

# The Journey of Buddhist Social Work

Exploring the Potential of Buddhism in Asian Social Work



Report on the 4<sup>th</sup>  
International Academic  
Forum on Buddhist Social Work  
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Edited by Josef Gohori



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Asian Research Institute for International Social Work  
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# Preface

This report is composed of full papers and other documents shared during the 4<sup>th</sup> *International Academic Forum on Buddhist Social Work* which was held on December 20-21, 2019 in Tokyo, Japan. After five years of the joint research project, scholars and researchers from Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, and other Asian countries met to share outcomes, findings, and other fruits of their research activities. Thus, this report may be considered as a collection of crops gotten thanks to this five-year project focused on Buddhist social work in Asia.

This volume follows the flow of the academic forum. Thus, the brief outline of the international project is followed by texts reporting on outcomes and results in Thailand, Vietnam, and Mongolia. Unfortunately, it was impossible to include all target countries, however, I hope the above-mentioned three countries are a representative sample of the project as a whole. A report summarizing the survey in Japan follows, accompanied by a Shukutoku University Vice President's brief reflection on building a new strategic research infrastructure, which was one of this project's objectives. The next section brings a brief introduction on ongoing projects in various countries and regions and concepts of future projects, plans, and strategies, including the ARIISW's empirical proof on characteristics and essence of Buddhist social work. The last part reflects the session on indigenization and indigenous knowledge and practice. Prof. Ives from McGill University was asked to share the Canadian experience to deepen our discussion on this issue, allowing participants to go beyond the Buddhist perspective. And the last piece of the mosaic, Prof. Akimoto's text summarize all discussions challenging not only the concept of Buddhist social work but also the essence of social work in general.

All authors are responsible for the content of their texts and ethical consideration. However, there are some editor's corrections and changes.

The goal of the forum (the same as a goal of this report) was not easy. To provide information necessary to know about the Buddhist social work for those who heard about it for the first time, and to provide enough space to deepen discussion between those who are involved in this project from the very beginning. It is the reader who will judge if we were successful or not. Please, enjoy the journey of Buddhist social work.

Josef Gohori  
In Tokyo, March 8, 2020





# From the ABC Model to the Definition of Buddhist Social Work

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*Introduction of the research project, an overview of main targets, methods, and core findings, focusing on the ABC model and working definition of the Buddhist social work.*

A few years ago, researchers and experts from Shukutoku University were asked to assist the development of social work education programs for Buddhist priests in Sri Lanka. When the Japanese team introduced some basic social work concepts, methods, and theories to the Sri Lankan priests and monks, they were surprised by their reaction. “What’s new?!” After hearing the introduction to social work theory and practice, Buddhist monks said that social work was almost the same they had been doing for more than 2500 years. At this moment, we realized that there is an unexplored field of social work activities provided by Buddhists for a long time. This is one of the causes that have started our present research project on Buddhist social work.

## **Subject and purpose of the research project<sup>1</sup>**

“Exploring Buddhist Social Work” is a research project coordinated by the Asian Research Institute for International Social Work at Shukutoku University, Japan. The project is focused on social work and other social activities provided by Buddhists and Buddhist temples in the Asian region. Target countries and regions are (in alphabetical order) Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam; mainly-Buddhist societies in the Asian region. The purpose of this international joint research project is very simple. Since various activities provided by Buddhist around Asia are still not recognized and (except some interest in socially engaged Buddhism) there no research has been done in this field, we wanted

- 1) to know the actual state of Buddhist social work activities in mainly-Buddhist countries in Asia
- 2) to collect basic data necessary to systematize the concept of Buddhist social work
- 3) to publish research book series helping students as textbooks (or reference books) to learn about Buddhist social work

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<sup>1</sup> This text is an edited version of the previously published article (Gohori, 2018).



The project is being international, interdisciplinary, and interfaith. ARIISW is now working together with our colleagues and counterparts from more than 10 Asian countries and regions. This is another characteristic of this international joint research project which aims to build a research network to connect researchers, practitioners, and scholars from various countries and regions. Together we conduct meetings, workshops, fieldwork, and research assistance to explore the Buddhist social work, to systemize it, and to set the definition of it.

### **Core findings<sup>2</sup>**

As a result of our research activities, we can see, that Buddhist temples and monasteries are not only religious centers but also provide a huge number of social work activities. In some cases, not only Buddhist temples, but also Buddhists followers, Buddhist monks and nuns as individuals, and Buddhist NGO's, etc. are involved in those activities. We can see activities for children, the elderly, and the poor, which are typical for Buddhist social work and very similar to Western-rooted social work as developed in Europe and the US. But we can find also educational programs, hospitals for chronic-ill patients and HIV/AIDS patients, rehabilitation centers, agricultural support, donations, building roads and bridges, protecting forests, and many other activities provided by Buddhists. Temples serve as institutions for religious practice and at the same as places for social activities, medical care, and social work.

When compared to the Global Definition of Social Work Profession (2014) we can find that above-mentioned activities are different in

- 1) Target (Some activities are targeted on protecting forests, mangroves, etc., not only on humans. But in results they aim to improve the human environment or living conditions.),
- 2) Existence of Professional Social Workers and Professional Standards (There are almost no practitioners educated as social work professionals. Only a few activities follow professional standards as set in the western-rooted social work.)
- 3) Social Work Education
- 4) Core Concepts and Theories
- 5) Methods
- 6) Areas of Activities (There are many activities focused on medical care, construction, infrastructure, etc., showing that Buddhist social work operates in a broader context than western-rooted professional social work.)

Above mentioned differences show that the Buddhist social work (even if we can see many similarities) has been shaped in a different way than western-rooted professional social work. Similar points and differences may be the background for discussions on the Buddhist social work definition and its framework. At the present moment, research activities have been

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<sup>2</sup> This text is based on the report presented during the symposium held in Ulanbaataar, 2018 (Gohori, 2018).

finished and books published in Mongolia, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. I hope we will share reports from Sri Lanka and other countries and regions very soon. Those will help us to explore the Buddhist social work activities in more detail and to discuss the social work in a broader, international context.

### The ABC model

This model was introduced by Akimoto (2017), allowing us to distinguish between Western-rooted, indigenized-, and indigenous models of social work in Asia. When we focus on social- and community activities provided by Buddhist temples, monks, and nuns in various Asian regions, we can see that many of them following the Western-rooted model (A) as defined in the global definition. Using the same approaches, methods, and theories makes it a copy of its “Western” original. However, in some cases, these copies don’t work properly in the same way as their originals do in Western Europe or North America. That is the reason why many activities, approaches, and methods have been indigenized or modified to fit the target society and its cultural background. Those may be called as the model B. But there is also the model C, the original, indigenous model of social work reflecting characteristics of the society and its culture, using different methods and approaches while being underpinned by completely different values, beliefs, and principles. In my previous texts, I have clarified how different might be some core values and interpretations (Gohori, 2019). Moreover, this ABC model may be explained and verified by tracking the historical development and expansion of social work (Gohori, 2017).

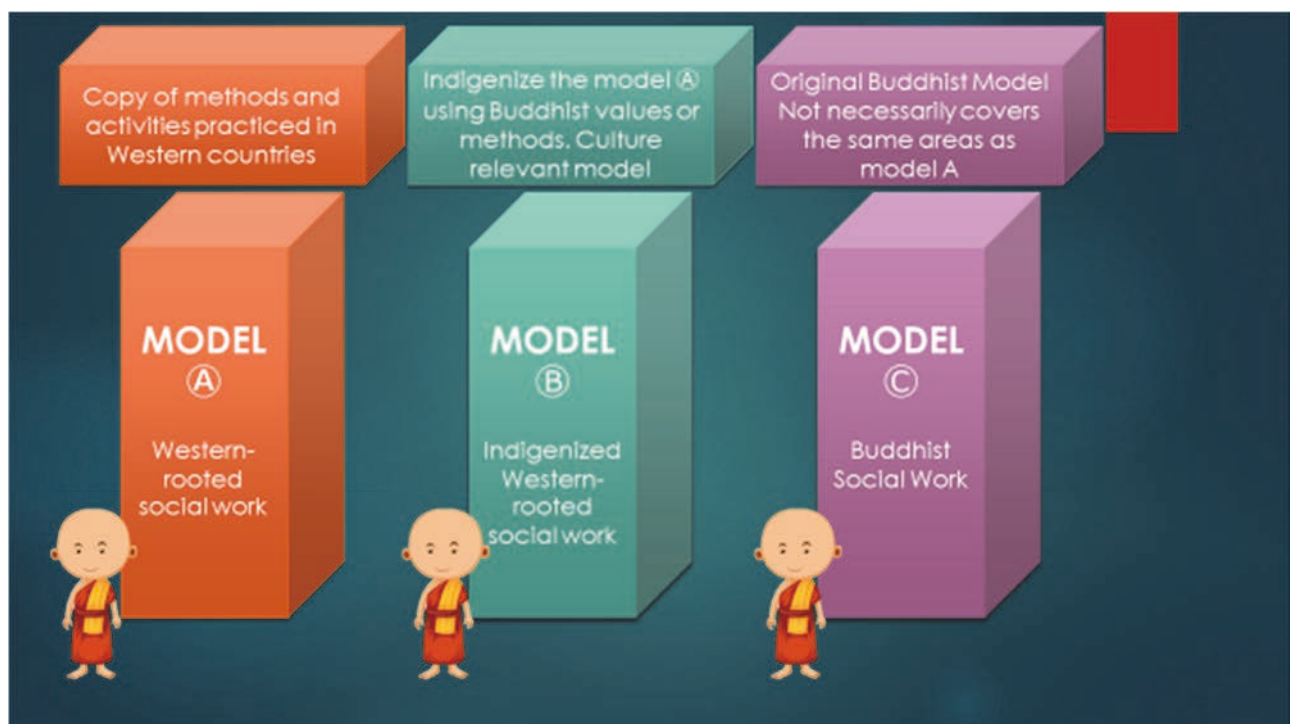


Fig. 1 The ABC model

## Beyond the Project on Buddhist Social Work: What is next?



In this text, I have already pointed out some differences and commonalities between Buddhist social work and Western-rooted practice. As written later in this report, a research project called Can/Can't is one of the

attempts to clarify and empirically prove some characteristics of Buddhist social work practice (cf. p. 51). In my previous articles, I have discussed the need to consider core concepts and values. We have to pay more attention to cultural aspects and recognize that the same term and definitions may be interpreted in various ways depending on the cultural background. This will inevitably lead us to the discussion on a paradigm underlying social work practice and theories. This step is necessary to establish the model C (Gohori, 2019).

Some authors refer to the working definition of Buddhist social work adopted during the Hanoi Expert Meeting in 2017. However, we have to refine both definitions. One another issue is the profession. We have already professional social workers, but we have to ask if we need professional Buddhist social workers. Do we need them? This may bring us in front of another question. What is social work? And who are people conducting social work? I hope that future activities of ARIISW, of our colleagues, and the Buddhist social work research network members, will address these questions and issues.

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**Asian Buddhist Countries:**  
**What Have We Done?**  
**What Have We Achieved?**

# Buddhist Social Work Practice with the Drug Users: Case Study from Phap Van Temple and Rehabilitation Center No2

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The philosophy of Buddhism has been applied in solving a practical problem: helping drug addicts to detox. While the western model shows some difficulties in providing effective support to drug abusers in Vietnam, the Buddhist approach can open a “new way” in helping this vulnerable group. Buddhist social work is also consistent with the trend of "authentication" of professional social work in the 21st century. Through our comparative survey conducted in a temple and a drug detox center in Hanoi, there is evidence to demonstrate that Buddhist social work practice with drug addicts more successful in terms of satisfaction level and in reducing the number of relapses. The research results also

point out that the differences in results come from differences in approaching philosophy, detoxification processes, and support as well as the supportive relationships between two models.

In Buddhist philosophy, human suffering is due to greed, hatred, and delusion is due to "craving". There are three forms of dukkha, from physical and mental pain; suffering from dissatisfaction with changes as well as the interaction between action and karma.

Therefore, according to Buddhism, eradicating suffering means eradicating “craving”, including greed, hatred, and delusion. The process of eradication of suffering must be based on the Eightfold Path. Because of such conception, Phap Van monks considered drug addiction as suffering due to "craving" for drugs. That suffering is suffering physically and mentally; unpredictable future situations and both



karma in the past and future. Therefore, when applying the Buddhist philosophy to help drug users, the temple focuses on strengthening personal strength to abandon the drug-induced "craving" by changing thoughts and enhance physical health. Besides, drug addicts are also encouraged to conduct many good deeds to solve their karma. That is the beginning of the differences and the success of this model compared to the state-run rehabilitation center model.

Keywords: *Buddhist social work, Drug users, authentication*



# A Journey with Asian Buddhist Countries: Buddhist Social Work in Thailand

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## Introduction

A journey with Asian Buddhist Countries was set out to survey Buddhist social work activities and reasons for monks, nuns, faithful followers and temples in Asian to engage in social work activities. Thailand first joined the Buddhist Social Work Project with Asian Research Institute for International Social Work, Shukutoku University in 2015 through the research entitled “Buddhist Social Work Activities in Thailand.” The research aimed to study and collect information on Buddhist temples, monks, nuns, and followers in Buddhist organizing Buddhist social work activities on what kind of activities they performed, and why they performed such social work activities.



## Methods

The research methodology was a qualitative study examining the social work activities carried out by the Buddhist monk leaders of five well-known temples in Thailand. The methodology comprised of survey questionnaires in Chiang Mai Province. Only the qualitative findings corresponding to the five temples are reported in this article.

