

THE FOUR-ALMSHOUSE MODEL: INTEGRATING DĀNA INTO BUDDHIST CRISIS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THAILAND

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: During the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand, communities exhibited remarkable solidarity through food donations and the establishment of almshouses. Despite these efforts, the rapid escalation of the epidemic between 2020 and 2022 posed significant challenges. Globally, including in Thailand, people faced severe distress and diverse needs. Volunteers from various agencies, many of whom had never collaborated before, united swiftly to address these issues and mitigate potential losses. However, managing a large group of volunteers proved challenging due to the lack of formal leadership structures, which led to operational inefficiencies and disruptions. Buddhist monks in Thailand, under the official announcement of the Supreme Patriarch, played a crucial role in resource distribution during the pandemic by establishing almshouses throughout the country. Help Society (HS), a collaborative effort of 38 organizations, including monk organizations, followed the Supreme Patriarch's guidance by brainstorming solutions to manage distress with limited resources. From these collaborations, HS developed the Four-Almshouses Model (FAM), integrating Buddhist principles and the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), and employing the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis framework to provide timely crisis solutions. This study aimed to investigate the development and implementation of the FAM, based on Buddhadhamma principles, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand.

Methodology: This study employed a qualitative research design, utilizing a case study approach to investigate the development and implementation of the FAM during the COVID-19 crisis in Thailand. A snowball sampling technique was used to selectively identify and interview key informants. Data collection was conducted using a combination of semi-structured questionnaires, focus groups, and in-depth interviews. These methods were complemented by triangulation



techniques to ensure the reliability and validity of the data through cross-verification from diverse sources.

Main Results: The FAM emerged from Buddhist networks as a strategic response to the crisis, designed to provide timely assistance. It was developed through a comprehensive SWOT analysis and integrated three crucial components: The Supreme Patriarch's almshouse announcement, Buddhist principles, and the SEP. This innovative Buddhist management model operated across four distinct categories: 1) Onsite almshouses: Provided direct assistance from temples; 2) Offsite almshouses: Extended support to communities beyond the immediate area; 3) Online almshouses: Leveraged digital platforms to reach broader communities across Thailand; and 4) Wisdom almshouses: Emphasized sustainable development and long-term solutions. The model was adopted in four additional regions during the COVID-19 crisis: Two locations in the central region, one in Chiang Mai Province in the northern region, and one in Narathiwat Province in the southern region.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: This investigation revealed the application of Buddhism in relation to Buddhist innovations for addressing the COVID-19 crisis. The FAM integrated six core Buddhadhamma principles: Sati and Sampajañña (Mindfulness and Clear Comprehension), Dama (Self-restraint), Khanti (Patience), Dāna (Generosity), and Yonisomanasikāra (Systematic Attention). The teaching "Attā hi attano nātho" (One is Truly One's Own Protector). These principles were collaboratively refined through brainstorming sessions within Buddhist networks, shaping the FAM into a practical and adaptive solution for crisis management. For instance, Yonisomanasikāra clarified principles, crystallized operational models, and adjusted practices to address varying impacts and evolving circumstances effectively.

Conclusions: The FAM's foundation lay in the Supreme Patriarch's directive and Buddhist principles, which were systematically applied to crisis management. The integration of Buddhadhamma with modern management strategies highlighted the model's potential as a blueprint for addressing future challenges. These principles served as guidelines for driving and addressing problems during the emergency situation of the COVID-19 crisis.

Keywords: Almshouse, Buddhadhamma, Innovation, Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, SWOT Analysis

Introduction

The global COVID-19 pandemic burdened healthcare personnel and individuals worldwide, leading to both morbidity and mortality (Chang et al., 2022); (COVID-19 Excess Mortality Collaborators, 2022). Healthcare professionals faced challenges such as prolonged work hours, strained healthcare systems (Al-Zaman, 2020); (Zhan et al., 2020), and an economic recession (Prada et al., 2022); (Satchanawakul et al., 2023). Indirect effects, including mental health issues (Colizzi et al., 2023); (Thatrimontrichai et al., 2021), food insecurity (Phulkerd et al., 2023), and health inequality (Chirico et al., 2022); (Okonkwo et al., 2020), further compounded the challenges faced by Thailand. The country's response mechanisms revealed gaps in resource



distribution, leadership roles, and effective coordination among sectors, leaving communities particularly vulnerable during the peak of the crisis.

