



# The Role of Public Administration in Sustainable Buddhist-Based Community Development: A Thai Perspective

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the role of public administration in promoting sustainable Buddhist-based community development in Thailand, highlighting the integration of Buddhist principles such as compassion, interdependence, and mindfulness into public policies. The research examines how these values can enhance the effectiveness of public administration in addressing critical issues such as social fairness, environmental sustainability, and community engagement. By focusing on collaboration between government, local communities, and Buddhist organizations, the paper outlines strategies for achieving long-term community development that respects cultural traditions while advancing modern sustainability goals. Case studies and examples of successful projects demonstrate how Buddhist teachings can shape public administration practices and contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable society. The study emphasizes the importance of participatory governance, community involvement, and the application of Buddhist ethics in fostering societal resilience and environmental care.

**Keywords:** Public Administration, Buddhist Values, Sustainable Development, Community Engagement, Thailand

## 1. Introduction

In modern Thailand, the mix of public administration and Buddhist ideas creates a special way to support community development that lasts. This paper will look at how including Buddhist values in public administration helps local communities become stronger and healthier. By focusing on teamwork, kindness, and awareness, Buddhist teachings offer a set of morals that can influence policy and community involvement. Additionally, the comprehensive approach found in Buddhist philosophy supports not only economic improvement but also care for the environment and fairness in society. As Thailand faces quick modernization with its challenges, it is important to understand public administration's role in this situation. This study will show how these Buddhist-based methods can be used to build sustainable development practices that fit within Thailand's unique culture, ultimately encouraging a more balanced and peaceful community life.

When talking about sustainable development, public administration includes how government groups use policies to meet societal needs. It connects policy creation with program execution meant to help community well-being. Good public administration is key



for achieving aims found in Buddhist-based community development, where values like compassion and group welfare guide choices. In Thailand, the mix of old governance and modern administrative methods often affects how public policies are carried out, particularly in areas like environmental protection and social fairness. For example, recent research shows that how people view governance has a big impact on local community support for projects like Marine Protected Areas, suggesting that management that brings people together is important for good community results (Bennett N et al., 2013). Moreover, Thailand's special cultural background requires a public administration framework that respects local traditions and governance systems, highlighting how CSR practices are linked within these communities (Minh N et al., 2018).

To know the part of Buddhist ideas in community building, it is important to see the basic teachings that highlight kindness, giving, and helping each other. A key part of these teachings is *Saṅgahavatthu*, which describes the four important bases of sympathy needed for building community unity: helping others, kind words, good actions, and being involved in community events. These ideas promote a complete way to do social work that is more than just giving money; it calls for real involvement with the community, focusing on shared well-being ((et. al. et al., 2021)). Additionally, having good governance in Buddhist organizations is important for long-lasting growth. Recent research shows that using good governance practices improves how people are managed, supporting fairness and efficiency, which leads to stability and progress in educational settings, such as Mahamakut Buddhist University (Arakpochchong et al., 2023). This combination of Buddhist beliefs and good governance creates a model for sustainable community development in Thailand.

Community development in Thailand is very important for building social unity and economic stability, especially in rural areas. By focusing on local priorities and involving residents in decision-making, community development efforts improve living standards and help protect important cultural and environmental assets. Collaborative programs with local governments, NGOs, and community members are key to tackling critical problems like poverty, education, and environmental harm. An example is the PRCD model from Warm Heart Worldwide, which shows that good public relations can boost community involvement and improve development results (Mitchell et al., 2012). Additionally, issues like deforestation highlight the need for all stakeholders to work together to manage natural resources wisely, as successful conservation demands cooperation between local movements and government support (Lee et al., 2021). These efforts not only strengthen communities but also support Thailand's larger goals for sustainable development.

This essay aims to look at how public administration and Buddhist ideas work together to help community development in Thailand. By examining the culture and ethics of Buddhist thoughts, the essay tries to show how these ideas can lead to better governance that supports society and the environment. It focuses on working together and highlights the important role of local non-governmental organizations in connecting businesses and communities while aiming for sustainable development goals. The research suggests that understanding corporate social responsibility in a Thai context can improve community involvement and benefit all parties in the development process (Sthapitanonda et al., 2015). Additionally, using a model based on *Sappāya Dhamma* points out important features of sustainable environmental management needed for a complete approach to community development (et. al. et al., 2021).