## Results

The finding in the social work activities carried out in the five case studies is probably an emphasis on creating an environment where individuals and communities live in harmony and cultivate mutual support such as schools rendering services in both religion and general educational curricula for the communities, health care centers, places for learning and sharing information on traditional Thai herbs and medicine, palliative care for cancer and HIV/AIDS patients, shelters for the poor, orphans, and the elderly, meeting spots of members of the communities for dispute resolution, and venues for cultural and religious festivals.

The result from the creative initiation of abbots in their effort to alleviate or end the suffering of community members and societies. Another conclusion is that it is crucial both to relieve the discomfort of the body through secular means, such as physical and financial resources

and to enlighten sufferers about the uncertainty of life and ultimately to calm their souls through religious approaches. Moreover, the Buddhist teaching of The Sangahavatthu 4 and Brahmavihara 4 are the major reason that the 5 monks provide social work activities to people. Sangahavatthu is a dharma precept aimed at integrating family and community members into a bonded group so that they can be more helpful to one another.

Sangahavatthu 4 include: giving, sacrificing (Dana), kind and polite words (Piyavaca), mutual assistance (Atthacariya), displaying of consistent behavior deemed appropriate as per one's social status (Samanattata). The Brahmavihara 4 principles apply to the virtues of people in power as well as the kind-hearted people. The four Brahmavihara virtues include Loving-kindness (Metta), Compassion (Karuna), Appreciative joy (Mudita), Equanimity (Upekkha).

## Discussion

The five Buddhist monks reveal important Buddhist teaching that the pursuit of helping fellow human beings overcome suffering or life obstacles should be based on the principle of rationality. In Buddhism, it is believed that every event that occurs will be a precursor to another event. Therefore, a problem that arises accords with its cause, and the right solution is one in which the cause is dealt with. Once the cause is addressed, the problem and suffering resulting from such a problem will be ended - a law of nature. This Buddha teaching being applied in the present context, social work activities should comprise physical support in tandem with mental support that will not cause suffering to oneself or any parties involved to gather momentum and be sustainable. All this seems to reveal an independent social work model that is not influenced by western social work ideology focusing mainly on the needs, rights, and freedom of varied groups of people.

The researchers participating in the Buddhist Social Work in Asia Program learned that although each country has a dominant denomination of Buddhism, the core value is to teach people to realize the nature of life is suffering. Hence, to end suffering, people need to treat other people and beings nicely and equally, with the same standards. Buddhist monks and temples do not isolate themselves from society, or only practice Buddhism to reach Nirvana. Instead, Buddhist monks help people face their challenges and problems. They unite people and communities in society. Finally, in 2017, the researchers in the program gathered together, defining Buddhist social work as:

*"Buddhist Social Work is human activities to help other people solve or alleviate life difficulties and problems in life based on the Buddha-nature. Buddhist Social Work always finds causes to work on both the material or social arena, as well as in the humane, or inner arena, working on both arenas in tandem. Its fundamental principles include compassion, loving-kindness, and mutual help and interdependency, and self-reliance. The central value is the Five Precepts. The ultimate goal is to achieve the wellbeing of all sentient beings and peace."* (Akimoto, T., 2017)

## Conclusion

The definition of Buddhist social work is different from professional social work, as defined by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). Buddhist social work is not a profession. It does not focus on the social structures leading to injustice or discrimination—necessitating people to fight for their rights and equality. Buddhist social work encourages suffering people to: understand their problems are part of life; solve problems on their own; and be self-sustaining. Buddhist monks, nuns, and followers are key in using the ethical principles of Buddhism to help people and other beings live together in harmony, despite constant and dynamic changes in the world.

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# Exploring Buddhist Social Work in Mongolia<sup>3</sup>

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Buddhism is a traditional and dominant religion in Mongolia. Today Buddhists constitute 86.2 percent of the religious population, according to the latest population census. Nationwide there are around 140 Buddhist monasteries and temples. Besides, several Buddhist non-governmental organizations contribute to Buddhist practice and teaching. However, Buddhist social work is a new concept for Mongolian social workers since 2015. It has become popular as a result of the joint international research project which is coordinated by the Asian Research Institute for International Social Work, Shukutoku University, Japan. We have learned a lot by studying

Buddhist social work activities in Mongolia comparing to its situations in Asian countries. The study on Buddhist social work versus the western-rooted professional social work provided insights in terms of social work alternative services. In this presentation, the author discusses what Mongolian scholars in the field of social work and religious studies achieved in the process of identifying the characteristics of Buddhist social work in Mongolia. The author presents the core findings of the research on Buddhist social work in Mongolia. Also, the presentation includes a description of the project outcomes and provided an analysis of the role of the project in the process of building a research network in Mongolia. The Buddhist social work research network in Mongolia involves three institutions, namely, Mongolian National University of Education, National University of Mongolia, and Mongolian Academy of Sciences. The author points out the importance of the collaboration within the Asian Buddhist Social Work Research Network. Future steps involve review and analysis of the social work and religious studies' curricula, curriculum development of new courses, and other research initiatives. Evaluation of the international joint research project indicates the success of the project in terms of institutional as well as professional development for research counterparts.

Keywords: *Buddhist social work, social work, religion*

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<sup>3</sup> This text is a reprint of the presentation abstract.

# Core Findings and Summary of the Field Research in Japan

Yusuke Fujimori  
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*Introduction of core findings of the Buddhist social work research lead by ARIISW, evaluating the joint research project and the role of the research network.*



This paper reports on the theme No.2 of our research project which is focused on the development of the collaboration model of social work and Buddhism in Japan, within the Japanese community. The report is based on the survey on the relief or support work done by Japanese Buddhists and temples after the 3.11 earthquake and tsunami disaster (strong earthquake hit Japan in March 2011). Moreover, we have been focusing on the process of problem solving and improvement of temples activities and sharing information via a web platform. In other words, we have done similar work as our counterparts from abroad. We think that Buddhist monks and temples have been carrying out social-work-type activities after the 3.11 disaster.

We carried out three specific surveys. Number one is the work done by denomination groups and sects and second, was the work done by temples or temple organizations in the stricken areas. Also, in stricken areas, temples provided quite a bit of relief work to the affected people. Furthermore, local communities received such relief supports. They established support centers led by the council of social welfares. Therefore, we wanted to know what they did in detail.

First of all, the Social Welfare Councils' (Shakyo) survey at the time of 03/11/2011, there were several programs conducted by the community social welfare councils, and we asked the members of the councils (Shakyo) to look back at the first three months immediately after the disaster and tell us what they have done. This survey was conducted in the Tohoku region (Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima prefecture), badly affected regions. We picked 12 communities in Iwate and 15 communities in Miyagi and 5 in Fukushima.

One of the questions was about the kind of activities local people expected from temples and Buddhist monks. Of course, many answered they had wanted ceremonies and funeral services, however, we found out that they expected religious people to provide mental care or psychological care to those who had been stricken by the disaster. Furthermore, we asked what they expected of social welfare councils and religious institutions as far as their collaborations are concerned, many responded that they should cooperate more often, not only in disaster-related activities.

During our survey, many interesting comments have been shared. The following comment is from a monk in the disaster-affected community. “People in the community tend to find temples as places they don’t usually enter but after the 3.11 disaster, I felt that temples must belong to residents and monks must always be on their side. After the 3.11 disaster, I opened my temple as a sort of a saloon where local people can meet, gather, and build close relations with the temple. That helped everyone at the time of disasters. I want to also launch a food bank at my temple to assist residents in advanced age.” Concerning this comment, we can see that the Japanese still feel sort of a distance between social work and religious work. However, in various cases, we can see how Buddhist social work values are effective and how temples play a very important role in the community.

In Japan, after World War II, the public security system has been built and improved and the principle of the separation of religion and state was introduced. This was accepted by temples as well because the temples had reflected their problematic and negative role during the war. As the principle once accepted by people, the role of religion in social welfare service diminished and became invisible. However, more than 50 years after the war, social welfare needs are diversified and post-war welfare service for the poor is losing its validity. The reform of the system was necessary. Therefore, in 2000, the basic structural reform of social welfare system took place in Japan. Thus, the social welfare system in Japan has been changed but the reform has not been completed yet.

Society is changing very rapidly even today and reform needs to be carried on. However, there is a shortage of social workers and other people who serve, venues, and resources. But there are 75,000 temples in Japan, 370,000 monks and after the 3.11 disaster, temples in Japan collected ¥5.5 billion as donations. Thus, I believe temples can make a great contribution to society in Japan. Monks, of course, are engaged in different social work activities; however, they did not recognize it as social work.



# Contribution of Our Joint Work, Contribution of ARIISW

W.K. Anuradha Wickramasinghe  
Small Fishers Federation of Lanka



Anuradha Wickramasinghe during the presentation of the post stamp dedicated to Buddhist social work, released by Sri Lankan government in December 2019.



# **Shukutoku University: Building the Strategic Research Infrastructure**

*Project on Buddhist social work as a core factor for building the strategic  
research infrastructure at Shukutoku University*

# Building the Strategic Research Infrastructure

Koji Yamaguchi  
Shukutoku University

*Impact of the international joint research project on Buddhist social work on the Shukutoku University strategic research base (infrastructure) building. Review of the fulfilled tasks and future tasks and issues.*



First, the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Science and Technology provides this kind of grant for private universities to establish their strategic research infrastructure, based on the managing strategy of each university. The final goal is to contribute to the promotion of science and technology not only in Japan but also in Asia as well as in international society.

As already mentioned, the research product is focused on the potential of Buddhism in social work in Asia and there are two themes, both highlighted in previous texts reflecting the morning session. The first one focused on social work and Buddhism in Asia, and the second one on the domestic practice in Japan as reported by Professor

Fujimori. However, both research themes are combined to promote research activities at Shukutoku University.

In the last five years, research activities have been conducted based on the management strategy of the university and for the school cooperation, the Daijo Shukutoku Gakuen's ground design has the research activities as one of the priority policies. Moreover, the school aims to become an advanced university for international academic exchange in the areas of international social welfare and Buddhist welfare as highlighted in the ground design we have adopted as a mid-term plan (2019-2022), where objectives such as contributing to the social work in Asia, and to contributing the society are set to raise the core values of the university philosophy. At the same time, the university has a mid-term plan stating that we should strengthen cooperation and collaboration with overseas universities regarding social work.

Furthermore, based on this research project outputs, we need to reconsider the way how social work is being practiced and thought, because of the difference in history and cultural perspectives. Whether it's possible to pursue social work as a profession or not? This might be one of the items to discuss, as we can see how temples and Buddhists in Japan have been providing social work services in the tsunami and earthquake-affected areas, and how the

practice of social welfare has been provided at religious places, including temples and monasteries. The question is, how the research outcomes should be reflected and utilized in the future.

In the future, based on the systematization of Buddhist social work, we would like to provide new perspectives as well as develop the education programs. I think this is very close to the philosophy of our university, while Ryoshin Hasegawa, the founder of the Shukutoku University, emphasized practice in social welfare underpinned by Buddhist teaching. He was a monk and also a practitioner of social welfare and he founded Shukutoku University to educate the next generation.

Based on Mahayana Buddhism, the spirit of the university aims for human development through the promotion of social welfare and education and aims to develop a human resource that contributes to social development. This spirit, maybe I should say the philosophy, is underpinned by the concept of altruistic coexistence. People are living together with others and people help others. That's the mission of the school. And, that is the reason why is the research project on Buddhist social work so important for Shukutoku University. And, at the same time, the reason to move forward, continue our research activities with colleagues from various regions and deepen our discussion and understanding of Buddhism and social work in the Asian region.

Furthermore, the research activities and the education in graduate school and undergraduate school of Shukutoku University need to be linked with each other means that the research. However, these activities should not be confined only within Shukutoku University. During the forum, we had participants, professors and researchers from different universities in Japan and we need to cooperate with them to advance our research.

My last point is the need to think about the change. Everything changes today and there is nothing immune to change. People change, the way people think changes and society changes, too. Thus, we need to respond to these changes. And Shukutoku University should become the hub of Buddhist social work. Moreover, we should address some changes in society while exploring new directions in the education of social work in Japan. Social work education should not be focused only on national accreditation. Looking at other Asian countries, where people have been supporting each other in villages and monks have been supporting people, I think, that this way of community life should be incorporated into the Japanese social work education.





**Theories, Surveys, Education,  
and Practice:  
Brief Reports on Ongoing  
Projects and Expectation to  
Buddhist Social Work**



# Development of Buddhist Social Work Discipline in Sri Lanka from 2014 to 2019

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## Introduction

Since the 3rd Century B.C., Sri Lankan history records the Buddhist value system and its operational pattern. Those days Buddhist monks advised and guided kings to perform administration according to Dasarajadamma (ten principles to be as the guideline stated by the fully enlightened person).

Those principles are,

1. Granting Gifts (*dana* donation)
2. Be Virtuous (*seela*)
3. Generosity (*pariccagam*)
4. Honesty (*ajjavam*)
5. Kindness (*majjavam*)
6. Austerity (*tapam*)
7. Non- anger (*akkodo*)
8. Non –violence (*ahimsa*)
9. Patience (*kanthi*)
10. Conformity to the law (*aviroda*) (Rahula1970:123).