Toward the end of 2021, Thailand experienced a significant surge in COVID-19 cases, which exposed weaknesses in public health preparedness. Shortages of medical supplies (Tuesuwan et al., 2023), increased food poverty (Walsh & Lovichakorntikul, 2023), and the uneven distribution of aid highlighted the critical need for a more inclusive, community-driven response model. These challenges pointed to the necessity of a framework that addressed not only immediate needs such as food and medical resources but also long-term resilience and solidarity within communities.

In response to these challenges, the Help Society (HS) initiated the "Four-Almshouse Model" (FAM), which drew inspiration from monks' roles during crises and six key Buddhist principles, with a primary focus on *dāna* (Generosity). Developed using a SWOT analysis, the FAM identified and addressed specific weaknesses in traditional crisis management approaches, such as inefficient resource allocation, lack of localized leadership, and disconnected aid efforts. By integrating Buddhadhamma principles with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), the model emphasized holistic, sustainable solutions that catered to physical, emotional, and social well-being. For example, "Happy cabinets" (Kerdkaew, 2020), inspired by Buddhist giving practices, were introduced to ensure equitable access to food and supplies in affected communities.

The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of the FAM as a crisis management strategy developed by HS during the COVID-19 pandemic. By integrating Buddhadhamma principles and the SEP, the FAM represented a Buddhist-inspired innovation for addressing challenges in disaster response. Building on the issues and significance outlined, the research sought to provide insights into how such Buddhist-based approaches could enhance disaster response and promote community well-being, particularly within Thailand's pandemic context.

Objectives

The aim of this study was to explore the development and implementation of the FAM, based on Buddhadhamma principles, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand.

Methodology

To investigate the challenges of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, this study employed a qualitative research design that integrated principles of Buddhadhamma to gain in-depth insights into experiences, adaptive strategies, and systemic responses. Using a case study approach, the research examined lessons learned from the development and implementation of the Four-Almshouse Model (FAM) between November 2022 and March 2023. Ethical approval was obtained from Walailak University (Certificate Number WUEC-22-332-01).

Data collection utilized purposive sampling and the snowball method to identify and recruit key informants within interconnected networks, particularly Buddhist communities and volunteer groups involved in crisis management. Snowball sampling proved particularly suitable



for this study, as it enabled access to individuals with specialized knowledge and unique experiences, often challenging to identify through other methods. Purposive sampling ensured the inclusion of diverse and relevant stakeholders, enriching the depth and variety of data collected. Pilot testing was conducted to refine interview guides and focus group prompts, ensuring the tools' clarity, reliability, and alignment with the study objectives.

The study involved in-depth, semi-structured interviews with three key individuals instrumental in the development and implementation of the FAM. These included Phramaha Wara Chotiwaro from Wat Pa Sunthon Thammaram in Chumphon Province, Mr. Sevee Ruangtrakul, Chairman Emeritus of the Muay Thai Foundation, and Phrapalad Surachet Surachetto, Abbot of Wat Tanod in Nonthaburi Province. These individuals were chosen because they were the most relevant figures in the primary phase of developing and implementing the model.

Focus groups were conducted four times with stakeholders from the four expansion areas. Each session lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and included open-ended questions to gather different views on how the model was implemented. Phramaha Wara Chotiwaro actively participated in these discussions, offering valuable insights into the model's contextual adaptations and broader impact.

To ensure reliability, the study used member checking, allowing participants to review summaries of key findings and confirm their accuracy. Triangulation was achieved through multiple data sources, including the official LINE account of the HS, documents related to the FAM, Facebook fan pages, and insights from leader teams actively involved in the initiative.

