

PROJECT REPORT

GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS AND ENGAGED BUDDHISM

November 1, 2009 to November 1, 2010

Amount granted by Niwano Peace Foundation JPY 500,000

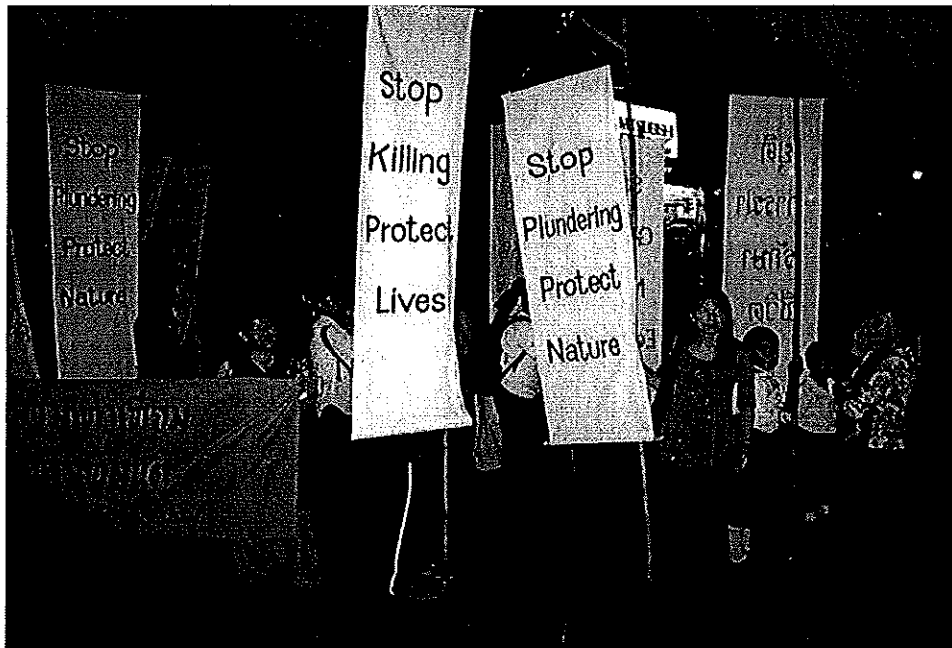
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Recipient

SUAN NGUEN MEE MA social enterprise

Honorary Advisor

SULAK SIVARAKSA



Preparing for the INEB Peace Walk, Chiangmai, November 2009, Thailand

Realized in collaboration with the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) and the School for Wellbeing Studies and Research (School for Wellbeing)

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ACTIVITY REPORT

Introduction

General outline of the Project Structure

Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa

Founder Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF) in 1968

INEB Founder 1989 and Chairman Advisory Committee

Advisor School for Wellbeing Studies and Research



Suan Nguen Mee Ma social enterprise

Suan Nguen Mee Ma was registered as a company in 2001. SNF is the founding shareholder of the company. Shares are held by NGO's affiliated with SNF (40%), business friends each 5% (total 40%) and the managers Wallapa and Hans van Willenswaard (20%). The dividend of the company is donated to SNF. Suan Nguen Mee Ma organized the 3rd international conference on Gross National Happiness ("GNH3") in Thailand, November 2007.



As a result of an action-research project titled *GNH Movement project* (2008-2010) Suan Nguen Mee Ma initiated the **School for Wellbeing Studies and Research**. The Secretariat of the School for Wellbeing is taken care of by Suan Nguen Mee Ma. The founding partners of the School for Wellbeing are:

- Faculty of Political Science, International Relations, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok
- Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF), founded by Sulak Sivaraksa in 1968; the SNF is the legal umbrella of INEB
- The Centre for Bhutan Studies (CBS), Thimphu, Bhutan

The School for Wellbeing and INEB (both affiliated with the Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation) work closely together, in particular in the field of Buddhist Economics and alternative development. At present the School for Wellbeing realizes an action-research project (2010-2013) supported by Thailand Research Fund titled *Well-Being Society scenario project*.