In addition to that, laymen of the country also followed meritorious activities, those are directly connected to the present-day Buddhist social work and those days they were introduced as *paramveda* (work for others) Those are,

1. Gifts (*dana*)
2. Virtuous acts (*seela*)
3. Meditation (*bavana*)
4. Respect (*apacity*)
5. Rendering a service (*veyyavacca*)
6. Transference of merit (*pattenuppadana*)
7. Devotedly rejoicing at merit (*abbanumodana*)
8. Advocating dhamma (*desana, Savana*)
9. Listening to dhamma (*ditthijjukamma*)
10. Rectitude views (Deerananda 2004:397).

As a result of following those guidelines the, rulers of the country and the citizens together built the community based peaceful society. The following picture and the table show the

evidence.



Picture 1: Mihintale Bhiksu hospital, 3rd century B.C  
(Uragoda 1994:44)

Table 1: Names of the Hospital established in the 3rd century B.C.

Pali name	Sinhalese Name	English Name
Sivi sala	Mathru nivasa	Maternity Hospital
Gilana sala	Gilan hal	General Hospitals
Veijja sala	Veda hal	Local Hospitals
Panguna	Wikalanga rohal	Peadiatrics Hospitals
Pasarantheenan	Presava nari vedaya	Gynocology Hospitals
Kanang Salake	Akshi rohal	Eye Hospitals
Upasagga roga vejjesala	Bowanaroga rohal	Community Diseases Hospitals
Bikku vejjesala	Bikshu rohal	Monks Hospitals

(Uragoda 1994: 38)

At the same tradition, we had started a new outlook in 2014 in Sri Lankan society introducing Buddhist Social Work with the collaboration of Shukutoku University, Japan. The main objective of this short essay is to provide a brief history of Sri Lankan Buddhist social work from the year 2014 up to 2019.

### **Training and Awareness Programs for Buddhist monks on Buddhist social work in Sri Lanka**

During the first part of the year 2014, before the establishment of the ISWEBM institution, there were several discussions conducted with Chief incumbents of the three chapters namely, the Siyam chapter, the Ramanna chapter, and the Amarapura chapters. In the second stage, we selected District level representatives from every chapter and appointed them as District level coordinators. After appointing coordinators, first, we conducted seminars introducing the new subject and the importance of the subject for the development of the Buddha Sasana.

Subsequently, all the 25 senior Buddhist monks who represented in District Level organizations, delivered the Buddhist Social work message comprehensively at the grass-root level. After this message was received, young Buddhist monks in the country eagerly disclosed their willingness to get admitted to the ISWEBM.



### **Extraction of Buddhist social work literature from the various sources**

With the introduction of the new subject discipline into the social science field in Sri Lanka, Buddhist monks, academics as well as professional social work practitioners educated in the Western countries tried to explore the new field and academic boundaries in Buddhist literature. Especially, they were searching for literature in the *Sutta Pitaka*, the *Vinaya Pitaka*, and the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. Meanwhile, some Buddhist scholars were confused about Buddhist Philosophy and Buddhism and their relationship to the new subject. And they were searching for exact Buddhist social work subject and referred thousands of Buddhist books.

### **Establishment of the Institute of Social Work Education for Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka (ISWEBM)**

After several discussions with the Ministry of Buddhasasana, we established the Institute of Social Work Education for Buddhist Monks, officially at the Buddha Sasana Ministry premises in Colombo, 22th April 2014 at No135, Darmapala Mawatha, Colombo7.

#### Policy guidance

All the Social work education system is based on Buddhist social development policies that practiced in 2500 years history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Secondly, it provides background knowledge systems on contemporary social work policies practice by modern social work institutions elsewhere in the world.

The diploma courses and degrees are purely for the Buddhist monks whose desire to be social work practitioners in the community.

After completion of the diploma or degree of Buddhist social work education, the monk must be work for four years with the assigned community by the Institute. If the monks do not complete this requirement, they do not eligible for “Buddhist Social Work Higher Education”.

#### Council of the ISWEBM

1. The most Venerable Niyangoda Vijithasiri Nayaka Thero, Deputy Chief incumbent of Siyam Chapter (Advisor)

2. Ven. G Pamarathana (Chairman)
3. Dr. Anurada Wikramasinghe (Council member)
4. Prof. Tatsuru Akimoto (Council member)
5. Prof. H.M.D.R. Herath (Director)
6. Mr. S.W. Pathirana (Council member)
7. Mr. M.K.B. Dissanayake, a representative from the Ministry (Council Member)
8. Mrs. Ganga Rohini Dissanayake (Registrar)

### Vision of the institution

To be the main Social work education institute for Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka by practicing theory and its penetration and deliverance of Buddhist social work and its value system for the betterment of the community.

### Mission

To provide awareness, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and commitment to Buddhist social work for young Buddhist monks who stay and work with the community in the Buddhist temples. To promote cultural and social values related to Buddhism that were practiced historically in Sri Lanka to alleviate the social suffering in society.

To build the personality of Buddhist monks as virtuous, disciplined and dedicated monks to work with the community for social change. The Buddhist monks to be the practitioners and the counselors to alleviate the social illnesses of the community.

### Strategy

- To offer interdisciplinary diploma and degree courses in Buddhist studies and contemporary social work studies by focusing on the practitioner's personality development and social development.
- Undertake learning by doing approach training within the community and engage in applied social research and to achieve the knowledge-base with practical applicability of the community by working with community organizations.
- Carry out assigned social problem focus research work and provide facilities on social work projects to work with the community.
- Work with the community on an assignment basis on specific social problems and geared toward social change.

### Buddhist Social Work Knowledge-Base

Different disciplines of Buddhist Social Work Education- theoretical presentation in eight (08) months. ISWEBM presents ten comprehensive social work courses in the Diploma Level

as follows.

DSWSU101	Introduction to Buddhist Social Work
DSWSU 102	Buddhist Social Philosophy, History, Value systems and diversity
DSWSU 103	Human behavior, Psychological and Sociological aspects of counseling
DSWSU 104	Contemporary society,
DSWSU 105	Social Policy, Social Development, and Social resources
DSWSU 106	Research Methods in Buddhist Social work
DSWSU 107	Project Management. Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation
DSWSU 108	International social work perspectives, and indigenous perspectives, and approaches
DSWSU 109	Social work practice with individuals, family, and groups
DSWSU 110	Language and computer literacy (ISWEBM)

### **Impact of Buddhist social work program to temple-based traditional Buddhist social work activities**

Since the 3rd century, B.C. Sri Lankan Buddhist temples maintained multi-functional roles to reduce the suffering of different communities in the country. The whole life of a Buddhist monk was devoted to service to others. Their learning and teaching were directed to protect others' lives. In Sri Lanka, at least there about 15000 temples and 30000 monks and 3000 nuns have traditionally defined, social work programs they were operating. After hearing these new programs, they started a new type of organization and new institutions in their temples. Further, they are ready to send their students to new social work institutions for training to acquire and organize knowledge and skills.

### **Buddhist Social work subject and its impact on the other universities in Sri Lanka**

Most of the Universities in Sri Lanka,(excluding technical universities) have offered courses in the traditional liberal arts category with British and American traditions. Under those degree programs, some universities offered Pali and Buddhist studies with their specializations. They taught courses Buddhist Social work under; community studies, Buddhist leadership, Socially Engaged Buddhism, Buddhist Counseling, Psychology, Buddhism and Social Development, Buddhism and Personality Development, etc. Even in the Government Institute of Social Work in Sri Lanka, there was a reluctance to introduce Buddhist Social work, as a subject in their institute. This institute was established under the colonial Government. There are two Buddhist Universities in the country, namely Pali and Buddhist University in Colombo and the Bikshu University in Anuradapura was also teaching Buddhist social work under different disciplines.

After several discussions with Professor Akimoto, following revolutionary changes happened in our University system.

1.The Pali and Buddhist University started a new curriculum including Buddhist social work



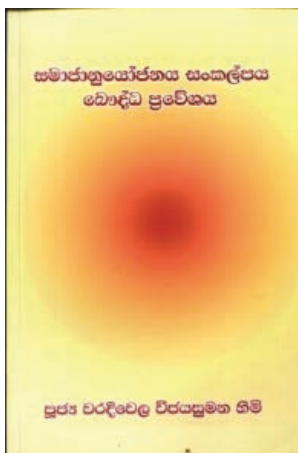
- 2.The Bikshu University of Sri Lanka, Anuradapura also included Buddhist social work subject into their curriculum.
- 3.The University of Peradeniya, Department of Sociology started a research wing to support Buddhist social work.
- 4.The University of Kelaniya is planning to conduct a conference on Buddhist social work in March 2020 to promote the discipline.

In 2018, when our ARIISW – ISWEBM Collaborative Buddhist social work conference in Sri Lanka, there were very fruitful Buddhist social work research papers presented by Sri Lankan Buddhist scholars. This is a good sign of the development of the new subject.



Picture 2: Bikshu University of Sri Lanka

### **Prominent Scholars published new books and research articles under Buddhist social work discipline**



In the last five year time period most of the Buddhist scholars published excellent research articles after presenting papers in international conferences. Very recently Ven. Professor W. Wijesumana Thero published a book that was based on Suttapitaka and child personality development. Those are indicators of future development of the Buddhist social work in Sri Lanka.

Picture3: New book on Buddhist social work

### **Commemoration of five years of Buddhist social work and the government issuing a stamp with the highest recognition**

For the first time in Sri Lankan history, the government issued a stamp to recognize the Japan-Sri Lanka relationship and the importance of Buddhist social work, on 8th December 2019. Before the modern democratic system, the temple was the live wire of the country. The whole social binding force developed in the temples. Even today, Mahasngha (Buddhist monks) play a multi-functional role in the development of Sri Lankan society. That was recognized by the government at least after 2600 years.



### **Buddhist monks higher studies in Japan**

As a result of the collaborative Buddhist social work between Shukutoku University, Japan and Sri Lanka, one Buddhist monk started higher studies on Suttapitaka and Buddhist social work that would help us to share his knowledge in the future. Further, in the future, there will be more and more collaborative work and knowledge exchange programs can be implemented with other countries in Buddhist Asia.

### **Expectations towards Buddhist social work**

With the regime changes in Sri Lanka in 2019, we hope to reprogram the ISWEBM institute in 2020. Then this will be the first Buddhist social work institute in the world with the government affiliation. Within the next five years' time, we hope to introduce Buddhist social work subject for degree programs in the ISWEBM and the rest of the universities in Sri Lanka.

### **Buddhist Social work Publications**

Prof. Akimoto, the ARIISW and the rest of the Buddhist countries, in the Buddhist Social work network have identified the scarcity of Buddhist Social work literature among those countries including Sri Lanka. We hope to collect, Buddhist Social Work-related articles, conferences, papers, and relevant materials, and republish them in the future.

*“Monk’s vocation is not selfish and luxuriates in their life. They should travel for the welfare and happiness of many people. No two monks go the same way. Mediate with people for the social reality for the alleviation of their suffering” (Armstrong 2002:109.).*

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# Buddhist Social Work Curriculum Improvement at Buddhist Universities in Thailand

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*Presently in Thailand, there are six (6) public and private universities offering courses in social welfare. The first four namely Thammasart, Huachiew Chalermprakiet, Prince of Songkla Pattani campus and Pibulsongkram Rajabhat universities offer courses for the general public while the other two namely Mahamakut and Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya universities, known as Buddhist university, for both monks and the general public, have integrated Buddhist teaching into their social welfare curriculum. Even with the emphasis on Buddhism as the course should have been, the curriculum and course structure still focus on course description based largely on western ideologies. Each university offers not less than 30 credits (10 courses) on general subject, not less than 30 credits (10 courses) on Buddhism, not less than 68 credits (44 courses) on social work yet only 18 credits (6 courses) on Buddhist social work and social development of which*

*are 12 credits (4 courses) by Mahamakut Buddhist university and 6 credits (2 courses) by Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. In that respect, this article aims to study the direction to improve the curriculum specifically on Buddhist social work through the study of relevant documentation from both Buddhist universities with expected outcomes of a more precise and appropriate direction for the improvement of the social work curriculum of the Buddhist universities in Thailand.*

Keywords: *Buddhist University, Improvement of Social Work Curriculum*

## Introduction

To talk about the origin of social work, it would be difficult to say exactly when it started. It could start before the Buddhist era, during the Buddhist era, or maybe since the beginning of mankind when everybody helped each other, which we do not have evidence to support it. But if we consider the word "social work" in Thai language, which has its roots from the Pali language, it is to believe that a social work emerged with the religion in a way that the religion acted as an institution for providing humans with welfare, so letting them help each other and coexist peacefully.

In Thailand, two Buddhist universities are open to monks and the general public to study. Both universities are under the supervision of the Sangha Supreme Council and the Ministry of Education. The reason why both universities were established was that many of the Sangha Supreme monks found that public education had been improved and changed to keep up with modern technology while the education of the clergy had not been changed to be in line with the changing society. At that time, the study of the Buddhist scriptures, especially in Pali and Dhamma sections, gained less popularity in Thai society as well as got little support from the government. Therefore, they saw it appropriate to improve the education of the clergy, in which monks and novices get to study the Buddhist scriptures along with ordinary worldly subjects, and so will have the knowledge, ability, and better understanding of the present society as well as modern sciences.

### **Social Work Studies at Buddhist Universities**

The Social Work Program is another modern science that is offered in both Buddhist universities. It integrates Buddhist principles into the curriculum, aiming to make the graduates to have professional knowledge in social work integrated with Buddhism as well as having volunteering mind and feeling responsible for helping fellow humans and society. The curriculum consists of basic education courses, Buddhism courses, social work core courses, and elective courses. The content of the program mainly focuses on western social work. The Buddhism courses include the study of Pali literature, Pali grammar, Pali translation, Tripitaka studies, *Vinaya Pitaka*, *Sutta Pitaka*, *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, and History of Buddhism, all of which is the foundation of religious knowledge that learners may not yet be able to see how to apply to Buddhist social work. There are only one or two courses concerning the practical application of Dhamma teachings.