Using these data collection methods, the study sought to gain a deep understanding of the development and implementation of the FAM, shedding light on its background, conceptual foundation, and practical applications. By merging qualitative insights with Buddhadhamma principles, the research contributed to the conversation on innovative crisis management strategies within Buddhist frameworks.

Results and Discussion

The Development of Buddhist Innovation

1. The HS collaboration

At a critical juncture on March 23, 2020, the Supreme Patriarch issued an announcement through the National Office of Buddhism. This announcement led to the first collaborative effort known as "HS," which was initiated by Mr. Ruangtrakul and Phramaha Wara Chotiwaro. After carefully considering the situation, context, potential, and operational readiness, Phramaha Wara Chotiwaro recommended Wat Tanod in Nonthaburi Province as a suitable temple for this collaboration. This marked the beginning of online collaboration within the Buddhist network under the name "HS." Wat Tanod served as an experimental initiative aimed at fostering collaboration among various groups.

Phramaha Wara Chotiwaro stated, "Building upon the success of this collaborative integration, the establishment of HS sought to de-emphasize individual identities and egos.

A fundamental principle of HS was to minimize personal significance and encourage all volunteers to adopt an egalitarian mindset. This aligned with the principles established by King Rama IX." Social enterprises successfully applied these principles as well (Saowapaporn et al., 2021).

This framework promoted a state of freedom within the group, devoid of designated leaders or subordinates, and facilitated a collective decision-making process. As a result, the group relied on situational dynamics as a guiding force to inform their actions. The strength of this group lay in the exceptional proficiency of its leaders in efficiently resolving issues and fostering cohesion among over 100 volunteers. The initial activities included regular online meetings, prompt actions, and successful distribution across diverse networks nationwide. These findings aligned with prior research on effective crisis management during the COVID-19 situation, which emphasized the importance of well-structured plans, data-informed decision-making, effective communication, proper allocation of resources, dedicated operational centers, and active involvement of stakeholders (Chaitarachote, 2022).

2. Strategic tool

The findings of the SWOT analysis conducted within HS were comprehensively summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 SWOT Analysis

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	<u>Strengths</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Temple: The central hub of the community 2. Temple: Source of faith, prestige, acceptance, and credibility 3. Temple: Vital resource gathering and access point for assistance 4. Monks: Efficiently integrate diverse volunteers 5. Monks: Provide moral sanctuary and empowerment 	<u>Weaknesses</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Temple: Weak community engagement potential 2. No standardized operating methods in temples 3. Lack of unified policies among different temples 4. Outdated in innovation and adaptation to the changing world 5. Overreliance on defensive strategies instead of proactive approaches 6. Monk: Limited access to international communication tools
External origin	<u>Opportunities</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Temple: Enhance social dependence 2. Implement COVID-19 cleanliness measures 3. Promote integrated cultural concepts. 4. Showcase Buddhism's problem-solving potential 	<u>Threats</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Impact on social contexts, requiring safety measures in monasteries. 2. Strict government regulations for public safety. 3. Challenges in mobilizing assistance due to social distancing. 4. Inability to conduct large gatherings and ceremonies in temples. 5. Uncertainty and potential worsening conditions



3. The Components of the Buddhist Innovation

The Supreme Patriarch's announcement regarding the establishment of almshouses led to concrete implementation guided by the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) and the six principles of Buddhадhamma. These foundational principles facilitated the development of the Buddhist innovation known as the Four-Almshouse Model (FAM).

Introduced by His Majesty King Rama IX in 1974, SEP aimed to guide the Thai people's way of life. This philosophy had been applied during various economic crises, influencing human resource development (Pruetipibultham, 2010), well-being (Barua & Tejativaddhana, 2019), and community strengthening (Vorakitjoe et al., 2024). Moreover, previous studies highlighted SEP's role as a survival strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic, promoting self-sufficiency, protection, and rationality (Phrakru Satugitgosol et al., 2021).

