

**Buddhist Monks and Building Well - Being**

The 5th National Health Assembly,

Having considered the report on Buddhist monks and development of monks' well-being<sup>1</sup>,

*Recognizing* that 95 percent of Thai people are Buddhists, for whom the teachings of the Buddha serve as a way of life and become the foundation of rituals and culture that are identity and heritage of the Thai nation. Monks play a highly important role in inherit Buddhism, developing knowledge of virtue and ethics, and in the development of local community societies, serving as positive role models for communities in taking care of their own health, temple environment, and expanding those results into developing well-being of the community;

*Concerned* that monks have health problems, especially chronic diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, ischemic heart disease, and hyperlipidemia, for which one important contributing factor is the food offered to them by householders who lack knowledge, understanding and awareness of the drawbacks to illness among monks. In addition, some monks engage in risk behaviors, which are causes of illness, such as smoking tobacco, drinking coffee, drinking energy drinks, and lacking proper exercise, and that if these matters are not addressed, more monks will become ill;

*Acknowledging* that monks' health problems are being addressed by various agencies, but those agencies only do it on an *ad hoc* basis and lack mechanisms of operation, integration with various sectors, and operate only in certain areas. Although monks have health insurance, they still have problems on access to medical and health services, including continuous and comprehensive care when they are sick.

*Concerned* that if there is no process development of promoting and caring for monks' health, this will cause the mechanism of inherit Buddhism and righteous development of virtue and ethics that is important to Thailand to be weakened,

*Appreciating* that many operations have been implemented, such as the Health Promoting Temple Project, the Monks' Network for Health Promotion Project of the Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health, the Monks' health management in Si-akhio district by the Health Assembly of Nakhon Ratchasima along with the Sangha Pathana Network of Khorat, the successful project addressing the problem of unplanned teen pregnancy of the abbot of Wat Sirattnaram, Chonsombun sub-district, Nong Muang district, Lopburi, the 5-S Temple project by monks in Saraburi, and Serene Temple, Healthy Monks by Community Means project in Singburi,

*Deeming* that it is necessary to address importance of healthcare for monks so they have a good quality of life, and well-being physically, emotionally, intellectually, and socially, as well as to arrange an environment that promotes health, by building connections between the temple and the community, making monks healthy, temples stable, and the community resilient,

Has, therefore, passed the following resolution,

1. Requesting Office of National Buddhism (an agency responsible for monk affairs) to serve as the lead agency in coordinating with the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Ministry of Culture, academic institutes, local administration, community organizations, related public and private networks as follows:

1.1. Develop guidelines for monks compatible with both the Pra Dhamma-Vinaya and health situation;

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<sup>1</sup> Document Health Assembly 5/Main 3

1.2 Work together with network of development monks to prepare strategic plans for implementing health promotion temples in order to facilitate participation on health care for monks and community;

1.3 Implement and develop a registry and set up a nationwide information database for monks to ensure that they enjoy the rights and benefits they are entitled to within the appropriate bounds of monkhood;

1.4 Promote, encourage, and develop monk organizations and networks of development monks by monk leaders in taking care of their health and other monks in the areas of responsibility, as well as participating in building community well-being, taking into consideration on spiritual health development, such as meditation and walking meditation, and providing support for monks who want to study Thai traditional medicine, alternative medicine, and first-aid;

1.5 Collaborate with community organizations in providing health care to all monks in the local areas in a comprehensive and proper manner;

1.6 Collaborate with monks, Ministry of Education, Buddhist Universities, and Thai Health Promotion Foundation in promoting and supporting the inclusion of materials related to “Buddhist Monks and Development of Monks’ Well Being” in various educational curriculums for monks, such as the *Sankhathikan* administrative training curriculum, Buddhist university curriculums, the *Dhammacharik* wandering spiritual monk curriculum, and curriculum for development monks.

2 Requesting the Ministry of Public Health to take action, coordinate and cooperate with agencies/networks that provide health care including public and private organizations, local administration, monks, communities, and civil society in the implementation areas,

2.1 Develop systems and models of health services, basic physical examination, screening for chronic diseases, follow-up visits and care for monks with chronic diseases or disabilities in a comprehensive and continuous manner;

2.2 Campaign to promote public awareness about making offering with healthy food and drink and avoiding or stopping giving things that are detrimental to health, especially tobacco that could lead to chronic diseases.

3. Requesting the National Health Security Office to improve the service criteria of health facilities to enable monks to get better access to and make use of health services in every health facility, both public and private, that is part of the service network of the local health security office.

4. Requesting the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Health to promote and support all Buddhist universities and other education institutions in setting up regular research studies and innovations on health care for monks as well as developing appropriate forms of exercise for monks.

5. Requesting local administration at all levels to allow monks the opportunity to participate in working groups or committees on the development of community health care;

6. Requesting monks and networks of development monks

6.1 To develop models, guidelines and processes of learning to promote and support the development of well-being for monks and communities with monks as leaders;

6.2 To work together with the Ministry of Public Health to develop and ensure more temples to meet the standards of health promoting temple according to plans that will be worked out.

7. Requesting members of the National Health Assembly to continue to promote, support and keep the issue of “Buddhist Monks and Development of Monks’ Well-being” active at the ground level;

8. Requesting the Secretary-General of the National Health Commission to report progress to the 7<sup>th</sup> National Health Assembly.