

Security Activity of Vietnam Buddhist Association from 1981 to the Present

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Abstract For nearly 40 years of establishment (in 1981), the Vietnamese Buddhist Association has practiced the spirit of compassion and relief in order to bring a prosperous, peaceful and happy life to the people. This secular activity is the activity of ensuring social security to help people overcome the difficulties they are facing in their daily life. This is also the "motivation", the initial basis to help a large number of disadvantaged people in society to assert themselves and their families in life, contributing to building a better and more sustainable society. In recent years, this activity has been strongly and widely implemented towards disadvantaged people in society. Therefore, in this paper, on the basis of clarifying the importance of the Vietnamese Buddhist Association in ensuring social security for the people over the past time, the authors assessed the situation and drew some experience from social security activities of Vietnamese Buddhist Association for people from 1981 to the present.

Keywords Social security, Vietnamese Buddhist Association, Experience, Vietnam, 1981

1. Introduction

Social security activities for people has become a central issue in the sustainable development strategy of countries around the world in general and in Vietnam in particular. Along with the socio-economic development strategy, social security activities are always the primary concern to Vietnam in order to improve the material and spiritual life of the people. With this wish, from its establishment (in 1981), the Vietnamese Buddhist Association has always accompanied the country, carried out the renovation and international integration in the spirit of harmony, solidarity with the motto "Serving religion, patriotism". Many "secular" social security activities for people, especially the disadvantaged people in society, are always concerned, shared and implemented extensively by the Vietnamese Buddhist Association. Thereby express the spirit of "Benevolence, Mercy, Cheerfulness, Indifference" and the humanism and virtue "Compassionate mind" of Buddha's teachings. Social security activities have been responding to the thoughts and aspirations of monks, nuns and Buddhists in the country. Therefore, social security activities for people have created a vigorous movement, a source of encouragement for the

national solidarity movement. The achievement of "human life" from social security activities for the people creates a material and spiritual motivation for the country's sustainable development, and contributes positively to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations¹.

2. Research Method

In recent years, in the world and in Vietnam, research on social security is attracting scientists and scholars to participate in research with many different approaches and methods. Because this is an important theoretical and practical activity to improve the people's life quality and contributes to the sustainable development of each country and the world.

As one of the important contents in the development direction of the Vietnamese Buddhist Association, *social security activities of the Vietnamese Buddhist Association* are interested in researching in many angles, contents and welfare pillars by the authors in recent years. In this article, the authors have used a number of research methods: analytical and synthetical method; logical - historical method with the purpose of clarifying the importance of the

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¹ The MDGs (8 MDGs) include: 1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. 2. To achieve universal primary education. 3. To promote gender equality and empower women. 4. To reduce child mortality. 5. To improve maternal health. 6. To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases. 7. To ensure environmental sustainability. 8. To develop a global partnership for development.

Vietnamese Buddhist Association in ensuring social security for people in Vietnam ...

The paper is based on historical sources stored in libraries and volumes of prayer-books, research papers, highly reliable scientific conferences, summaries of disciplines related to social policy and social security policies, ... Based on that, the article goes in depth to analyze the typical activities of the Vietnamese Buddhist Association in general, the Buddhist Association in localities in particular about ensuring social security for people to provide scientific arguments to achieve the effect that the article requires.

To assess the reality of the research issue, the authors conducted a survey based on the questionnaire survey method to extract practical information from monks, nuns and Buddhists in some localities throughout the country (Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City; Lao Cai; Hung Yen; Dak Lak; Lam Dong; Thua Thien Hue; Bac Ninh; Tay Ninh) from 2015 to the present. These are localities with the active participation of the Vietnamese Buddhist Association. Data were collected based on the survey results of 300 monks, nuns and 1000 Buddhists living in the above areas. Information and data obtained after processing through a number of statistical software help the authors analyze and assess objectively the requirements and tasks set out in the article.

Especially, in order to discuss the research results of the article in an objective and scientific manner, the authors have conducted using expert research methods (in-depth interviews, group discussions). At the same time, through these research methods, the authors have drawn some experiences from social security activities for Buddhists and people of the Vietnamese Buddhist Association after nearly 30 years of establishment. Specifically, the authors conducted in-depth interviews with a number of religious managers, religious experts and monks, nuns and Buddhists during the study.

3. Research Results

3.1. The Importance of the Vietnamese Buddhist Association in Social Security Activities for the People from the Time of Reunification (1981) to the Present

Currently, there are many different approaches in the world about social security. Although approaching from many different perspectives, it shows that ensuring social security is the basis to contribute to ensuring income and life for citizens in society. Its mode of operation is through public measures. The goal is to create "well-being" or, more precisely, to ensure "human security" for all members of society.