In January 2020, during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand, the initiative team established an online network in collaboration with five organizations: The Muay Thai Foundation, Bundit Asa, the Magic Books for Kids Project, Wat Tanod, and the Electricity Generating Authority. This network utilized Buddhist monks as spiritual professionals in the digital realm, integrating technology in alignment with their spiritual and ethical principles (Panyapa, 2022).

Key individuals held weekly brainstorming sessions to adapt to evolving situations and requirements. Six Buddhist principles were discussed and selected as guidelines for developing the almshouse model. These principles were as follows:

3.1 Sati and Sampajañña

In Buddhадhamma, Sati and Sampajañña, or mindfulness, stood as profound principles directing individuals away from harmful actions. Sati involved focused attention on the present task and awareness of consciousness, while Sampajañña entailed understanding the context and effectively applying that awareness. Sati fostered continuous awareness, advocating for a conscientious and vigilant approach to every facet of life. Meanwhile, Sampajañña ensured individuals comprehended their actions clearly, preventing them from yielding to the allure of desires or experiencing lapses in attention.

Each of these principles, when applied individually, contributed to leading a secure life. However, the absence of both significantly increased the likelihood of errors and challenges in navigating life's complexities (Thanissaro, 2015). In critical situations inducing mental confusion and biased decision-making, mindfulness served as a tool to realign the mind and enable timely problem resolution. As articulated in a Buddhist proverb, "Sati Sabbattha Patthiya," mindfulness was indispensable in every scenario (Luang Ta Maha Boowa, 2012).

3.2 Dama

Dama, also known as self-command, included the disciplines of self-control, self-discipline, and an unwavering dedication to self-improvement. This concept was universally esteemed by celestial beings, humanity, and all sentient entities. Dama honored those who strove for self-cultivation and personal greatness, maintaining the valued principles of Buddhадhamma.



It was exemplified by the adage "Danto settho manussesu (Brahmagunabhorn)," which meant "The self-restrained one is the best among humans."

During times of crisis, maintaining emotional control proved exceedingly challenging. Consequently, it was essential to cultivate Dama to prioritize a realistic assessment of the situation while consciously avoiding personal biases. This approach facilitated the management and resolution of immediate issues.

3.3 Khanti

Khanti encompassed enduring life's adversities, maintaining equanimity amidst afflictions, navigating interpersonal discomfort, and adhering to the Buddhadhamma. When applied in practical contexts, the concept of patience or tolerance could be categorized into three distinct types. Endurance in strenuous efforts: This entailed pushing through demanding tasks or tolerating severe environmental conditions, Endurance through hardship: This required individuals to withstand and persevere through suffering, such as enduring illness, coping with emotional distress: This involved demonstrating resilience in handling psychological discomfort caused by external factors, such as offensive remarks or actions that disrupted mental tranquility. The development of these abilities led to a stage called "Adhivasanakanti," signifying the proficiency in managing emotions irrespective of situational circumstances (Hiraki, 1989).

Amidst the COVID-19 crisis, the demand for both physical and mental tolerance became imperative. Volunteers exemplified such tolerance in their daily tasks, often requiring patience as they awaited the admission of patients throughout the day. This tolerance entailed coping with exhaustion, hunger, and sleep deprivation, culminating in both physical and mental fatigue. Despite these challenges, the commitment to serving the public persisted, necessitating unwavering patience to persevere and continue providing assistance.

3.4 Dāna

In Buddhism, Dāna referred to the selfless act of giving without expecting anything in return. It fostered compassion, spiritual growth, and interconnectedness within the community, while accumulating great merit for the giver. This practice necessitated that the offerings were obtained honestly and that both the giver and recipient embodied virtuous qualities, ensuring pure intentions and sincerity. Dāna led to compassion and honesty, benefiting both givers and recipients. Moreover, within the realm of Buddhism, the practice of Dāna transcended simple material donations, or āmisadāna (Thongputtamon, 2019), and included the giving of spiritual teachings and support, or dhammadāna, which was considered even more valuable. It encompassed the dissemination of Buddhadhamma, symbolizing the spread of knowledge. Such conduct was commended by the Buddha as the paramount form of generosity, encapsulated in the phrase "Sabbadānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jināti," meaning "The gift of the Dhamma transcends all gifts." This principle, which included engaging in actions that benefited the public and demonstrating selfless generosity towards fellow beings, was regarded as essential, particularly in times of crisis.