The management of a curriculum structure in the social work of two Buddhist universities is in line with higher educations and the identity of each university. The details are as follows:

1. Bachelor of Social Work- B.S.W, Mahamakut Buddhist University: the philosophy and objectives as follows:

Social Work Study is a study for creating social justice, social development; accepting diversity in various dimensions; creating a happy and non-discriminated society; respecting and valuing dignity of humanity, human rights, and the right to access social welfare of all sectors; serving the society and creating awareness of responsibility by properly integrating Buddhism with Social Work and multidisciplinary professions.

Objectives

1. To produce undergraduates who uphold value of morality, ethics, public-mindedness, and code of conduct, and to guide society towards the right path.
2. To produce undergraduates who have professional knowledge and attitude as well as social work methods and skills and who can apply and develop social work tools for application at micro and macro levels.
3. To produce undergraduates who are capable of integrating social work knowledge and

skills as well as dharma principles of Buddhism into social works.

The 151 credits of the curriculum structure are as follows:

- 1) General study courses, the courses that promote complete humanity, broad knowledge, understanding and appreciation of others. Total credits are no less than 30 credits.
- 2) Required courses for social work degree 115 credits. The details are as follows:
  - 2.1 Buddhism courses. These courses demonstrate the identity of the university. They are History of Buddhism, *Tipitaka* Studies, Buddhism and Thai Ways of Life, Pali for Buddhist Research, Mahayana Buddhism. The credits are no less than 30 credits.
  - 2.2 Required courses for social work major are Introduction to Social Work, Ethics of Professional Social Work, Social Problems and Social Measures, Social Work Research, Social Case Work, Social Group Work, Community Work, Social Welfare Policy and Administration. The credits are no less than 63 credits.
  - 2.3 Fieldwork practicum, no less than 22 credits.
- 3) Free Elective courses are courses that students choose from courses offered by the university. The credits are no less than 6 credits.

## 2. Bachelor of Social Work- B.S.W, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

The curriculum structure includes 140 credits. The details are as follows:

- 1) General study courses, the courses that promote complete humanity, broad knowledge, understanding and appreciation of others. Total credits are no less than 30 credits.
- 2) Required courses 104 credits. The details are as follows:
  - 2.1 Buddhism courses. These courses demonstrate the identity of the university. They are Pali Literature, Pali Grammar, Pali Composition and Translation, *Tipitaka* Studies, Vinaya Pitaka, Suttanta Pitaka, Abhidhamma Pitaka, History of Buddhism. The credits are no less than 30 credits.
  - 2.2 Required courses for Social Work are Social Work Philosophy and Concepts, Principles and Methods of Social Case Work, Social Work Research Methodology, Principles and Methods of Social Group Work, Field Visit and Seminar, Principles and Methods of Community Work, Social Work and Social Welfare Administration, Field Work Practice in Case Work, Field Work Practice in Community Work. The credits are no less than 33 credits.
  - 2.3 Specific Courses are Technique for Working with Clients, Professional Ethics and Human dignity, Social Work Counseling, Human Rights Strengthening in Social Work, and Social Work and Criminal Justice. The credits are no less than 32 credits.
  - 2.4 Major Elective Courses are Buddhism and Social Work, Buddhism and Social Development, and ASEAN Community and Social Welfare. The credits are no less than 9 credits.
- 3) Free Elective Courses are courses that students choose from courses offered by the university. The credits are no less than 6 credits.

## **Improvement of Social Work Studies Program**

Any bachelor's degree programs must be reevaluated every five years according to the announcement of the Ministry of Education. It specifies in detail the program's teacher qualifications, program structure, and the quality assurance of the program to guarantee quality graduates. The program must meet the standard of learning results as stipulated by the Higher



Education Commission and must cover at least five areas which are (1) morality and ethics (2) knowledge (3) intellectual skills (4) interpersonal skills and responsibilities (5) skills in numerical analysis, and communication and information technology use.

## **Social Work Professions Organizations**

The curriculum improvement not only must meet the criteria of the Ministry of Education, but also those of the professional organizations related to social work studies programs, which are the following.

1. Thai Association of Social Work and Social Welfare Education (TASWE), a cooperation among the universities that offer social work programs in Thailand, has drafted the standard of bachelor's degree in social work studies to be a guideline for curriculum development and improvement. The curriculum structure must meet the 4-year undergraduate degree program standards of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, that is, the students must have at least 120 credits in total.

2. Social Work Professions Council, founded under the Social Work Professions Act 2013, is in charge of setting standards and ethics, promoting and developing the social work profession. For the benefit of applying for membership, it sets the service standards of social work professionals and certifies the degrees from various institutions. It gives opinions and recommendations regarding the curriculum of the social work vocational program in higher education institutions. The Council of Social Work Professions certifies the programs that meet the specified criteria ensuring the professional standards of the Social Work Professions Council with the following: the undergraduate and the graduate of social work curriculum evaluation forms.

## **Curriculum Analysis Results**

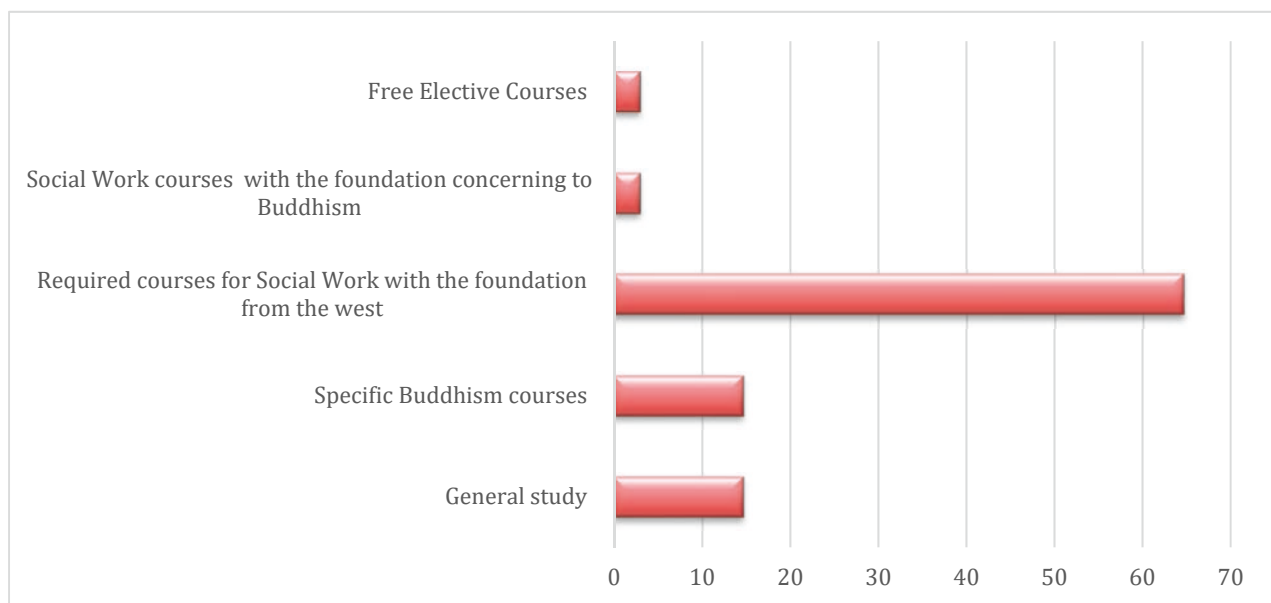
The analysis results of the bachelor degree in social work studies program of both Buddhist universities show that the curriculum structure that the number of courses and credits of the Social Work Program of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, it is found that there are 68 courses and the total credits are no less than 140 credits. They are 1) 10 courses for General study (30 credits) or 14.7 percent. All courses must be studied together. 2) 10 courses



for Specific Buddhism courses (30 credits) or 14.7 percent. All courses must be studied together. 3) 44 courses for Required courses for Social Work with the foundation from the west (68 credits) or 64.7 percent and 2 Social Work courses (6 credits) or 2.95 percent with the foundation concerning Buddhism. 4) 2 Free Elective Courses (6 credits) or 2.95 percent.

The number of courses and credits of the Social Work Program of Mahamakutbuddhist University, it is found that there are 61 courses and the total credits are no less than 151 credits. They are 1) 10 courses for General study (30credits) or 16.39 percent. All courses must be studied together. 2) 10 courses for Specific Buddhism courses (30 credits) or 16.39 percent. All courses must be studied together. 3) 35 courses for Required courses for Social Work with the foundation from the west (73 credits) or 57.40 percent and 4 Social Work courses (12 credits) or 6.55 percent with the foundation concerning Buddhism. 4) 2 Free Elective Courses (6 credits) or 3.27 percent.

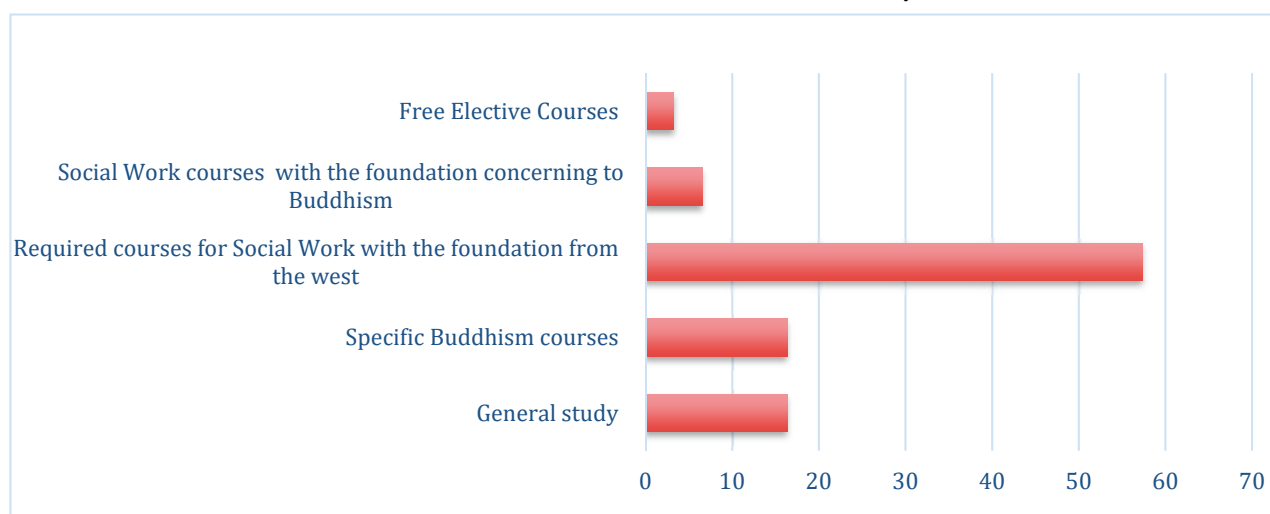
Table 1.1: Courses and credits of the Social Work Program of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University



Source: Curriculum in Bachelor of Social Work of mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University



Table 1.2: Courses and credits of the Social Work Program of Mahamakutbuddhist University



Source: Curriculum in Bachelor of Social Work of Mahamakut Buddhist University

The analysis results of the bachelor degree in social work studies program of both Buddhist universities show that the curriculum structure that wants to create a unique Buddhist program requires 30 credits in basic Buddhism courses, 30 credits in general education courses, 74 to 85 credits in western social work core courses, and 6 credits in elective courses. In total, the programs at these universities require 151 and 140 credits, which are higher than what is specified by the Thai Association of Social Work and Social Welfare Education, which is 120 credits.

Regarding the curriculum development to be more Buddhist-oriented than western social work, it is found that the Social Work Professions Act 2013 has provided a leeway to create specialties within the social work program, but no institution has offered any specialties. Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University offers built-in specialized courses in their curriculum structure. Although Mahamakut Buddhist University does not offer any specialized courses, many Buddhist courses in the curriculum can be applied to social work. Those courses are, for example, Buddhism and Social Work, Buddhism and Social Development, Buddhism and Social Work for Chronic and Hospice Care, Buddhism and the Elderly. It also offers practicum courses, for example, the practical training where the Sangahavatthu 4 is introduced only in the cases that have already been supported by research reports, or practical training in the community where the monk's working ethics are studied with the Aparihaniyadhamma 7 principles, or the seven conditions of welfare.

## Conclusion

The current social work studies curriculum of both Buddhist universities can potentially be developed to be more Buddhist-oriented by introducing Buddhism principles and concepts into the courses to replace the western ones. To be even more unique, it could introduce the Dhamma principles and the process of leading the way to subdue sufferings with *Ariyasacca* 4

(the Four Noble Truths).

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# The Demand and Solutions to Development of Buddhist Social Work in Vietnam

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*Humanistic Buddhism is currently a global trend and Buddhist social work is one of the applications of Buddhism in supporting people to tackle their problems in achieving happiness. The article discusses what is Buddhist social work and the role of Buddhist social work. Since then, from the specific challenges and opportunities, solutions to develop Buddhist social work in Vietnam are proposed.*

**Keywords:** *Buddhist social work, Vietnam, Solutions, Development*

## **What is Buddhist Social Work?**

Humanistic Buddhism is currently a global trend. Dharma practice is not just going to the temple, reciting Buddhist scriptures, but it also the way the monks and nuns live with their family, with their sangha, with their followers as well as

with the people in their country or the world. It can be seen that the development of paradox has happened when economic development is accompanied by inequality, poverty, armed conflict, social issues, environmental problems... These issues caused people to failed in achieving happiness which is their desire. Therefore, all of Buddhism and its philosophy should come into life, from the grocery store to the schools, hospitals as well as prisons and so on... To leading and supporting people, communities and the whole nation is looking for an inclusive development approach. Buddhist economics, Buddhist culture, and Buddhist social work are the paths and the inevitable combination. This combination creates “the gate of Upaya/gate to the Truth” for Buddhism to participate in all aspects of social life and is also an appropriate approach to the indigenous cultural characteristics of each nation's economic activities, culture, and social work.