## 2. Theoretical Framework of Public Administration

The study of public administration gives an important view that helps look at how well governance works in building sustainable communities. The use of good governance ideas is

very important for making organizations work better and for promoting openness in agencies that work on community projects. As mentioned, good governance can help organizations be more effective and support lasting growth, especially in schools like Mahamakut Buddhist University (Arakporthchong et al., 2023). Additionally, using public relations methods in community development, such as the PRCD model, shows how important good communication is for reaching development goals (Mitchell et al., 2012). In the area of Buddhist-focused community development in Thailand, these ideas point to the need to connect public administration actions with values like fairness, involvement, and sustainability, which are key for improving social justice and community health.

Understanding important ideas in public administration is crucial for promoting sustainable growth in Buddhist communities in Thailand. A key part of this is community empowerment, which highlights the need to involve local people in governance. This method encourages independence and lessens reliance on outside help. Leaders need to develop local skills, which is noted in the focus on training mentioned in (Carmody et al., 2017). Also, participatory governance principles boost community participation in decision-making, aligning with sustainable management practices seen in projects like the restoration of Phimai's Old Baray. This initiative shows the link between preserving culture and managing resources sustainably, demonstrating how public administration can adeptly handle these areas to foster historical awareness and support agricultural sustainability, as explained in (Ektanitphong et al., 2014). Altogether, these ideas show how public administration can play a vital role in comprehensive community development.

Public administration plays a key role in community development in a Buddhist context because it helps include cultural values in government work. In Thailand, where Buddhism greatly affects social behaviors, public administration can boost community involvement by encouraging social return. This is important since studies show that being active in religious events promotes generosity, aiding both religious and secular efforts (Apinunmahakul et al., 2014). By emphasizing education to build social capital, public agencies can motivate civic involvement among people. Also, by understanding the cultural aspects of corporate social responsibility, public administration can work with local NGOs, promoting teamwork among different sectors for development projects (Sthapitanonda et al., 2015). This collaboration not only meets community needs but also strengthens society, leading to sustainable community development based on Buddhist principles that connect traditional values with modern goals.

Buddhist values can play an important role in making public policy, especially in sustainable community development in Thailand. By focusing on ideas like mindfulness, compassion, and connection, policymakers can set up rules that balance environmental health with social fairness. For example, projects that promote community involvement in taking care of the environment fit well with the Buddhist idea of interdependence. This idea encourages teamwork between local people, government workers, and NGOs. Such teamwork can help solve issues related to resource use and conflicts among stakeholders, as shown by studies on effective conservation projects in Kanchanaburi and Chiang Mai, where local involvement was key (Lee et al., 2021). Furthermore, cultural practices like 'Pid Thong Pang Phra' highlight a shared responsibility for social care and generosity, closely linked to Buddhist principles. This method leads to a sustainable public administration model that aligns with the cultural values of Thai society (Sthapitanonda et al., 2015).

Public administration in Thailand has many big problems that make it hard to put sustainable development into practice, especially with Buddhist-based community projects. A key problem is that the bureaucratic processes are complex, making it tough to respond quickly

to community needs and discouraging local involvement in governance. Also, there is a lack of understanding about Community Based Tourism (CBT) among both officials and the public, which creates obstacles in carrying out projects that follow sustainable practices, as discussed in the ongoing conversations about tourism development in Pai (G Pookaiyaudom, 2012). Moreover, the arrival of migrants, like those from Cambodia, often puts pressure on existing administrative systems, complicating work relations and social unity (Veng SH, 2019). Together, these challenges weaken the ability of public administration to support overall community growth, calling for a reassessment of policy strategies to improve collaboration and responsiveness to various societal needs.