During the COVID-19 outbreak, it became essential for wealthy individuals to support those in need, with the HS serving as the central hub of assistance. One example involved a wealthy individual who was unable to gain admission to the hospital. The HS assisted by saving their life and those of their family members through alternative treatments such as providing oxygen tanks and medicines, which they might not have considered themselves. Consequently, those affluent individuals who were rescued and survived nurtured trust in the operations of the HS. They showed their gratitude through monetary donations or *Dāna*, aiming to further extend assistance to others.

3.5 Yonisomanasikāra

Yonisomanasikāra referred to wise consideration, which was crucial for cultivating virtue and progressing toward liberation. It involved thoughtfully contemplating and understanding the nature of things, promoting positive mental states, and dispelling ignorance. This practice encompassed ten distinct ways of thinking, such as ordinary thinking, the Noble Truth way of thinking, and evaluative thinking. The principle of Yonisomanasikāra held significant importance in crisis contexts, comprising four fundamental elements: *Patthamanasikārā* entailed the pursuit of effective solutions or methodologies to tackle various challenges; *U-baimanasikārā* underscored the importance of sustained, directed cognition, systematically prioritizing tasks to ensure clarity and organization; *Prathāmanasikārā* denoted a continuous, lucid thought process, emphasizing structured thinking devoid of clutter while prioritizing manageable aspects within each scenario; and *Karmanasikārā* involved rational contemplation aimed at uncovering causal relationships between factors, thereby identifying the root causes of issues and addressing them appropriately (Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P. A. Payutto), 2013b).

Additionally, *Upādakamanasikārā* fostered positive mental dispositions, encouraging individuals to perceive critical life circumstances as opportunities for cultivating virtues such as patience and kindness (Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P. A. Payutto), 2013a). The Yonisomanasikāra approach proved effective in managing digital online usage during the COVID-19 crisis (Pangthipumpai et al., 2023). Furthermore, the concept of self-reliance emerged as a defense strategy against epidemics in many countries (Leung et al., 2023); (Mathpati et al., 2022). Although these countries may not have adhered to the same form of self-reliance practiced in Buddhism, they employed similar survival methods.

3.6 Attā hi attano nātho

Attā hi attano nātho, or self-reliance in Buddhism, signified depending on oneself as the ultimate refuge. One's own wisdom became the reliable sanctuary, as others could not always be depended upon with certainty. From the standpoint of existence, this concept included awareness and respect for life's facts. It advised against reliance on external factors beyond one's own efforts and wisdom, whether they were supernatural powers, destiny, or other phenomena. Furthermore, it discouraged unrealistic expectations of assistance from others. The Buddhist adage "*Viriya Dukkhamaccati*" stated that perseverance enabled individuals to transcend suffering,

while "Attā havā chitaā seyyo" asserted the superiority of those who conquered themselves as truly outstanding individuals (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 1992).

During the emergence of COVID-19, a considerable gap in understanding and timely response methods persisted. Consequently, HS utilized the principle of Attā hi attano nātho to promote volunteer self-reliance, encouraging individuals to independently seek out guidelines and collaborate with other networks to provide patient assistance.