Buddhist social work is not a new topic because Buddhism has engaged in social work activities in the process of developing and practicing its philosophies. In Buddhism, there are not terms such as "social work", "social security" or "social welfare" but the spirit of those terms is expressed in the writings of Buddhism (Luong Gia Tinh 2012, p.419). Thinking, words and deeds are the means to help people to enlighten and liberate themselves following the Buddhist philosophy. The final goal of Buddhism is to enter the real world, save suffering, rescue the vulnerable. However, the definition of Buddhist social work is controversial

depending on different angles. Is it the involvement of Buddhism in Western social work or a parallel combination or does it exist as an independent branch of social work in Asian countries where Buddhism plays crucial roles? They are questions that we have to answer so that we can understand “Buddhist social work” comprehensively.

There are three main approaches to the definition of Buddhist Social work. The first approach derives from the Western social work, which emphasizes the difficulty of social service delivery system. Since then, with the positive activities of temples, monks, and nuns, the authors propose the connection between Buddhism and Social work (Nguyen Ngoc Huong 2012; Hoang Thu Huong et al 2018). This approach emphasizes the auxiliary role of the Buddhism generally and temples specifically in supporting the state’s social service system, so it can be considered as taking advantage of Buddhism as resources in providing services for people. From there, the authors propose solutions to professionalize Buddhist activities in the social work system.

The second approach affirms that Social work and Buddhism share similar values and goals. Therefore, connecting Buddhism and social work can create an independent part of social services provision. This combination can help the vulnerable group have more resources to approach in tackling their problems. This approach emphasizes the relative independence of Buddhism in the combination but still focuses on helping individuals, groups and communities is the responsibility of social work and Buddhism can participate in this process.

The third approach is Buddhist social work rooted in the social activities of Buddhism, not relating to Western social work. This approach is the most appropriate when tracing the roots of the Western social work and its development process as well as the actual role of Buddhism in helping, supporting people and communities in Vietnam and other countries in Asia historically. It can be seen that Western social work has religious roots when churches organized supportive activities and the professionalization process of these activities was the origin of social work as a profession. Due to the division and conflict between state and religious institutions, social work was separated from its origin. Social work even becomes a public service in western society when personnel and quality assurance systems are managed, paid and evaluated by the government (Gohori, J., 2019). Moreover, in the US where social work is professional, religious institutions still carry out rehabilitation, crime education, and parenting skills education (Conan & Boddie 2002, cited by Nguyen Ngoc Huong, 2012).

Regarding the role of Buddhism, in Vietnam’s history, Buddhism involved in many areas such as the orientation of life values, teaching parenting skills, emergency assistance, and intervention for the mentally ill throughout roles of village’s temples...It can be seen that in Vietnam, the village is the most important administrative unit throughout history for its functions: economic management, tax collection, and public services provision. Paul Doumer, the highest leader of French authority when France invaded Vietnam once remarked that

Vietnamese villages "are a small republic, a tribute to the system ..." (Pham Duy Nghia 2018). Hence, the village and its institutions implemented the state's functions including social support for villagers. In a village, public land was rented to help the vulnerable: widow lands, orphan lands... Besides, every village has a temple where "its gate is always opened for all" to help villagers. Specifically, the monks and nuns



apply Buddhist philosophy to supporting people in tackling their problems. Therefore, Buddhist social work had already existed and played an important role in supporting people in Vietnam. Currently, approximately 15.000 temples in Vietnam which are providing: (1) Charity work; (2) Shelters for orphans, the elderly, the disabled...; (3) Psychological services, even suicide prevention; (4) Emergency supports; (5) Education for parents and the youth and so on. To conclude, it is clear that Buddhism appears in every important event of an individual's life: when he/she was born to the time he/she passes away and Buddhist social work had already existed and played an important role in supporting people in Vietnam before Western Social work appeared.

## **2. What are the challenges and opportunities in the developing of the Buddhist social work in Vietnam**

Certain difficulties have to be overcome in the development of Buddhist social work in Vietnam and Asian countries. First of all, western social work is a mainstream approach in Vietnam. The social security system and the social work profession are built by learning from the United States of America's and Australia's models. Secondly, Vietnam is not a religious state. That can prevent Buddhist social work to become an independent part of the social work provision system. Last but not least, Buddhist social work is only a part of Buddhism. This could lead Buddhist institutions and temples to not concentrate their entire resources to develop Buddhist social work.

Opportunities always come with challenges. In Vietnam's and global context, there are plentiful resources to develop Buddhist social work as an independent discipline. Firstly, Buddhism's tradition in helping disadvantaged groups is respected by communities. Regarding charity activities, Thich Phuong Chi (2012) points out the involvement of Buddhism in addressing the negative consequences of various social problems. According to the summary report of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in the term of 2012-2017, temples, monks and nuns participating in humanitarian blood donation, environmental protection, natural disaster prevention and response, HIV/AIDS prevention, vocational training, job services (Vietnam Buddhist Sangha 2017, p.33). Furthermore, there are professional supportive models built and run by monks and nuns. They have become effective models to help people with special need



such as orphans, HIV/AIDS, mental health patients and drug abusers. Pagodas such as Phap Van, Phap Bao, Ky Quang 2, Dieu Giac ... have become reliable addresses in supporting people with HIV/AIDS and the addicted (Nguyen Hoi Loan et al, 2014). Besides, the trend of humanistic Buddhism and the limitation of Western social work in Vietnam made the actual need to develop Buddhist social work as an indigenous social work to meet the need of the whole society.

### **Solutions to develop Buddhist social work as an independent social work in Vietnam**

Develop the Buddhist social work is an urging demand from actual social issues. To achieve the tasks, numerous solutions have to be implemented step by step. First, establish a comprehensive foundation of Buddhist social work: definition, applied theories, helping process...and delivering it to scholars, social workers, policymakers...Second, design a professional model of Buddhist social work to share useful examples in reality: for HIV/AIDS patients, drug users, health care system...Third, design and train an intensive course on Buddhist social work: Curriculum, textbooks, trainer preparation and the last is policy advocacy to lay Buddhist Social work services in national social work services provision.

### **Conclusion**

“When you are bitten by a snake, look at your surroundings for medication”. This Vietnamese proverb means that Buddhist social work is the answer to tackle social issues in Asian context. Develop Buddhist social work in Vietnam can be difficult. However, the development of Buddhist social work could bring advantages for more people especially people in special need.

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# Comparative Study on Features and Essences of Activities at Different Centers for Seniors and Children

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*The current study aims to examine features and essences of ‘social work’ activities at the Buddhist Centre, Asral NGO compared to the activities of typical daycare and welfare centers for children and seniors in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. A group of scholars, NGO leaders, and monks have come to argue that the Buddhist religion is distinctive in its emphasis on conveying indigenous cultural knowledge to social work in Asia (2; 3). In the latest Global Definition of Social Work, indigenous cultural knowledge has been acknowledged as a type of knowledge asset of particular importance for social workers (7). This leads to a growing need to study indigenous*

*knowledge including Buddhist philosophy and put it into practice to elaborate social work practice that is more culturally relevant in Mongolia.*

*Using exploratory qualitative research method, the research team members that consisted of lecturers of the National University of Mongolia and manager of Asral NGO collected qualitative data from participants and followers of the selected centers. The findings of the study were analyzed with the help of two different perspectives: Western social work and Buddhist social work. The findings revealed that the activities of the selected centers vary in terms of consistency, accessibility, and motivation of participants/followers and service providers of the centers. Additionally, they suggested demand for further detailed studies to be carried out by joint teams that include scholars of social work and religious studies, monks and practitioners in the relevant field to determine the impact of cultural and religious activities on children and seniors.*

## **Literature review**

In Mongolia, social work is a relatively new field with slightly over 20 years of experience as a profession. Mongolian social workers, with support of international scholars, have made attempts to apply Western rooted traditional and modern social work theories and practice into the national standard and curriculums of social work education and practice (1; 9; 10). This process of integrating Western practice into the Mongolian context is viewed as westernizing, colonizing or globalizing and blamed for disseminating western values, theories and concepts of social work across diverse contexts (2; 6). Since social work is a value-driven profession, social work principles play an important role in the social work domain.

According to the Global Definition of Social Work, concepts such as social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are key principles of social work (7). However, non-western social work scholars view the latest Global Definition of Social Work as an ethnocentric term exclusively Western in nature and as so is bound to introduce various models of social work neglecting contextual nuances of non-western social work perspective (2; 3; 6). One of their proponents is Buddhist Social Work (2; 3). Historians point out that Shamanism and Buddhism played an essential part in the social and cultural lives of Mongols for several hundred years. Buddhism fosters genuine worship putting more emphasis on selflessness and altruism and doing good deeds for the wellbeing of all sentient creatures in the world (3; 6; 13). It should be noted that both Shamanism and Buddhism have been exerting great influence on forming social and cultural consciousness of the Mongolian nation (13). As historical recordings indicated, Buddhist temples had played and still play an important role in the provision of survival as well as moral and emotional support for vulnerable stratum in times of need in Mongolian society (11; 12; 13; 14; 15). Anyway, some scholars argue that Buddhism encompasses a variety of traditions, beliefs and spiritual insights including indigenous cultural knowledge and practice (2; 3; 6).

Some scholars describe culture as an integral part of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, and customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups (8) whereas other scholars argue that “culture is best seen as a source rather than a result of human thoughts and behaviors” (5). Culture is central to social work (6) therefore it tends to draw greater attention to social work practice. As Webb states, the key issue for social work in the twenty-first century is finding culturally relevant ways of knowing and helping (6). Since people’s beliefs - religion and spirituality - are important parts of culture, social workers are expected to understand the underlying philosophy and principles of the people’s belief system that influences their everyday lives.

## **Methodology**

An exploratory qualitative study was carried out in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia aiming to understand features and essences of social work activities at the Buddhist Asral NGO compared to the activities of a typical after-school center or daycare centers for children and

seniors. Primary qualitative data were collected via individual interviews (N=20) and secondary data were collected through literature, project document and social media post reviews to answer the following key questions “What are the features and essences of the activities at the selected centers?” and “What are the beliefs and driving forces that push children or their parents and seniors to take part in the activities at the selected centers?” There were 21 participants including ten children with ages between 7 and 13 and nine senior adults ages between 45 and 69. The average age for children was nine and 58 for adults. The participants were beneficiaries of three different centers of the same district of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The first center was a District Senior Citizen Center established in 2018 by a district governor. The second was a Private Day Care Center for children established in 2015 by owner, and the third was a Buddhist Center for Children and Seniors established in 2001 by Panchen Otrul Rinpoche with support of His Holiness of Dalai Lama (4).

## **Findings**

### **Features and essences of the activities at the centers**

Depending on the goals, the three Centers' focused on different activities. The purpose of the Asral NGO Buddhist Center was introducing prevention strategies to keep disadvantaged children away from street life and promoting a greater family cohesion (4) whereas Private Day Care Center emphasized developing children's social and cognitive skills and focused on supporting their learning process. The common areas of both Centers include childcare before and after school, giving an opportunity to do homework and review class materials and practice, relax and play, organize various child development courses and providing regular hot meals. Moreover, chess and drawing classes were given at the Private Day Care Center while Little Buddha class was held weekly at the Buddhist Center.

Another difference is recruitment of teachers, fees and welfare services that the centers provide. The Private Day Care Center hires young teachers with limited work experiences shortly after graduation. In contrast, the Buddhist Center prefers more mature candidates with years of teaching practice and with experience in Buddhist philosophical debates. Also the children enrolled in the Private Day Care Center have to pay a fee and are not provided welfare service whereas the Buddhist Center provides various types of free of charge welfare services based on official permission from the Governor's Office, social worker and Buddhist Center's social worker. It was obvious to the researchers that differences in recruiting teaching staff and relevant payment methods at two centers actually affect teacher-children relationships and learning environment. For instance, the teacher-child relationship at the Private Day Care Center was characterized as more formal inherent for school teacher-student environment while the relationship at the Buddhist Center was described as more casual and similar to a grandparents-child relationship.

Thus, the activities at the three centers selected for the study differed according to the purpose and services provided. Although participants in the three centers were hired on a volunteer basis, their activities differed depending on whether the center services were paid or not. As to characteristics in common for two Centers' activities for seniors is that the elderly

volunteered to participate and they are entitled to exemption from payment of any charges. Another difference was that the Senior Citizen Center funded by District Governor's Office provides health, nursing, fitness services, training and counseling for the elderly whereas the Buddhist Center provides an opportunity to attend classes on Buddhism and rejoicing the wisdom of Buddha's teachings on important religious days.