### **3. Buddhist Principles and Sustainable Development**

Bringing Buddhist ideas into sustainable development creates a broad approach that links economic growth with social and environmental care. A key idea in Buddhism is interconnectedness, which shows why it's important to respect and support both people and nature. This idea fits well with current talks in social and environmental accounting (SEA) that look closely at the specific issues facing developing countries like Thailand (Qian W et al., 2021). Additionally, the Thai concept of Sufficiency Economy shows how Buddhist ideas can lead to sustainable practices in business, encouraging corporate responsibility through ethical choices and community involvement (Kantabutra S, 2019). These principles can help guide public administration, making sure that policies and programs support local economies while preserving cultural traditions and the environment. In the end, applying Buddhist philosophy in sustainability efforts helps build strong communities that can tackle today's challenges.

At the center of Buddhist teachings is a strong respect for interconnectedness, highlighting the need for sustainability in both personal and community actions. This idea not only promotes a responsible relationship with the environment but also supports thoughtful consumption and a deeper understanding of how actions affect outcomes, which are vital for any sustainability project. In Thailand, applying these teachings in public administration can create a more balanced way to manage resources, aligning with local community values. Additionally, a study on corporate sustainability practices in Sri Lanka shows that there is often a gap between traditional Buddhist values and the standardized systems used by companies, reducing the impact of local cultural contexts in sustainability efforts (Abeydeera S et al., 2016). By adopting fundamental Buddhist teachings, public administration can foster practices that align closely with community values, paving the way for sustainable development that respects both tradition and new ideas (Minh N et al., 2018).

In Thailand, the idea of Sufficiency Economy, introduced by King Bhumibol Adulyadej, acts as a guiding principle for sustainable development. It highlights a balanced and careful way to achieve economic progress. This idea focuses on good resource use and promotes moderate behaviors, reasonableness, and protection from outside changes. The Sufficiency Economy is closely linked to Buddhist beliefs, especially the Middle Path, which suggests living a moderate life and acting ethically, encouraging people to avoid extreme consumption and goals (et. al. et al., 2021). As Thailand faces modern challenges, like those related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sufficiency Economy offers a strong plan that encourages self-sufficiency and mindful living, connecting with broader Buddhist ideas of balance and sustainability (Puntasen A et al., 2017). This combined approach shows the importance of public administration in supporting community growth that is based on cultural identity and flexible to global changes.



In Thailand, how communities work together is greatly affected by Buddhist beliefs, which promote kindness and group well-being. The idea of Pid Thong Pang Phra, which means doing good things quietly, highlights a culturally based way of giving, where people engage in charitable acts without wanting fame (Sthapitanonda et al., 2015). This custom helps to strengthen social bonds and build trust in communities, emphasizing the value of a shared identity. Moreover, the mix of nonprofit public relations with community growth, as seen in organizations like Warm Heart Worldwide, presents a new model that aligns well with Buddhist principles of awareness and kindness (Mitchell et al., 2012). By developing cooperative relationships and using these cultural ideas, public administration can improve sustainable community development programs that connect with local people, leading to real changes that show the link between Buddhist customs and modern civic involvement initiatives.

The study of successful Buddhist-based projects in Thailand shows strong methods for sustainable community progress, especially when combining religious ideas with government work. Examples indicate how Buddhist beliefs can encourage participation and teamwork among different people in the community, as seen in projects that focus on leadership that respects cultural, language, and religious differences. For example, teachers in southern Thailand showed they cared about knowing local community situations and stressed building relationships between schools and communities, which fits with important learning ideas discussed in studies about teaching roles in these areas (Maitreephun et al.). Additionally, looking at religious social activism in Southeast Asia highlights the need for public policies that connect with local cultures and beliefs, thus supporting inclusion and sustainable growth (N/A, 2016). These case studies together emphasize how key public administration is in using Buddhist teachings for effective community-driven efforts.

## 4. Public Administration Strategies for Community Development

Using public administration methods in community development is important for supporting sustainable Buddhist-related projects, especially in Thailand. These methods usually focus on participatory governance, where local people take part in making decisions. This way, development initiatives connect with the social and cultural values of the community, strengthening the role of Buddhist principles in everyday life. For example, looking at how remittances affect families that send migrants can shed light on how financial help links with cultural habits, which affects overall community well-being (Veng SH, 2019). Additionally, properly assessing climate change projects shows the need to tackle obstacles that prevent sustainable development. By applying ideas like the Theory of No Change, public administration can more effectively evaluate how different projects impact the community and improve strategies that build resilience and support economic strength (Miyaguchi T, 2017). Together, these methods highlight public administration as a key player in promoting sustainable development that aligns with Buddhist beliefs.