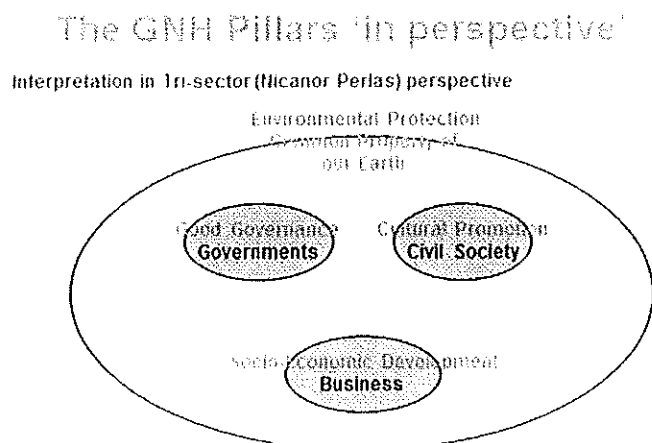
Collaboration between the School for Wellbeing and INEB, together with a diversity of INEB partner organizations and individuals, resulted during the 20th anniversary INEB conference in the establishment of an **INEB Project Group on Buddhist Economics and alternative development**. Gross National Happiness is appreciated as a developing country's challenge to the existing development paradigm characterized by unbalanced emphasis on economic growth indicated by Gross Domestic Product (GDP).



In preparation to the **INEB international conference in 2011 in Bodhgaya**, an international weekend conference will be convened by the European Buddhist Union, 18-19 June 2011.

The “GNH Movement”

The remarkable series of GNH conferences (Bhutan 2004, Canada 2005, Mekong region 2006, Thailand 2007, Bhutan 2008, Brazil 2009, USA 2010) incited a global process of reflection, research, social innovation and impulses for policy development involving a diverse partnership. Suan Nguen Mee Ma plaid its role with the *GNH Movement action-research project* supported by Thailand Research Fund. The following scheme represents part of the related analytical process:



One of the main conclusions of the action-research was identification of the urgent need for “consensus building leadership” among the above mentioned three sectors in order to guide societal development towards increased quality of life or “wellbeing” within the limits of a healthy environment. This would imply strengthening of feminine quality, empowerment of civil society and determination to engage in dialogue.

Bhutan delegation to the INEB 20th anniversary conference



Tashi Zangmo, Executive Director Bhutan Nuns' Foundation

In November 2009 INEB, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, celebrated its 20st anniversary. At this occasion an international conference was organized in Chiang Mai, and the Buddhist University meditation centre situated in the surroundings.

The delegation from Bhutan, invited to the conference thanks to the grant of **Niwano Peace Foundation**, consisted of:

1. Ven. Khenpo Rinpoche, Abbot, Pema Choling Nunnery, Bumthang, Bhutan
2. Tashi Zangmo, Executive Director Bhutan Nuns' Foundation www.bhutannuns.org
3. Ani Rinzin Lhamo, Nun, Pema Choling Nunnery, Bumthang, Bhutan

Brief overview of progress in the three areas of cooperation

1. The Himalayas network

One of the important results of the exchanges in the Himalayas network was that Deerpark Institute, Bir, North India, took responsibility for the organization of the next bi-annual INEB conference. By now it is known that this conference will take place 26-29 October 2011 in Bodhgaya.

Dzongsar Jamyang Kyentshe Rinpoche, the Founder and Spiritual Guide of Deerpark Institute, as well as a number of monasteries in Bhutan, his home country, will be present at the INEB conference in Bodhgaya.

2. The gender network

The exchanges on *gender* in Chiangmai resulted in significant empowerment of activities supporting Buddhist nuns, and female lay persons, including in Bhutan.

The representation of the Bhutan Nuns' Foundation and Pema Choling Nunnery in the INEB conference was prepared by the visit of Ven. Dhammananta, Thailand, to Bhutan in April 2009, organized by Suan Nguen Mee Ma social enterprise in collaboration with the School for Wellbeing Studies and Research. Ven. Dhammananta, a pioneering nun in the Theravada tradition brought a Buddha image from her temple in Thailand to Bhutan, and presented it to Prime Minister Lyonchho Jigmi Y. Thinley. The Prime Minister donated the same in turn to the Bhutan Nuns' Foundation, at that moment still in the process of being established.