### **Beliefs and driving forces of the involvement**

It should be noted that the participants' beliefs and motivation in the activities of centers under study related to the purpose of the centers as well as the participants' age, needs, interests and family support, namely parental support for children and family support for the elderly. The children enrolled at the Private Day Care Center are mostly from middle-class families and their parents pay a fee for their enrolment at the center to provide them a better education. Nonetheless, the children become fond of going to a daycare center to avoid being alone at home, making new friends, and improving their academic performance. Likewise, the children who attend the Buddhist Center are motivated with an opportunity to make friends, review class materials, have hot meals and attend Little Buddha classes even though they pay no charge thanks to available funds raised by Buddhist followers and students of Panchen Otrul Rinpoche. Besides attending classes the children at the Buddhist Center named doing charity, committing no wrongdoing and respecting parents and teachers as virtues to be cherished.

Along with the purpose and scope of the center's activities, the elderly people indicated their values as prerequisites of their motivation to participate in centers' activities. The District Senior Citizen Center members expressed their commitment to the membership as an opportunity to do fitness, go dancing, do a recreational activity, exercise to improve their health and socialize. Meanwhile, the elders at the Buddhist Center expressed their commitment to increase their comprehension of Buddhism, practice charity, socialize and share their knowledge about Buddhism with their family members and children. Also, the findings demonstrated that the interests and beliefs of the seniors at the two centers differ. For the seniors at the District Senior Citizen Center, health and well-being are of higher significance whereas elderly people at the Buddhist Center indicated high importance of the well-being of their family, children, and the environment in addition to personal peace of mind.

### **Conclusion**

Historically, Mongolians have practiced Shamanism and Buddhism for centuries as a pillar of everyday life values and a solution to their daily problems. The findings of this study show that there is a discrepancy from the traditional approach in the beliefs and values of children and elderly people in Mongolia. Also, the study identified similarities and differences in the purpose and outcome of the three centers' activities. In particular, the interests and beliefs of children at the Private Day Care Center and the elderly at the District Senior Citizen Center



are either success-oriented or focused on promoting own health and physical well-being whereas the children and the elderly at the Buddhist Center are more motivated to satisfy the needs of spiritual well-being and worshipping rather than success and self-achievement. Additionally, this study demonstrates that in Mongolian society may exist groups with different religious, belief and lifestyle preferences and accordingly different centers aimed to meet the emergent needs of the society are operating in Mongolia. Finally, the findings indicated an urgency for social workers, religious scholars, practitioners, and monks that there is a need for a comprehensive examination that people of different ages seek different approaches to handle their problems and make choices that match their lifestyles and beliefs.

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**ARIISW Project:**  
**"What Buddhist Social Work  
Can Do, While Western-  
rooted Professional Social  
Work Can Not"**  
**(Empirical Proof)**

# What Buddhist Social Work Can Do While Western-rooted Professional Social Work Can Not

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Buddhist temples/pagodas/monasteries and monks/nuns and Western-rooted professional social work agencies and workers have been engaged in similar and same works/activities. Both have been serving for various physical and mental and social and economic sufferings of people—the poor, children, the elderly, the diseased, people with disabilities, disaster and war victims, and many others. We temporarily name those activities by Buddhist temples and monks & nuns “Buddhist social work” in this research albeit they do not necessarily use the term of social work.

We would like to find out the difference between the two social works beyond the difference of players. We would like to find the “essence and features” of “Buddhist social work”.

We have asked coresearchers from Vietnam and Sri Lanka to

- (1) find out an effective or successful Buddhist social work practice whose parallel practice by Western-rooted social work did not work effectively or successfully, in a specific subfield of social work such as counseling, a recovery program for withdrawals, casework on the poverty and crime, disaster relief, and mobilization of resources,
- (2) conduct close observational research to collect empirical data,
- (3) describe both of the cases of Buddhist social work and Western-rooted professional social work in detail—how they have been practiced and functioning,
- (4) analyze why and how the Buddhist social work practice worked effectively and successfully because of Buddhism while Western-rooted professional social work did not, and
- (5) extract the essence and features of Buddhist social work in that specific case.

A group of monks, university professors, and NGO leaders formulated a working definition of Buddhist social work in 2018, which signified some “essence and features” of Buddhist

social work extracted inductively and conceptually through discussion and writing. They are, however, still at the hypothetical level. They must be more rigid, being tested and refined by empirical research and data. Without documentation of those findings, Buddhist social work could neither be transmitted to the current other practitioners and the next generation practitioners nor communicable with the Western-rooted professional social work. Without this process, Buddhist social work could never improve itself to serve people better and more effectively. The empirical data collection and their accumulation are indispensable steps towards the construction of Buddhist social work.

# Diverse Applications of Buddhist Social Work in Mental Health Care in Vietnam

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This paper aims to showcase the diverse applications of Buddhist social work in the area of mental health care in Vietnam. In particular, the paper reports the results of three interconnected research studies exploring the use of Buddhist practices to help people with mental health problems in three settings: Buddhist temples, psychiatric hospitals, and in the community.

Study 1: Buddhist social work performed by Buddhist monks and nuns at temples in Vietnam.

At present, Vietnam has nearly 54,000 Buddhist monks and nuns, and 19,000 Buddhist temples and monasteries. The majority of temples are situated in the communities and performing many activities to help people with mental health problems, including individual and family counseling, meditation, chanting sutras and mantras, performing rituals and good deeds, and exorcism. Between 2012 and now, I had conducted an ethnographic study and in-depth interviews with monks at Buddhist temples in Vietnam about their help activities. The results of the study showed that Buddhist temples were able to help people with various mental disorders to reduce and recover completely from their symptoms. In many cases, Buddhist monks served as the last resort for patients who were deemed untreatable by psychiatric hospitals.

Study 2: Mental health professionals used Buddhist therapy with mental health patients  
Mai Huong Psychiatric Hospital in Hanoi, the only daytime psychiatric hospital in Vietnam, has been using a meditation therapy as group therapy to help mental health patients, especially those with depression, anxiety disorders, and stress-related disorders. From 2014 to 2016, I conducted in-depth interviews and surveys with mental health patients and professionals here to learn about the benefits of meditation therapy and how Buddhism can be further applied to mental health care. The results of the study showed that most patients found Buddhism-based therapies to be helpful, especially to stress-related disorders. They strongly supported the offering of Buddhism-based therapies in formal mental healthcare settings. However,



most of them believed the therapies would be best offered together with medication. They also believed that having monks and nuns providing therapies would improve the quality of the therapies.

Case 3: Doctors, nurses, and social workers used Buddhist stress-reduction techniques to help family caregivers of elderly people with Alzheimer's disease.

Vietnam is one of 10 fastest aging countries in the world, with an increase in the number of elderly people having Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. The burden of caring for elderly people still fall on family members, many of whom develop depression, stress, and other mental disorders while providing care. Since 2016, the doctors, nurses, and social workers at Vietnam National Geriatric Hospital have been using Buddhist stress-reduction techniques to help family caregivers reduce stress and burden. They also used these techniques to help themselves reduce stress when working with distressed family caregivers and patients.

Keywords: *Vietnam, Buddhist social work, mental health*

# **Is Indigenization an Answer?**

# Social Work Practice in Canada: Weaving Together Indigenous, French and English Roots

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*The question of “What is Canadian social work?” cannot be answered without adequately understanding the complexity of Canadian histories and contexts. First, a historical overview summary of social work in Canada will be provided, highlighting Indigenous, French, and English approaches to addressing needs. In the Canadian context, “Indigenous” refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples. These elements of Canadian history are unpacked, illustrating how they have shaped and informed contemporary social work practice in Canada. Second, implications for social work education will be presented through a discussion of one path of Indigenization in the School of Social Work in*

*Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Two of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Calls to Action focused on Indigenous child welfare and justice will be discussed, with three examples from McGill University School of Social Work’s reconciliation path. The final section is devoted to how indigenizing social work can be practiced on the ground in communities and whether social workers could be effective if they fail to question social work practice’s “transportability across cultures and languages or its relevance to the contexts in which is it being transplanted” (Gray & Hetherington, 2013, p. 27).*

Understanding social work history in Canada is critical to ensuring that contemporary practice is respectful, relational, and supportive of client well-being as professional social work has had a largely negative history with Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Social workers removed children from their homes, placing them in non-Indigenous homes during the 1960s and 1970s during “the Sixties Scoop.” From a contemporary perspective, Indigenous children are placed in foster care by child welfare social workers at a rate substantially higher than non-Indigenous children (Blackstock, 2012). Addressing social issues effectively within Indigenous communities through helping and healing was present before colonization by English and French settlers, yet the importance of such foundations has been overlooked historically by the social work profession. Exploring Indigenous helping and healing traditions centres on learning from oral histories passed down through centuries. Approaches to helping have been experienced with Indigenous Elders, traditional healers, and helpers who have shared their knowledge, abilities, spiritual paths, and experiences through role modeling, storytelling,

ceremonies, and sharing circles (Arnaquq, 2015; Hart, 2009). From a professional perspective, contemporary Indigenous social work is “a form of social work which seeks effective culturally appropriate research, education and practice. In this sense it is a decolonized form of social work” (Grey & Hetherington, 2010, p. 27).

Indigenous scholars and Elders in Canada have described foundational Indigenous worldviews which offer insight into how Indigenous Peoples have experienced and continue to experience helping and healing (Ives, Denov & Sussman, 2020). Dr. Michael Hart, a Cree scholar, describes the Medicine Wheel as a relevant medium for social work practice for individuals and communities. As individuals seek *mino-pimatisiwin*, a Cree concept of “the good life”, they journey toward the centre of the Medicine Wheel, integrating wholeness, balance, connection, harmony, growth, and healing. When they are healthy in their journey, they are in a position to help others on their path. Inuit have a similar concept called *maligait*, which is Inuktitut for “living the good life”. *Maligait* includes working for the common good, respecting all living things, maintaining harmony and balance, and continually planning and preparing for the future. Indigenous approaches to helping and healing are holistic, which emphasize the importance of relationships and traditions of reciprocity. Thus, unlike the English and French approaches to relief provision which were largely punitive, receiving assistance is not stigmatized. Instead, it is considered “as a natural part of everyone’s life and is central to the health of families and communities” (Baskin & McLeod, 2020, p. 222).

Across Canada, churches played a foundational role in the development of private charity organizations. All assistance was provided by private charity organization societies or religious entities either through outdoor relief, where material assistance was given to individuals and families in their own homes, or more punitively through indoor relief, where assistance was provided in an institutional setting (poorhouse or workhouse). Providers of relief believed two major tenets regarding poverty (Ives, Denov & Sussman, 2020). First, poverty was believed to be a result of individual “flaws” of character. Second, people in poverty were evaluated as being either “deserving” or “undeserving.” Receiving charity was a privilege, not a right; thus, it was only conferred upon those evaluated as “deserving.” “Deserving” individuals who were in poverty through no fault of their own, such as widows, orphans, people with chronic illness, and the elderly, but only if they were not engaged in “immoral activities” (e.g., substance abuse) as perceived by relief providers. Those considered able to work but who were unemployed (e.g., unemployed men, unmarried women) were seen as “undeserving” and were sent to workhouses. In the late 19th and early 20th century, moving toward more organized initiatives for relief, Charity organization societies and Settlement House were established across Canada. While Charity Organization Societies viewed families in poverty as dysfunctional within a well-functioning society, followers of the Settlement House Movement saw poor families as doing their best to survive in societal frameworks in need of reform. The Social Gospel Movement brought together theological and social

movements focused on social development and change (Ives, Denov & Sussman, 2020).

As we approach contemporary social work practice in Canada, it is imperative to engage in challenging discussions of whether social work can be used to heal ruptures that



past events, attitudes, and behaviours have caused. Teaching “generic” social work practice will not heal these wounds; rather, perpetuating the idea of a “generic” practice maintains the colonial perspectives that brought about the harm in the first place and ignores historically caused present-day trauma. Such discussions must directly address issues of power and an examination of who benefits from the continuation of unjust systems. One way to engage in this discourse is by adopting a decolonizing approach to social work. A decolonizing approach “necessitates a confirmation of Indigenous wisdom’s place in social work curricula, requires social workers to reflect on their privilege in relation to their social location, recognizes the importance of Indigenous rights not only to Indigenous Peoples but also to non-Indigenous Peoples, and addresses issues of power” (Ives & Loft, 2013, p. 244) within professional social work. Thus, central to a decolonizing approach is illuminating past offenses in order to promote healing and forgiveness. This is the purpose of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In 2008, as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was established. The TRC was mandated to work with Residential School survivors and others to publicly reveal the truth about Canada’s residential school system and facilitate methods of reconciliation among former student survivors, their families, and communities as well as with all Canadians (2015). To facilitate healing and redress for Indigenous Peoples in Canada, the TRC compiled a comprehensive list of calls to action. Multiple calls to action are explicitly relevant for social work education; three are discussed below.

Call 1 under Child Welfare calls for social workers and others involved in child welfare to be “properly educated and trained about the history and impacts of residential schools”, ensure “that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the potential for Aboriginal communities and families to provide more appropriate solutions to family healing” and require “all child-welfare decision makers consider the impact of the residential school experience on children and their caregivers” (TRC, 2015, p. 1). Under Education, Call 10 calls for new legislation to fund and support “improving education attainment levels and success rates” of Indigenous Peoples and



“developing culturally appropriate curricula” (p. 2). Under the Justice category, the call targeted law schools in Canada but the call content was directly relevant for social work schools. Call 28 calls for a requirement that “all law students...take a course in Aboriginal people and the law, which includes the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law... This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and antiracism” (TRC, 2015, p. 3).