4. FAM Initiation

The FAM was structured into four distinct almshouse categories, each serving specific roles within the community. These categories included the onsite almshouse, the offsite almshouse, the online almshouse, and the wisdom almshouse. Table 2 provided an overview of the FAM strategies, goals, activities, and categories to contextualize its application in combating the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2 The Four-Almshouse Model Overview

Phases	Strategies	Goals	Activities	Almshouse categories
1	Proactive	Emergency plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actively seek potential donors - Maintain regular communication with donors - Initiate donation drives for resources 	- Onsite
2	Corrective	Healing Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement measures to support volunteer groups - Explore alternative solutions for the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Onsite - Offsite - Online - Wisdom
3	Preventive	Restoration Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adapt to changes in the "New normal" era - Provide community restoration activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Onsite - Offsite - Online - Wisdom
4	Offensive	Developmental Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish leadership to meet diverse needs - Drive nation-building and transformative changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online - Wisdom

The onsite almshouse acted as a central hub for emergency coordination and assistance. It was located within the temple premises and played a crucial role in accepting donations, distributing aid, and supporting the community through a dedicated group of volunteers. Its operations involved proactive, corrective, and preventive strategies.

The offsite almshouse extended assistance beyond the settlement area. Its activities aimed to coordinate and connect various community missions to foster self-sustainability. One notable activity was giving out "Happy Boxes," which supported the community through corrective and preventive strategies.



The online almshouse served as a virtual or digital platform to assist individuals in difficulty by providing resources, support, or assistance. It also provided crucial coordination support to various agencies to ensure effective cooperation and aid delivery. This category implemented corrective, preventive, and offensive strategies.

The wisdom almshouse assumed a long-term role by utilizing the temple as a community brain center. It served as a hub for information, analysis, and management, facilitating coordination with the government and other stakeholders to maximize community benefits. Its strategies involved corrective, preventive, and offensive approaches.

5. Initial Implementation

The HS initiated and developed the almshouse model at Wat Tanod in Nontaburi Province. However, it became evident that the demand for food extended beyond the immediate vicinity of the temple, impacting a larger population. As a result, the distribution of "Happy Boxes" began in the subsequent phase, facilitated by the generous sponsorship of two organizations associated with the HS. Bundit Asa sponsored 537 boxes, while the Muay Thai Foundation provided 1,216 boxes. These provisions were distributed across Bangkok and its neighboring areas. The primary contents of the happy boxes predominantly comprised dry food items, which played a crucial role in ensuring survival (Figure 1). Additionally, Wat Tanod prepared approximately 1,500 home care boxes containing essential medical equipment and Thai herbal medicines required for the initial treatment of COVID-19 (Sarai & Onopas, 2022). Interestingly, as an unexpected response to the challenges posed by COVID-19, almsgiving was also practiced in Islam, demonstrating similarities in community-based charitable acts (Hakim & Hakim, 2022).



Figure 1 The happy boxes

Implementation Expansion

1. The Magic Book Project for Kids (Bangkok, Central Region of Thailand)

The Magic Book Project for Kids expanded its operations after a successful preliminary trial at Wat Tanod. The HS group, having recognized the project's positive impact on the community, allocated resources and established an additional storage facility at the project's office. This facility stored essential equipment, including oxygen tanks, PPE kits, ATK testing kits, and



happy boxes. The expansion also led to the establishment of an onsite almshouse, complementing the existing online almshouse. Notably, around 20 percent of individuals seeking assistance required both encouragement and counseling, emphasizing the critical role of the wisdom almshouse in providing comprehensive support.

2. Village Office (Bangkok, Central Region of Thailand)

Three individuals from the village office in Thung Khru, Bangkok, actively participated as volunteers in the HS group. They distributed food to individuals affected by COVID-19, including patients and their families under quarantine. As cases in Samut Sakhon increased, the team identified the need for additional storage space for vital resources. Consequently, they sought and received permission to utilize the public space within the village office for this purpose. This space served as another storage location for the HS group, allowing them to store survival items and distribute happy boxes to COVID-19 patients. The happy boxes, likely containing morale-boosting items and essential supplies, aimed to provide comfort and support during challenging times. These initiatives highlighted the village office's commitment to aiding their community and contributing to the HS group's efforts to support COVID-19 patients and their families.