Ani Rinzin Lhamo participates in alms round

Remarkably, during the INEB conference monks and nuns from a great diversity of Buddhist denominations participated side by side in a public alms round in the early morning. Many lay people from Chiang Mai donated food and medicines.

3. The Buddhist Economics network

The introduction on Buddhist Economics by Prof. Hasishi Nakamura resulted in a lively plenary discussion and two break-out sessions. In the break-out sessions an impressive number of participants from various Asian countries exchanged experiences. Links between economy and ecology were emphasized (climate change caused by corporate greed). The possible role of Buddhist organizations in the areas of consumers' initiatives, social responsible investment and mindful business, and the dawn of an alternative vision on macro-economic development was explored. As well as the need for stronger support of the Buddhist community to the small-scale organic farmers' movement. The

A leading role in these community activities was performed by Ani Rinzin Lhamo. In 2005 she was one of the participants of the INEB Young Boddhisatva's training programme. She became a role model for young socially engaged nuns in Bhutan.

Diversity of Buddhist schools represented in INEB

The Bhutan delegation strengthened the profile of Vajrayana Buddhism as an indispensable element of the diversity of Buddhist streams working together within the INEB framework towards social engagement.

The Bhutan delegation participated fully in the retreat preceding the conference, guided by Dharmachari Lokamitra (India/U.K.), attracting nearly 100 participants. The Bhutanese group, together with participants from Ladakh, led several chanting sessions both during the retreat and the conference. The conference attracted almost 250 participants from 25 countries plus impressive involvement of the local communities.

Part 2

Thai delegation return-visit guided by Phra Paisal Visalo, Abbot Wat Pa Sukato, Thailand, to Pema Choling Nunnery, Bhutan, 17-28 April 2010.

Introduction



Phra Paisal Visalo, Abbot, Wat Pa Sukato, Thailand

Phra Paisal Visalo has been a pioneer of engaged Buddhism since he became a monk more than 25 years ago. He was a student of Ajarn Sulak and took up the position of Lord Abbot of Wat Pa Sukato, a well-known meditation centre in Chayapum. He is the author of numerous books, a speaker at public meetings and a frequent resource person in the media. He leads environmental conservation walks, is a tireless Peace mediator and member of the Advisory Board of INEB.

Phra Paisal Visalo spoke at the invocation ceremony of the 3rd international conference on Gross National Happiness at Wat Hin Mak Peng, Nongkhai. Wat Hin Mak Peng is a well-established temple in the Theravada forest tradition. The temple is situated at the border of the Mekong River, opposite Vientiane, the capital of Laos.

The 'GNH3' conference supported by **Niwano Peace Foundation** attracted over 900 participants dispersed over a period of one week, including a Youth Camp, community-based gatherings in Nongkhai, as well as academic and practitioners' exchanges in Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

In Bumthang the study-tour included visits to, among others:

- Membartsho, the *Burning Lake*
- Pema Choling Monastery
- Ura Village

In 2011 the School for Wellbeing plans a second study-visit. This year it will be with a Mekong region delegation. The theme will be (to be confirmed): *Economic Development in Bhutan and the role of organic agriculture. Towards "Organic Asia"?*

Visit to Pema Choling Monastery



The Thai delegation visits Pema Choling nunnery. Left front: Ani Rinzin Lhamo. Central: Phra Paisal Visalo and Ven. Khenpo Rinpoche.

The activities of Pema Choling Monastery include:

- 9 - year shedra (Buddhist university) course of study of highest level Buddhist philosophy.
- basic education that includes English, Dzongkha (Bhutanese language), math, geography, history, logic, philosophy, debate.
- support and community for destitute elderly women.
- medical care and instruction in basic health and hygiene.

Part 3 (Future)

3.1.