Higher education, like Canadian institutions more broadly, is still grappling with how to effectively enact decolonizing strategies. McGill University’s School of Social Work has been on a path of reconciliation, and, more recently, the School has actively sought to employ decolonizing strategies. Responding to Calls 1 and 10, we have greatly increased Indigenous content throughout the social work curriculum, making conscious attempts to integrate rather than simply add on. In 2007, the School created Indigenous Access McGill, a program to support Indigenous students in social work through student support and curriculum development. Our initial focus was the recruitment and retention of students from underrepresented Indigenous communities. Since its founding, the School of Social Work has graduated 22 Indigenous students; 15 students are currently enrolled in Bachelor of Social Work, the Master of Science in Couple and Family Therapy, and the PhD program. Students have represented the Mohawk, Ojibwe, Inuit, Métis, Mi’gmaq, Wendat, and Cree Nations.

In 2010, under the guidance of Indigenous scholars from a university in British Columbia, in order to create a space where students saw themselves reflected positively in curriculum, we developed a course, entitled Indigenous Field Studies, founded on Indigenous ways of knowing, learning and being, grounded in local contexts of the Mohawk Territory of Kahnawá:ke, near Montreal, Quebec. The course, bringing together Law, Medicine, Anthropology, Nursing and other disciplines has addressed a critical gap in students’ knowledge about Indigenous cultures and worldviews while creating linkages to students’ areas of practice in a community context. Responding to Call 28, in 2016, we required all undergraduate social work students to complete the course First Peoples’ and Social Work before graduation. Moving the course from an elective position to a required one ensures that all social work students are exposed to the history and legacy of residential schools, including how intergenerational trauma has shaped Indigenous communities today.

Contemporary Canadian social work is shaped by national, provincial, municipal, and neighbourhood social, economic, political, legislative and cultural contexts. Commonalities do exist across these myriad contexts, such as a shared commitment to individual and collective well-being. However, do we all share the same goals? Is our primary goal social justice, is it living a good life, is it social inclusion? Social work must be enacted with local realities at the forefront of practice, shaped by histories and realities of the people who live in the communities. This is an issue that we have wrestled with during this conference. For example,

in Montreal and across Quebec, social work practice looks vastly different. Point St Charles, a historically impoverished neighbourhood of Montreal populated heavily by English-speaking Irish Catholics for generations, community practice is enacted differently from social work practice in Outremont, a neighbourhood with a large Hasidic Orthodox Jewish population, and different from social work practice in Côte des Neiges, a region of Montreal populated by Filipino, Jewish and Black English-speaking communities but also by people from Eastern Europe, North Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia. Over half the population (54%) is a member of the Statistics Canada “visible minority” category and a third of the population is considered low income. Social work practice is also different in Nunavik, Quebec’s Inuit territory, with 14 communities connected only by air or sea in the summer and air or skidoo/dogsled in the winter. There are only two Inuit social workers in Nunavik’s 14 communities. Thus, nearly all social workers are from outside the community, and, most importantly, outside Inuit culture.

Most of us work in universities that, following Akimoto’s (2017) typology, are either Model A structured, where social work follows western-rooted social work relatively uncritically and resembles practice in other places regardless of context, or Model B structured, where social work practice accepts a western-rooted model while seeking “to improve it by making it more complete and more appropriate for their own societies” (Akimoto, 2017, p. 23). I consider Indigenous Access McGill and the Indigenous Field Studies course “Model C” initiatives situated in a Model B School within a Model A-B university. As an independent approach, Model C moves from indigenization as “the adoption and adaptation of theories and practices in social work in ways that are relevant to the local (indigenous) context” towards authentization, an approach to social work theory, education, and practice development derived from locally-based contextual realities (Ives, Denov, & Sussman, 2020, p. 399). Thus, social work practice is an authentic reflection of “social work is born in people’s lives and the cultural of a society...grow[ing] in response to their experiences” (Akimoto, 2017, p. 4).

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# Objection to Western-rooted Professional Social Work To Make Social Work Something Truly of the World: Indigenization Is Not the Answer

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We would like to make social work, which we love, something of the whole world. Social work should exist to serve all suffering people in this world.

The dissemination of current social work (Western-rooted professional social work; WPSW) is not able to make social work the social work of the whole world. It is simply the globalization of WPSW. Its indigenization—a popular word these days—is not the answer, either. Indigenized social work is still WPSW. The exploration and establishment of an indigenous social work, which is different from but equal in status to WPSW, is necessary to achieve our goal. WPSW must be modest; indigenous

social work must catch up WPSW. Buddhist social work poses a question.

## 1. Social Work Is One Entity

Wherever we go in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, we hear the chorus of professionalization. We constantly hear such terms as human rights, social justice, empowerment, self-determination, and social reform.

It sounds as if we, those in social work, were all one. Some people even state, “We are a global profession.” What is social work? It’s easy to get an answer. Just ask the social workers and social work teachers around you. All would say the same, most typically, “Look at IASSW/IFSW’s Global Definition of Social Work Profession.”

*Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.*

*The above definition may be amplified at the national and/or regional level.*

All the following are included in it: “Social work is a . . . . . profession,” “an academic discipline,” “social change and development,” “the empowerment,” “social justice,” and “human rights.”

## **2. “It’s theirs.”**

Wherever we go in Asia, Africa and Latin America, we also hear other voices: “Something is wrong,” and “This is theirs,” “The West’s,” “developed countries,” and “It does not fit us.” “Our culture is different.” “Our tradition, life and society are different.”

In the statement that the culture, tradition, life and society are different, there is a mix of two different ingredients, that is, 1) the difference of the degree of industrialization, and 2) the difference of “intrinsic” or “indigenous” culture and traditional life and society.

1) The distribution among the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> industries varies. In some countries’ economies, the agriculture, forestry, and fishing industries comprise 60 percent or 70 percent while in some other countries only a small percent. Could the same narrow definition of social work be applicable both in post-industrial societies and pre-industrial societies? The structural development of occupations and their classifications, the level of urbanization, and the percentage of students in higher education are all different. For example, it is not realistic even to imagine “professional social workers” in some countries. There are no—or not sufficient numbers—of professional social workers in most of 200 countries and regions in the world. “This “difference of culture” in this sense may diminish over the time, though.

2) The “intrinsic” or “indigenous” culture is different. Once I said that we could read “individualism”, “modernism”, and “Christianity” between lines in the previous IASSW/IFSW’s international definition of social work. Spontaneously a Buddhist professor in Japan responded, “This is ‘individualism’, ‘modernism’, and ‘Christianity’ themselves.” Theirs are binary thinking (e.g. people vs. the environment, human beings vs. nature), Maslow-like self-actualization, wants/needs, putting yourself at the center, starting with yourself, discarding the “inner” aspect. . . . . Ours are harmony, respect of others and elders, help without expecting returns, Buddhism and *kyousei* (coexistence, living together), aren’t they?

## **3. The Response from “Them”**

This social work does not fit us—it is of “developed countries” and “it is the West’s.” Mainstream social work would respond: If “you don’t have any or sufficient professional social workers, import them from us,” or “Produce them”. They know that this is impossible. If “your culture is different,” then “Change your culture,” or—a little modestly, “Indigenize the social work.” They know that indigenized social work is still WPSW. These sound like colonialists and imperialistic demands and the demand for the globalization of the WPSW itself. In short, social work means WPSW, and must be WPSW. The intention is to make WPSW that of the world with or without modification.



Actually, many professional social workers from the West have worked and are working in social work “undeveloped” countries under colony managing governments, UN programs such as UNICEF, ODA of “developed” countries, international NGO projects, and university programs, or with personal voluntary initiatives. “Social work colonialism!” would be shouted back from the non-Western-rooted social work camp.

While there are at best few professional social workers, people in those “developing” countries have enormous numbers of the same or similar difficulties and problems in their lives as in social work “developed” countries, and also have different problems and difficulties. There is an urgent demand for “social work”. So, then, quickly create huge numbers of professional social workers in countries where only a small percent of young people go to colleges and there is little financial resource. “It is impossible!”

If your culture is different, “Change your culture,” said the then President of IFSW, Ruth Stark, in an international seminar on social welfare held in Tokyo on 10 December 2016 hosted by the Japan College of Social Work. Some participants were frightened.

Another alternative is “Indigenize social work” so that social work could be accepted and would function effectively. Wherever you go these days, you hear the chorus of “Indigenization”, which is another popular word today in the social work community. But can “indigenization” make social work that of the world? The indigenized social work will be still WPSW, won’t it—even if you indigenize much of the WPSW? Can we wait for the accomplishment of the law of conversion from quantity to quality? Remember Christian missionaries who proselytized in Latin America, Africa and Asia a few centuries ago or just several decades ago. They indigenized, for example, decorations of churches, clothes of the priests and the parables they spoke. But the core of what was transmitted was still Christianity.

#### **4. No Thanks for the Globalization of WPSW**

WPSW proponents have not even been conscious of the globalization of social work itself. Countries of the WPSW are the absolute minority in the world, only a handful among 200 countries and regions—Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. The overwhelming majority of countries and people on the earth belong to the non-WPSW world. This is a definition of globalization given by a Japanese author (Ohno, K. 2000. *Globalization of Developing Countries—Is the self-sustainable development possible?* Toyo Keizai Shinpo-sha. (in Japanese)):

*“Globalization is a process, with a clear direction and hierarchical structure. It values and favors systems of the country at the center over other regions, which tend to either follow or are coerced. It is “self-evident” in the central country’s eyes that their civilization is superior. Globalization implies both a sense of superiority and a sense of mission to extend the benefits to regions that have not enjoyed them yet.*

*Furthermore, it cannot be denied that globalization has shown a pattern where the central country forces*

*other countries to participate in fields where it has already claimed advantages under rules it has laid down, and then perpetuates that superiority on a progressive scale.” [translated by T. Akimoto]*

Was this definition written to describe today’s social work?

## 5. The ABC Model of Buddhist Social Work

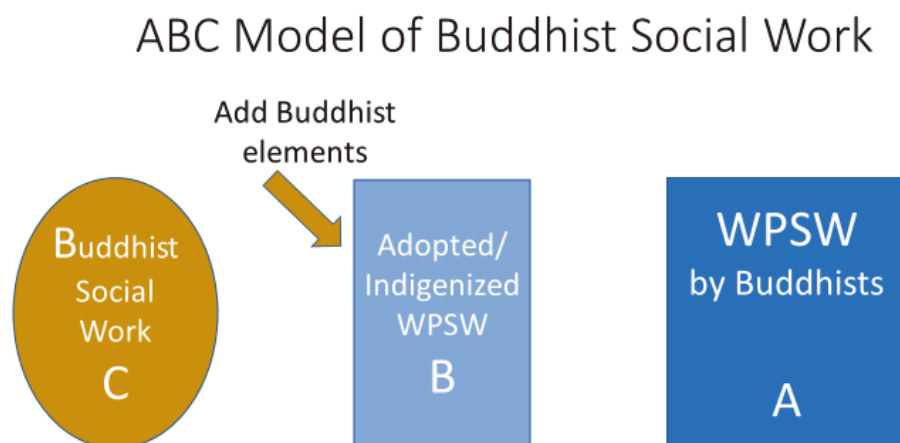
Several years ago, a group of monks, university professors, and NGO leaders began the journey of Buddhist Social Work.

A Vietnamese scholar said:

*“In our country, social work could not function effectively without considering Buddhism. Elements of Buddhism have infused into every corner of the lives of people, not only Buddhists but also non-Buddhists, Christians and atheists—values, the sense of beauty, the way of feeling and thinking, moral, behavior, and customs. Buddhism came 2000 years ago and has always been with us.”*

Some Sri Lankan people had an idea: “Let’s make contemporary social work available to Buddhist monks so that they could serve people in communities better and more effectively.” As soon as they started their discussion, the monks said, “We have been doing the same or similar work for 2500 years,” while WPSW has only done so for 150~200 years, “although we haven’t used the term ‘social work.’”

The Asian Research Institute for International Social Work (ARIISW), Shukutoku University, in the early days of the journey determined three different Buddhist Social Works, or the meaning and usage of the term of “Buddhist social work,” to formulate them as the ABC Model.



Model A Buddhist Social Work is WPSW performed by Buddhists. Only the player (actor) is different. The social work of Buddhist Social Work is the same as WPSW.

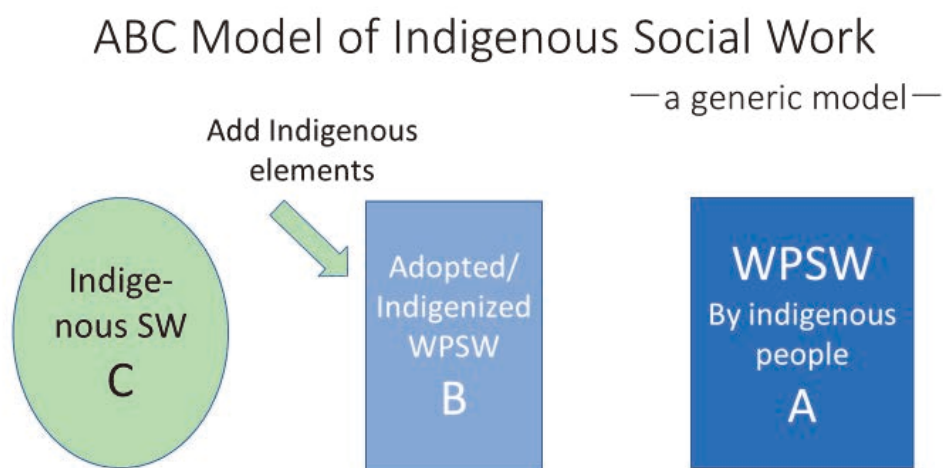
Model B Buddhist Social Work is a modification or an indigenization model. Buddhist elements (values, knowledge, and skills) are incorporated into WPSW. The indigenized social work is still Western-rooted professional social work.

