	Kampong Cham	May 26, 2011
Wat Kandal Doem	Kampong Speu	June 7, 2011
Wat Sa Mekee Raja Wat Aram	Kampong Speu	June 7, 2011
Wat Twoeum Ta Ah	Kampong Speu	June 7, 2011
Wat Kamoul Chukeit	Prey Veng	June 8, 2011
Wat Kousundae	Prey Veng	June 8, 2011
Wat Preah Vihear Thom	Prey Veng	June 8, 2011
Wat Kampong Se Ma	Battambang	June 15, 2011
Wat Kset Bo	Battambang	June 15, 2011
Wat Oh Takee	Battambang	June 15, 2011
Wat Pacha	Battambang	June 16, 2011



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