International Workshop on Engaged Spirituality and alternative development, 18-19 June 2011

Provisional announcement:

International Weekend Conference
18-19 June 2011



**ENGAGED BUDDHISM: common targets of social transformation
in the second decade of the 21st century**

Convener:

Frans Goetghebeur

European Buddhist Union

www.e-b-u.org

in collaboration with

International Network of Engaged Buddhists
Buddhist Economics Research Platform
School for Wellbeing Studies and Research

Expected resource persons:

Laszlo Zsolnai, Harsha Navaratne, Jotika Hermsen, Bernie Glasman, Paula de Wijs-Koolkin,
Phra Paisal Visalo, David Loy, Hisashi Nakamura, Marlies Musch, and many others

Venue:

Naropa institute, Cadzand, the Netherlands (a unit of the Tibetan Institute, Belgium)

This weekend conference with resource persons from Asia, Europe and USA is meant to strengthen the foundation for future collaboration on Buddhist Economics and alternative development. We intend to request the Niwano Peace Foundation to support the participation of resource persons from Asia, including from Bhutan, in this groundbreaking gathering.



The 2011 Bi-Annual Conference of the
International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)

The Future of Buddhism:
From Personal Awakening to Global Transformation

Venue: Wat Pha Bodhigaya

Location: Bodhgaya, India

Date: October 26-29, 2011

Contact: For registration and for more information, please contact INEB Secretariat
conference@inebnetwork.org or visit www.inebnetwork.org

Registration Deadline: 31 August 2011

International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) brings together activists, spiritual leaders, academics, and young people from more than 20 countries in Asia, Europe, America, and Australia, in areas of common concern: to integrate the practice of Buddhism with social action for a healthy, just, and peaceful world. INEB is rooted in the treasure of personal relationship that raises the original spirit of *sangha* in a contemporary, multi-cultural context. INEB aims to promote understanding and cooperation among Buddhists; to articulate the perspective of engaged Buddhism and train Buddhist activists; to serve as a network of information and resources on

action. After their initial talk, the program will be opened to questions. During the open session, questions from young participants will be prioritized.

Roundtable Discussions

Morning roundtable discussions will be organized on Day 2 and Day 4 to stimulate in-depth and critical dialog on social issues of common concern to all Buddhist traditions. The session will use a "fishbowl" format. Eight to twelve key resource people with informed views on the selected topic will sit at the round table. All other conference participants will be seated around them as observers. The roundtable participants will include lay and ordained men and women from different Buddhist contexts with a wide range of experiences and perspectives. For the first 2 hours, the roundtable participants will have an in-depth facilitated dialog on the proposed themes. For the final 1 hour, general participants will have the opportunity to ask questions, share views, and engage in the dialog.

Day 2 Roundtable: Dharma for the Future

Themes include:

- Relevance of the Dharma in modern society
- Opportunities and challenges in different countries and cultural contexts (e.g. declining, stagnating, reviving, spreading)
- *Dharmaduta* and Buddhist education
- Impact of new information and communication technology
- Buddhism in popular culture

Day 4: Sangha for the Future

Themes include

- Meaning of Sangha
- Lay-monastic relations in modern society
- Vinaya in modern society
- Dana and materialism
- Dana and Buddhist institutions

Learning for the Future

Afternoon sessions will provide an opportunity for active learning and exchange. These sessions will range from hands-on workshops and training programs to experience-sharing sessions organized by key resource people, for example:

- Challenges of *sangha*
- Non-violent communication skills
- Active learning techniques

Conference logistics will be managed by Indian youth from the Bodhgaya region. They will have the opportunity to participate in a pre-conference workshop and training program with youth from INEB's international network.

Mornings Maha Bodhi Programs

Morning meditation, chanting, and Dharma talks will be organized with Bodhgaya temples and religious groups to ensure participation and promote inter-communal exchange.

INEB Fair, Buddhist Art and Film Festival, Cultural Performance

Local people and organizations will be invited to participate in the evening sessions at the conference venue. Local artists will have an opportunity to perform and share their work.

Study Visits

On 30 October, the day after the conference, study tours will be organized to visit service projects by local organizations.

Shramadana

Shramadana means giving time, energy, and skills for the benefit of others. The conference organizers will work with local service organization to plan a *shramadana* opportunity (e.g. environmental cleanup) for conference participants.