Policy creation and execution are important parts of public administration, especially for sustainable community development based on Buddhism in Thailand. This process needs a deep understanding of local governance systems, as these systems affect how policies are made and carried out. Thai governance has moved from being centralized to more decentralized, giving local areas more control and responsibility. Still, issues like political interference and lack of funding remain a problem (Kulachai W, 2023). Also, using new methods in policy creation, like classifying agricultural areas by energy use, can improve the sustainability of development efforts (V I Belov, 2024). By tackling these challenges with

participatory governance and clear decision-making, public administration can better carry out policies that align with Buddhist values, leading to stronger community growth and resilience.

The teamwork between public administration and local Buddhist groups is very important for building sustainable community growth in Thailand. By using the strong values of Buddhism, which focus on kindness and community welfare, local officials can work well with these groups to boost social benefits and care for the environment. These partnerships often lead to new ideas that solve important community problems while honoring cultural traditions. Additionally, research on local administrative organizations (LAOs) shows that using digital tools can make public service delivery more efficient, helping improve community engagement (Prachumrasee K et al., 2024). This teamwork helps with urgent social issues and also supports long-term practices that regenerate, highlighting how important it is for stakeholders to work together to achieve sustainable tourism and community resilience (Jitaksorn W et al., 2024). Therefore, by engaging Buddhist organizations, public officials can create a more inclusive and effective way to move towards sustainable development.

Building capacity and training for community leaders is very important for Buddhist-based community development in Thailand. This helps improve leaders' skills and gives them what they need to solve local issues. Training programs made for Sangha leaders in Surin province focus on different areas, such as ethics, communication, and project planning, according to recent studies (et. al. et al., 2021). These efforts are essential for creating strong leadership that can handle community needs while promoting ethical values from Buddhist teachings. Also, customizing these training programs to fit the specific social and cultural situations of local communities can greatly boost collaboration among stakeholders, as shown by research on participatory governance in conservation (Lee et al., 2021). Therefore, including customized capacity-building programs is crucial for improving public administration's effectiveness in reaching sustainable development goals.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of development projects are very important for good public administration, especially in Buddhist-based community development in Thailand. Using strong M&E frameworks helps ensure projects follow the Sufficiency Economy principles, leading to sustainable results for local communities. For example, thorough impact assessments, shown in several studies, help find important sustainability indicators and look at the links between sustainability predictors and results (Kantabutra S, 2019). Also, involving stakeholders in the M&E process makes development projects more legitimate and effective. This is shown in impact assessments of low-carbon tourism programs, which create specific sustainability indicators through stakeholder input, reflecting local needs (Thongdejsri M et al., 2019). In the end, a good M&E system not only promotes accountability but also aids adaptive management strategies that support lasting community development in accordance with Buddhist values.

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up, the part public administration plays in encouraging sustainable Buddhist-based community growth in Thailand is very important and changing. By mixing Buddhist ideas into public policies and community projects, public administrators can support a complete approach that emphasizes caring for the environment, fairness in society, and economic strength. This system promotes teamwork among different groups, like government bodies, local communities, and religious groups, which builds a strong setup for sustainable growth. Furthermore, as mentioned, the psychological aspects of managers are key in sustainability reporting, showing how belief systems shape administrative actions

(Thoradeniya P et al., 2015). As Thailand faces the difficulties of modern development, a renewed emphasis on Buddhist values can act not just as a guiding philosophy but also as a useful method for tackling urgent social and environmental problems. Therefore, the connection between public administration and Buddhism presents a hopeful route toward a strong and peaceful society.

The study on public administration's role in promoting sustainable Buddhist-based community growth in Thailand shows some important points. First, having a strong collaborative governance framework is key for managing different stakeholder interests in environmental issues, especially for forest conservation. Research from Thailand, Cambodia, and Indonesia shows that good stakeholder involvement not only builds local flexibility but also builds trust among groups with different levels of power (Lee et al., 2021). Second, using Sappāya Dhamma principles in environmental management provides a way to connect community growth and ecological health. This approach highlights the need to create helpful physical, social, and educational spaces in primary schools, fostering a base for long-term commitment to sustainable practices (et. al. et al., 2021). In conclusion, these points show that including Buddhist ideas and collaborative governance can greatly enhance sustainable community growth in Thailand.