3. Chiang Mai Province (Northern Region of Thailand)

The Chiang Mai Trust, established in 2015, was primarily composed of university friends who were entrepreneurs involved in ventures such as the North Gate Jazz Club, YoRice (A Rice Drink Enterprise), and the Omnipath Creative Art Studio. Their main objective was to address challenges in Chiang Mai, including reforestation initiatives and tackling smog issues. As part of their broader efforts, the Omnipath Creative Art Studio collaborated with the Muay Thai Foundation to create online Muay Thai cartoons, which linked them to the HS group. Although the HS group faced constraints in directly offering assistance to Chiang Mai residents, their contributions proved valuable. They donated funds to purchase one ton of rice, while the Chiang Mai group supplemented this effort by providing additional dry food supplies. Together, their collaborative efforts aimed to assist the local community in Chiang Mai during a period of adversity.

4. Wat Sukhirin Pracharam, Narathiwat Province (Southern Region of Thailand)

Since 2014, Phrakru Metha Thanusai, the abbot of Wat Sukhirin Pracharam in Narathiwat province, had actively provided assistance to individuals affected by the ongoing unrest in Thailand's three southern border provinces, regardless of their religious affiliations. In this context, the HS group facilitated aid distribution between two temples through a corrective strategy. The process began with a financial donation from the HS group to a temple in Srisaket province, known for its abundant rice production but lacking other essential food resources. The monks at the Srisaket temple used the funds to purchase dry food items, which were distributed locally. Concurrently, the HS group appealed to the rice-farming community in Srisaket for rice donations. Through these efforts, approximately 500 kilograms of rice were collected and sent to Narathiwat province to assist those in need. The abbot of Wat Sukhirin Pracharam personally oversaw the



allocation of funds for procuring additional food supplies, while twelve monks within the temple premises managed the packaging of these items.

The model demonstrated its effectiveness during health crises by exhibiting adaptability in addressing real-world conditions. Innovations led by monks, including the "Happy Cabinet," home delivery of essential supplies, and repurposing temple spaces for vaccination efforts, were pivotal in the COVID-19 response (Loetamnakitseri, 2022). Furthermore, the model extended beyond providing survival food to include medication assistance, particularly during the social distancing period of the pandemic. This support encompassed the distribution of *Andrographis paniculata* capsules and the Wat Khiriwong drug formula (Khanthong et al., 2024).

A notable strength of the model lies in its ability to utilize even the smallest and most readily available resources, enabling expansion into diverse zones and local contexts. However, the study faced certain limitations. While successful implementation in specific locations indicated promise, it did not guarantee seamless scalability to other regions or countries. Effectiveness depended on factors such as leadership dynamics, local contexts, cultural specificities, and resource availability.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

The originality and contribution of this study lie in the development of the Buddhist innovation known as the FAM model (Figure 2). This model was initiated by five organizations that later merged to form a coordination team named HS, established to support individuals affected by the COVID-19 crisis in Thailand. The model's development at Wat Tanod employed SWOT analysis and was grounded in three key components: The Supreme Patriarch's speech for the almshouse, Buddhist principles, and the SEP.

The HS team demonstrated measurable impacts through various implementations of the FAM model. In the onsite almshouse at Wat Tanod, notable contributions included lunch boxes provided by the Electricity Generating Authority and approximately 1,500 home care boxes distributed to the temple and local communities. The offsite almshouse extended the model's impact area by distributing 537 "Happy Boxes" provided by Bundit Asa and 1,216 "Happy Boxes" from the Muay Thai Foundation. These efforts were coordinated and distributed by the Magic Books for Kids Project and the Thung Khru village office in Bangkok and the central region of Thailand.

An example of online almshouse activities involved the delivery of one ton of rice to Chiang Mai Province and 500 kilograms of rice to Narathiwat Province, demonstrating how the FAM model effectively integrates onsite, offsite, and online components.

The wisdom almshouse, an integral part of the FAM model, trained HS volunteers under the guidance of Buddhist monks. This training emphasized the application of Buddhadhamma principles to address challenges and support communities during the pandemic. A notable example of the wisdom almshouse in action was the collaborative effort between local monks

and HS volunteers, who worked together to deliver essential support and relief to affected communities.