Affiliated Events (before and after the main conference)

* to be confirmed

International Youth Volunteer Workshop (October 19-23, 2011)*

Young leaders from INEB's international network will join local Indian volunteers for a 5-day workshop and training program in Bodhgaya before the conference.

Buddhist Art Workshop (October 19-25, 2011)

INEB 2011 Conference

Draft Program

Pre-Conference Events	
October 19-23, 2011	International youth volunteer workshop
October 19-25, 2011	Buddhist art workshop

Conference	
Arrival and Registration: October 24-25, 2011	
Day 1: October 26, 2011	
06:00 – 07:00	Morning Program at Maha Bodhi
07:00 – 08:30	Breakfast
08:30 – 08:45	Traditional lamp lighting
08:45 – 09:00	Welcome by organizers
09:00 – 09:30	Welcome by INEB Chairperson
09:30 – 10:15	Opening speech by Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa
10:15 – 10:45	Tea
10:45 – 11:30	Generational Sharing (plenary)
11:30 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 17:00	Learning for the Future: Program A (~10 sessions, break for tea)
17:30 – 19:00	Dinner
19:00 – 22:00	INEB Fair (stalls and cultural performances)
Day 2: October 27, 2011	
06:00 – 07:00	Morning Program at Maha Bodhi
07:00 – 08:30	Breakfast
08:30 – 11:30	Dharma for the Future (plenary fishbowl format, break for tea)
11:30 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 17:00	Learning for the Future: Program B (~10 sessions, break for tea)

Conference Participants & Dana

An estimated 250 – 300 people are expected to participate in the conference. Special attention will be given to ensure strong youth participation and engagement in all conference activities.

Furthermore, INEB works very hard to bring participants from regions that are in crisis and who need support. Therefore, if you can afford to pay more than the full fee for this conference, your donation (dana) will be gratefully received to help those who cannot afford the whole fee. Support for such needy participants to attend will enrich your own conference experience!

Conference fees

Fees include the programme in its entirety: registration fee and food.

\$US 80 payable by participants with **low income or countries from the South**

\$US120 payable by participants with **medium income or developing countries**

\$US180 payable by participants with **high income or countries from the North**

*For further details on accommodation packages, please visit our website

Download Registration Form, [please click](#)

For registration and for more information, please contact:

INEB Secretariat Office

666 Charoen Nakorn Road,

Banglumphu Lang, Klongsan,

Bangkok 10600 Siam (Thailand)

Tel. (+66 2) 438 9331/2

Fax. (+66 2) 860 1278

Email: conference@inebnetwork.org

Website: www.inebnetwork.org



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Student Stories

A Dream for Improved Education for Women Benefits Bhutan's Nuns

She was the first girl in her village area to go to school. And now, three decades after leaving home to pursue her dream of securing a good education, Tashi Zangmo's (Ed.D. 2009) plan to improve the educational opportunities for all girls in Bhutan has become reality, launched with the blessing and the help of the Queen.



From a home in Amherst where she was staying while preparing to return to Bhutan to begin her work with Bhutanese girls, Zangmo talked about the progress that has been made in making education accessible for children in her country. Since 2002, providing education opportunities for all Bhutanese children, especially girls, has been a Royal priority, she said. More schools have been built, particularly in rural areas, where once there were no schools at all. Yet, today, only about 10% of Bhutanese girls attend school.

Although views about education are changing in her home country, some families still hold on to the traditional belief that daughters should remain close to home, Zangmo explained. But the number of girls in schools was far less than 10% when Zangmo was nine years old and living with her seven siblings in a remote corner of Bhutan.

Her father, a spiritual teacher, and mother "took a big step" by sending their daughter to school. "My mother was amazing. She could not read or write but she had such vision," Zangmo said.

Zangmo followed her brother on the day's walk to the closest school where she would board, the only girl in a "dormitory" of boys. Two years later, she would be joined by other girl students. "I was a kind of role model, I think," she said.