The future of public administration practices, especially in relation to sustainable Buddhist-based community development in Thailand, highlights the need for involving all stakeholders and participatory governance. The changing roles in forest management show that public administrators should focus on working together with various groups to tackle the complex social, economic, and environmental issues rural communities face. Better engagement of stakeholders not only builds local trust but also improves the ability to adapt to environmental projects (cite43). Additionally, using public relations for community development (PRCD) model can greatly help connect government bodies with local groups, aligning development efforts with insights from the community (cite44). As public administration changes, it will be important to adopt comprehensive frameworks that honor local traditions and values to achieve sustainable results, ensuring that the principles of Buddhist philosophy shape future community development efforts.

Scaling models based on Buddhism in sustainable community development in Thailand shows good potential for improving public welfare and environmental health. These models rely on ideas of mindfulness and connections, offering ways for effective public administration that focuses on community happiness and environmental care. By using local cultural knowledge, these methods can be adjusted to meet the specific issues that Thai communities face. For example, the efforts by the Yogyakarta government in sustainable transport highlight the important need for local solutions, showing aims similar to those in Thailand's public policies for sustainability (Atmojo MSE et al., 2024). Additionally, the creation of integrative models in city planning stresses the difficulty of balancing economy with social gains, leading to better decision-making that includes more voices (Suyendikova GK et al., 2022). Ultimately, the ability to scale these models depends on how well they can adjust to different social and economic situations, making sure they align with community values while supporting sustainable development goals.

To sum up, achieving sustainable community development in Thailand requires a complex approach that combines traditional Buddhist ideas with modern public administration methods. This connection promotes caring for the environment as well as building strong social ties and economic strength within communities. By focusing on the welfare of all members and supporting good governance, public administration is crucial in realizing the shared goals found in Buddhist teachings. As Thailand faces the difficulties of modernization

and globalization, embedding sustainable practices can bring overall benefits, enhancing local empowerment and national growth. In the end, sustainable community development is not just a goal for administration; it is a serious effort to improve life quality, maintain cultural traditions, and guarantee fair resource access for future generations. Ongoing cooperation between government and community groups is vital to fully achieve this vision.

### Originality & Body of Knowledge

*Originality:* This study presents a novel exploration of the intersection between public administration and Buddhist-based sustainable community development, a perspective that remains underexplored in Thai public policy research. Unlike previous studies that focus separately on either Buddhist ethical frameworks or sustainable governance models, this paper integrates the two, demonstrating how Buddhist principles such as compassion, mindfulness, and interdependence can enhance public administration effectiveness. The research offers a fresh theoretical contribution by applying Buddhist teachings like Saṅghavatthu and Sappāya Dhamma to public policy implementation, emphasizing their role in fostering social cohesion, participatory governance, and ecological responsibility. Through an examination of real-world case studies and policy implications, this paper bridges a crucial gap between cultural values and administrative efficiency, thereby offering a framework that is adaptable to both local and global sustainability challenges.

*Body of Knowledge:* This study expands the body of knowledge in both public administration and Buddhist studies by elucidating the critical role of Buddhist ethics in shaping sustainable governance in Thailand. It contributes to public administration discourse by highlighting how Buddhist teachings can serve as guiding principles for participatory decision-making, stakeholder collaboration, and community-driven policy frameworks. Additionally, this research enhances understanding of Buddhist-based community development, showcasing how religious and cultural values can align with modern governance strategies to promote sustainable outcomes. By integrating theories from public administration, sustainability studies, and Buddhist philosophy, the paper provides a comprehensive model that policymakers and scholars can utilize to design governance systems that are both ethically sound and practically effective. The findings also have broader implications for other Buddhist-majority nations seeking to incorporate traditional wisdom into contemporary governance models.

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### Declarations

**Conflict of interest:** The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

**Ethical treatment of experimental subjects (animals & human):** The research was conducted in compliance with the principles of the Helsinki Declaration regarding human subjects, so formal ethical approval was not required.

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