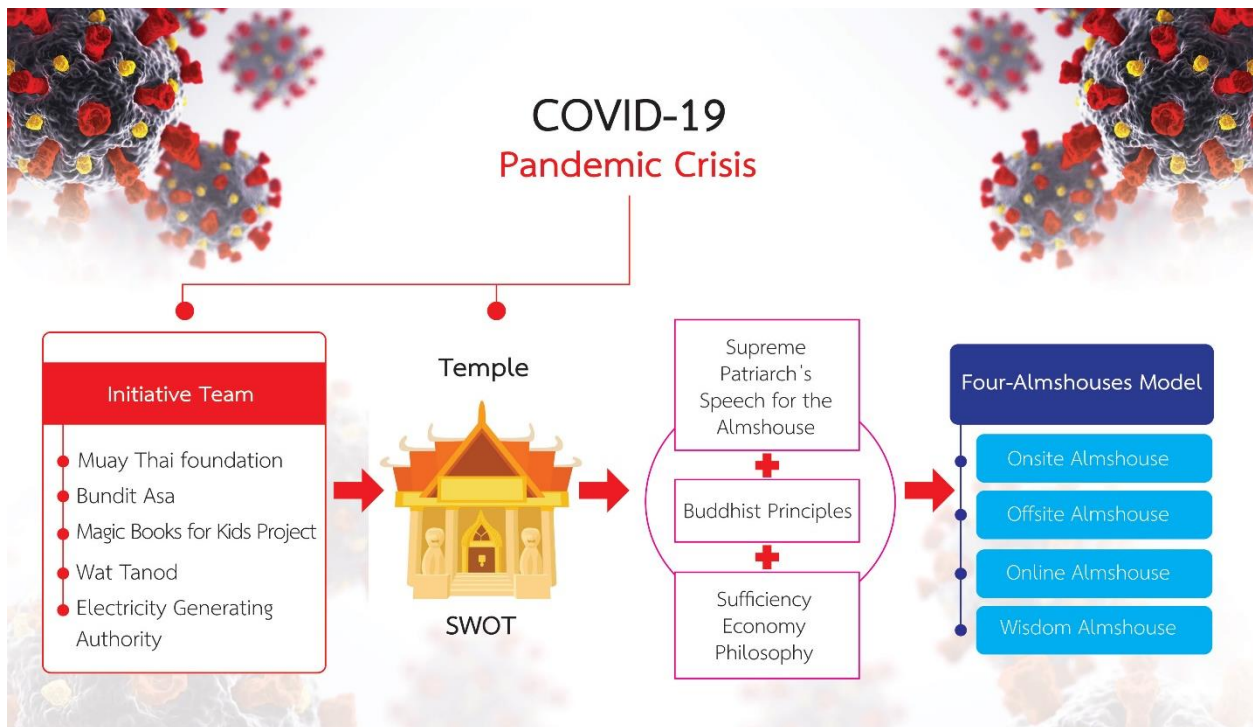


Figure 2 The Four-Almshouses Model development

Conclusions and Recommendations

The FAM, an innovative Buddhist model, originated within the Buddhist network at HS during the COVID-19 crisis. This model encompassed categories including onsite, offsite, online, and wisdom almshouses, tailored to specific circumstances. With its foundation in Buddhadhamma and the SEP, it was developed through a SWOT analysis, fostering a collaborative approach that harmonized efforts across diverse organizations and regions. Exhibiting remarkable adaptability and scalability, this model proved highly effective in crisis situations, facilitating rapid deployment during emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Even as the crisis subsided, the volunteer experience that HS gained remained ready to address future challenges, ensuring sustained preparedness for any forthcoming obstacles. However, the model's scalability and effectiveness were subject to factors such as leadership dynamics, local contexts, cultural nuances, and resource availability. Although it was successfully implemented in specific locations, seamless replication in other regions or countries was not guaranteed. Establishing standardized training programs for leaders and volunteers was recommended to ensure consistency in application, while fostering partnerships with local organizations and governments would enable the integration of valuable context-specific knowledge and resources.



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