After finishing elementary school, Zangmo attended school in the capital city. A government job came next. Always a spiritual person, she followed her interest in Buddhism, enrolling in India's Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies where she earned her bachelor's degree. It was there that she met a professor from Mt. Holyoke College and learned about the Five College area in Massachusetts. Encouraged by the professor, she applied to Mt. Holyoke and was accepted. Winning a public service fellowship there in her senior year, she travelled home and used the money to teach literacy in villages and to create a library in a nunnery, a common institution that offers girls rudimentary education and a culturally-approved way to live a spiritually-rich, but Spartan, life.

"Any woman can go into a nunnery," said Zangmo. "A divorced woman who is fed up or a woman who wants a spiritual life, a woman who wants to pray and younger ones who want to learn something. They are places where women can have a chance."

In the meantime, Zangmo had applied to and been accepted as a graduate student at UMass Amherst's School of Education. She returned to Massachusetts in 2001, earning both her master's and doctorate degrees here. And it was here in the School of Education that her life's mission began to have a clear focus, she said.

"The work I was doing at the Center for International Education, this helped me think how to apply what I was learning to what I wanted to do," she said. "I was a student, a mother, I was working. As a doctoral student, it all came into shape. It was very beautiful how it unfolded."

"The adult literacy and community development study - it really helped me see how I could put it into practice back home," she said. "I think what CIE does, they put theory and practice together. In the classroom, we read a lot. I used to think, 'What does this do?' I learned from CIE, you take your courses, you go out in the world and develop projects, and you see how you can balance thinking and practice."

At a Gross National Happiness conference in Nova Scotia in 2005, Zangmo met Bhutan's current Prime Minister. He had heard about her literacy work and her interest in Bhutan's nunneries.

"He suggested I come up with an organization to help all the nuns in Bhutan," Zangmo said. "He introduced me to the Queen. She was helping to rebuild a nunnery in western Bhutan. The prime minister knew we had a similar vision. We've been in constant contact by email or phone."

Zangmo's thoughts about the lack of access to education for Bhutanese girls, about her longtime interest in Bhutanese nunneries, the role they play in Bhutanese society, and especially the role they play in the lives of girls coalesced. "I went home. I did baseline research for my dissertation on how nuns can contribute to Gross National Happiness," Zangmo said.

And through the clarity of thinking that came with working on her dissertation, and with the support of many faculty, friends, and Bhutan's Queen, she formulated a plan: she decided that she would work to bring education to Bhutanese girls by transforming nunneries into places of organized education.

"Nunneries don't follow any curriculum now," she said. "The nuns loosely learn prayers, cultural values. There is some teaching. I'd like to help them to organize curriculum and become trained teachers so they can not only teach at nunneries but also at public schools. I truly believe, Bhutan being a Buddhist country, it is important for women to go to school to learn and teach traditional values. This is part of Gross National Happiness."

Typically dependent on alms and donations, Bhutan's nunneries are generally in poor physical condition. Most have no running water or no sanitary facilities. "Buddhism says you are supposed to be content with your life," Zangmo explained. "You know how in the West we hear people say, 'Why me? Why me?' In my culture in Bhutan, the way of thinking is, 'It is my Karma.' So the nuns never ask for anything."

Last year, Zangmo went home again and formally organized the Bhutan Nuns Foundation under the patronage of Queen Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck. This year, with the nuns' needs and the ways of her culture in mind, Zangmo will now officially go about the business of building nunneries into comfortable places for girls to learn.

"How can I help them, the nuns, the girls, fit into modern society?" she asks. "It has to be done in a gentle way. I have to be very careful. I don't want to put my values on them. I have to do it in a way that does not disrupt. A question I ask myself is, 'What is new that we can adapt that can help them and what is old that we can hold onto?'"

Zangmo's foundation will work to improve life conditions for the nuns and their girl students a bit at a time. "We are there to uplift a little," she says. "To give students small things - a notebook to write in, a pencil, a comfortable sitting place and a change of clothes. And not to be hungry when they are studying."

Zangmo says that her first job will be to do basic things: build bathrooms, ventilate living quarters, put up solar lights, install

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