Model C Buddhist Social Work is the “intrinsic” or “indigenous” Buddhist Social Work, not the WPSW indigenized with Buddhist elements. A Bhutanese professor nicknamed it as an ‘organic model’. This Buddhist Social Work does not begin with WPSW but with Buddhism. It is part of the total of Buddhist service/work.

Model A was the understanding until some years ago, and Model B is the popular understanding today. As long as we remain at the levels of Model A and B, we are accepted and even welcomed by the mainstream WPSW, but once we begin talking about Model C, we are rejected by them with the harsh words, “it is not social work,” and are prohibited from using the name of social work.

## 6. From a Buddhist Social Work Model to an Indigenous Social Work Model

Now, let us replace Buddhist Social Work with Indigenous Social Work to construct a generic model. Indigenous social work here means the social work rooted in the culture, tradition, life and society of indigenous people.



The indigenous people here are slightly different from those in the definition of the United Nations and mainstream Western Social Work—“native people,” who “live within geographically distinct ancestral territories (IFSW; Commentary note of IASSW/IFSW Global Definition),” such as Maori, Inuit, and *Ainu* (in the case of Japan). We dealt with Buddhist people in Asia as indigenous people above and applied our concept of Buddhist Social Work’s

ABC Model for indigenous social work in general. In our usage, indigenous people in this paper are not necessarily associated with Western colonization and hegemony and not necessarily confined as a minority in their current countries (cf. above Commentary note), but must have their origins in the community, society, area, region or nation in olden days<sup>1</sup> although “how far” they must go back in history has not been rigidly defined. Included in indigenous social work are Buddhist social work, Islamic social work, Hindu social work, some non-religious social works, Bhutanese social work, Vietnamese social work, Thai social work, etc. as well as social work by indigenous people in the sense of UN and IFSW’s definition above.

The above ABC Model of indigenous social work can be deciphered in parallel with that of Buddhist Social work above. Model A is WPSW performed by indigenous people. Model B is WPSW indigenized with indigenous elements thrown in<sup>2</sup>. And Model C is the “intrinsic” indigenous social work, which begins with the life, culture and tradition of indigenous people, not with WPSW. It is not an indigenized or modified WPSW. Both the highly lauded acceptance and the harsh rejection by the mainstream WPSW are also the same as for Buddhist social work in the section 5 above.

## 7. An Exploration of Model C

We must explore and establish Model C for four reasons. Otherwise, firstly, it is not interesting intellectually. University professors, or university-men and -women are to pursue something new, something different. Many of people, if not all, talk today about “Indigenization”, that is, Model B, as they previously talked about Model A, describing, for example, Buddhist monks as “Free social workers.” Secondly, if not done, we won’t have our own social work based on our own culture, tradition, life and society forever. Each society should have had “social work” within it. Without it, the society could not have sustained itself. Thirdly, unless we construct our own indigenous social work at the same status as WPSW, not under WPSW, we cannot demote the current social work, WPSW, to a relative position from its sole absolute monarchical position. WPSW and Indigenous social work stand at parity<sup>3</sup>.

Lastly, even when we discuss on Model B, we do not know what we should throw into Model B as indigenous elements (values, knowledges and skills) without having the Model C of social work, at least conceptually. Words, terms and concepts which are used today as being indigenous features or of different culture, have tended to be daily life commonsense patchwork pieces or impulses, and not to have been examined rigorously<sup>4</sup>. For example, are “*Wa*” (harmony in

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<sup>1</sup> Distinguished from “contextualization”, which lacks the time factor.

<sup>2</sup> The discussion on “authentication” is not referred in this paper.

<sup>3</sup> In order to understand properly the relation and position of Buddhist or Indigenous social work and WPSW, insert Model B’, which is an adapted or Westernized Buddhist or Indigenous social work, between Model B and Model C in the above two figures, and you can more fairly and clearly understand the relation and position of WPSW and Indigenous social work, which stand at parity. Previous figures were skewed towards WPSW.

<sup>4</sup> Most of what they mention as the feature or uniqueness of their culture or e.g. “Buddhism social work” are common with other cultures, or e.g. “Islamic social work,” “Christian social work,” or even “Western-rooted professional social work.”

Japanese), respect of others, help without expecting returns, and *kyousei*, which were mentioned above, genuinely indigenous features of our society? Or are they “a rice-producing culture,” “Don’t bother/inconvenience other people, ultraism, compassion, and modesty unique culture of our society? We have to know holistically what our own indigenous social work is.

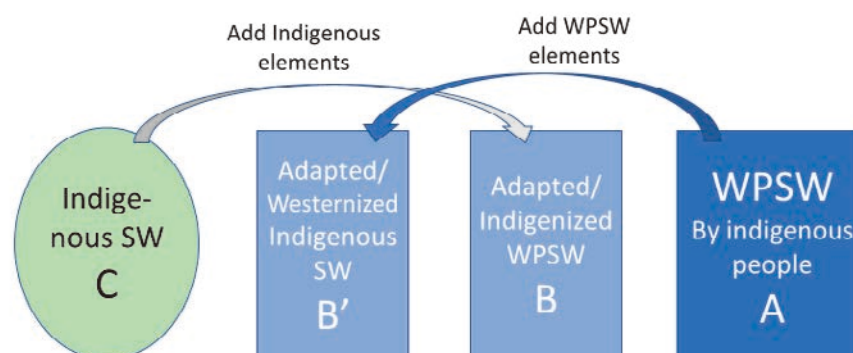
We are interested in the understanding of indigenous social work and its present and future development, but not in the indigenization of nor how to indigenize Western-rooted professional social work nor in the use of “indigenous knowledges” in the IFSW/IASSW Global Definition, to strengthen WPSW<sup>5</sup>.

## 8. Not to the Third Stage of WPSW but the First Stage for the Social Work of the World? A Letter to WPSW: Conclusion

Our original interest was to make social work something truly of the world (cf. p.1), the common asset of the whole world.

When we set off for the journey of Buddhist social work, we were thinking of leading social work to “the third stage” of its development. Social work was born in Europe (Stage I) and matured in North America (Stage II), and now expands itself to non-Western parts to cover the whole world. We had unconsciously started with WPSW or the equation of social work=WPSW. The realization of ABC Model led us to the new viewpoint of starting with our own culture, tradition, life and society. The meaning of the third stage changed from the dissemination of WPSW, that is, the globalization of social work itself, to the repositioning of WPSW to a relative one equivalent to other social works from the sole absolute one. From the non-WPSW side, it is not “the third stage”, but the first step of another social work, e.g. Buddhist or Indigenous social work—to explore, in order to make social work something truly of the world.

Put B' to Understand the Relation of 2 Models Fairer & Easier



<sup>5</sup> IASSW/IFSW’s Global Definition does not refer to the indigenization of social work directly although it refers to “indigenous knowledges” as one of foundations which underpins social work engagements with the interest in their “invaluable contribution to science”. (Commentary note)



21 December 2019

*Dear Western-rooted Professional Social Work,*

*We respect your efforts and achievements until the present and look forward to further development.*

*However, please do not proclaim that the only Western-rooted Professional Social Work, or what professional social workers do, is social work, disregarding other “social works” which other people do. You are not entitled to monopolize social work. There could be other social works, too.*

*On this earth, there are enormous numbers of people who have difficulties and problems in their lives. In most countries and regions, areas and districts, you are not there, or your social work doesn't fit them. You seem to pacify non-Western-rooted Professional Social Work people using the term of “indigenization”, but indigenized social work is still Western-rooted Professional Social Work.*

*Social work is social work, whoever does it. Rely on various indigenous social works. Otherwise, we cannot deliver social work, which we love, to the overwhelming majority of people with sufferings in the world.*

*Social work would like to serve people. We would like to make social work something truly of the world. Let's lead social work to its next stage together, not to the globalization of Western-rooted professional social work.*

*In solidarity,*

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# Closing Remarks

Masatoshi Hasegawa  
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Head advisor, ARIISW, Shukutoku University



The 4<sup>th</sup> Shukutoku University International Academic Forum was successfully conducted and completed. I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to ARIISW and all participants, particularly to our guest speakers for sharing their home country's social work practice and education. I am happy to see how researchers and scholars have been working on Buddhist social work research for more than 5 years. I feel honoured to have the privilege to be an advisor to ARIISW and to keep watching on the work of Professor Akimoto and his team from aside.

The outcomes of international academic projects are cross-border collaboration and no such a project succeeds without a strong person in the center of the network. That is why I want to congratulate Professor Akimoto, his team, and all the network members, who have contributed their time and efforts to this joint international research program. I enjoyed listening to presentations and discussions.

During listening to the presentations, one thing came to my mind. It's one of my favorite phrases. Water has a water source, a tree has its root, water flows from the source of water and we benefit from water. Otherwise, we can't live. In the same way, a tree has its root in underground, a trunk, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits, all grow because there is a root. The title of this forum is the "Journey of Buddhist social work" in Asia. As Professor Akimoto said, where did we come from, where are we going? The next steps of the journey are very important, while the steps we have already taken too. We have to reveal and review the history to explore the root of our culture. That was, I believe, the first step of this journey. Without knowing it, without knowing the roots of our history, how can we find a way forward in this journey?

I have also heard to discussions concerning the indigenous content. Here in Japan, social work education is based on the curriculum which is planned and set to enable students to pass

the national examination. However, the curriculum does not include any course on the history of social work. I had spent 20 years teaching the history of Japan's social work. When I was teaching in the classroom, there was no national qualification exam for social workers. Whether there is a national qualification (certification) or not, the university and me too, have always believed in the importance of this profession. I am worried that social work education has been threatened in the past decades. Students should learn more about pre-modern social work in Japan. During this forum, we heard a lot about the history of social work in each country. However, what about Japan? I am afraid we tend to forget our roots. When we forget and ignore the historical root of social work, that's not good. We tend to look at contemporary and more visible issues, but where are the roots of social work? I think that is all about the indigenous aspects. To say "indigenous" is easy, but to help students to fully understand what indigenous social work means, is very difficult.

There are still huge differences from country to country in the Asian region. Particularly, differences in the vitality of communities, villages, and families. Are they still healthy? Or are they falling apart? The level of vitality of these primary units makes a big difference for the whole country. Activities of Buddhist temples and monks in those communities, and respect for religious groups and monks in South East Asia, is, I think, much higher than here in Japan. In Japan, well, I am one of the monks and I personally regret and feel also responsible for the low esteem and regard. However, I see some little signs of change. As Professor Fujimori and Professor Watanabe reported, during the Hanshin Awaji Great Earthquake and East Japan Great Earthquake, people were struck with big disasters. In the process of reconstruction, temples and Buddhist monks worked very hard in those communities and they helped Buddhist temples to regain trust and confidence from the Japanese people.

The founder of Shukutoku University used to say as follows: "Welfare system could be perfect, but people feel the satisfaction only by people. Systems, institutions do not make people happy. People are made happy only by other people." In many Asian countries, this is already evident. There are social welfare programs and we should continue our efforts to make these programs to work more effectively and address the needs of society. However, public services and social welfare programs, can't, unfortunately, cover every single aspect of people's needs. That's the role of Buddhist monks and temples, which has been neglected and overlooked for a long time. Buddhist social work should focus on communities and people and act there where the needs are not still met by public services and institutions, go and find where there are overlooked or neglected people and communities. I think this is what people and communities are expecting from Buddhist social work. I am fully aware that it is easier said than done. But I would like to keep and follow this approach in social work - Buddhist social work.

Professor Akimoto and researchers at ARIISW are my colleagues. I know that they have worked hard for the last five years. I really appreciate their work. Ministry of Education's

grant to develop strategic research infrastructure enabled this five-years research project. The project will be completed in March 2020. Many people are already questioning what's next? What's beyond this project? I honestly would like to answer this question. Vice President Yamaguchi mentioned that the objective of this grant was to build the strategic research infrastructure. Once the infrastructure is built, what's next? Is this infrastructure strong enough? It will be tested by the future activities we will conduct. And I would like to ask all colleagues, coresearchers, and counterparts to stay with us and keep going on this journey of Buddhist social work.

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# The Journey of Buddhist Social Work

## Exploring the Potential of Buddhism in Asian Social Work

A group of scholars, monks, and NGO leaders has started a journey to explore the Buddhist social work. To resist the globalization of social work.

Cosponsored by APASWE



**December 20 (Fri) and 21 (Sat) 2019**  
**Japan Association for Social Work Education**  
**Seminar Hall** Konan 4-7-8, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan

### Dec 20 (Fri) 9:30 AM : **Journey we've travelled**

1. From the ABC model to the definition of Buddhist social work and beyond (ARIISW)
2. Role of temples, monks, and nuns in the community (ARIISW)
3. Asian Buddhist countries: What have we done? What have we achieved?

### Dec 21 (Sat) 9:00 : **Next steps of the journey**

1. Theories, surveys, education, and practice in target countries
2. ARIISW Project: "What Buddhist social work can do while western-rooted professional social work can not" (Empirical proof)
3. Claim on the world social work  
"Is indigenization an answer?  
The meaning of indigenous knowledge in the global definition" (ARIISW)

### Guest Speakers

Dec 20 : From Asian Buddhist Countries

Nguyen Hoi Loan (Vietnam)

H.M.D.R. Herath and Anuradha

Wickramasinghe (Sri Lanka)

Sopa Onopas (Thailand)

Phra Maha Surakrai C. (Thailand)

Dec 21: From Canada

Nicole Ives (McGill University)

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