Ensuring social security is the use of tools and measures by the state and society to limit, overcome and assist members in society against risks in life and economic shocks, or due to causes of illness, maternity, labor accident,

unemployment, injury, old age, natural disasters; at the same time, ensure medical care and allowances for poor families with many children. Social security is expressed through a system of policies such as hunger eradication, poverty reduction, sustainable poverty reduction, multi-dimensional poverty reduction, social insurance, health insurance, social assistance and incentives, etc [19].

On the basis of the spirit of harmony, solidarity, serving religion and patriotism, inheritance of more than 2000 years of history and with the principle of "serving sentient beings as offerings to the Buddha" with practical activities, the Vietnamese Buddhist Association actively implement activities to ensure social security for people. The Association helps and encourages Buddhists and people to take an active part in the process of economic growth and development, and to overcome risks in the lives of people. Since then, creating social consensus, consolidating and improving the quality of social security. Therefore, promoting the role of the Vietnamese Buddhist Association in ensuring social security for people is a necessary and objective requirement, consistent with the direction set forth from the unification.

"... The life of the Buddha taught us that the true happiness of every human being is not merely sought in material, but instead sought in peace of mind. On the national level, instead of pursuing unlimited growth, but instead, it is the growth of spiritual wealth, peace, happiness, respect and protection of the environment. Reflected with its core ideas and doctrines such as the doctrine of dependent origination, the doctrine of karma and the law of cause and effect, Buddhism has many advantages in engaging with the global leadership mission and shared responsibility for a sustainable society ...".

(Venerable Thich Thien Nhon - Speaking at the Vesak Festival 2019 - in Ha Nam (Vietnam))

Through many practical activities, the Vietnamese Buddhist Association has aroused patriotism and national pride among Buddhists and the people; actively participate in movements of the Vietnam Fatherland Front at all levels in activities of building and strengthening the people's administration, taking care of and protecting the legitimate interests of the people. The Vietnamese Buddhist Association at all levels is always a bridge between the government, organizations and social unions with Buddhists and people; attracting a large number of Buddhists and people to participate in social work, improving the activeness of each Buddhist, people in solving complex issues of social reality. Thereby, the Vietnamese Buddhist Association at all levels contributes to creating and maintaining the spirit of solidarity and mutual affection among members of the society, which is the basis for creating community strength in ensuring the implementation of social security for people, contributing to the sustainable development of the country.

In the spirit of appreciating the "entering the world", since

the unification of sects to date, nearly 40 years of establishment, the Vietnamese Buddhist Association has always set the direction and measures for activities emanating from the legitimate interests and aspirations of Buddhists and the people; consistent with the country's development practices and the development's guidelines and policies of the country. The process of implementing the direction and measures on the Association's social security in practice has always received the support and assistance of a large number of Buddhists and the people. Therefore, the prestige and influence of Vietnamese Buddhism are increasingly affirmed on the map of Buddhism in the region and the world.

In recent years, through various channels and forms, the Association has been actively propagating and disseminating Vietnam's guidelines, policies and laws on social security policies; coordinating with socio-political organizations at all levels to effectively organize the implementation of a number of basic pillars of social security policies: hunger eradication and poverty reduction; organize major campaigns nationwide, promoting the nation's compassionate tradition to help Buddhists and people facing many difficulties and risks in life; join and coordinate to participate in the movement "When drinking water, think of its source" in gratitude to heroes and families who have contributed to the country and the people; ... The practical activities launched and participated in by the Association are one of the important components to help Vietnam accelerate the guarantee of social security for people, proceed to successfully achieve the goals that Vietnam has set: Rich people, strong country, democratic society, justice and civilization.

Social security policy is a system of policies, programs to prevent, reduce and overcome risks. In order to ensure the implementation of the system of policies and programs, it is based not only on the resources of the State, international resources, resources from enterprises in state and private sectors, but also the resources of the people. The Vietnamese Buddhist Association at all levels organized, raised the generosity and volunteerism from domestic and foreign enterprises and Buddhists to participate in social movements; to regularly study and renovate measures and methods of allocating financial sources from charity budget funds; to build complete mechanisms and ways to promptly encourage Buddhists and kind-hearted communities to contribute financial resources; to participate in managing and effectively using resources for social security assurance process.

In addition, many monks, nuns and Buddhists are always actively involved in constructing and perfecting the guidelines and policies of Vietnam; participate in reviewing projects and policies of socio-economic development of the country and localities. The spirit of "truth and predestination" of the Buddha has gradually been "upholding the Dharma, giving advantage to the people". The activities of the Buddhist "ambassadors" also contribute to

overcoming the negative and limitations in the process of implementing projects under each different pillar of social security in many localities.

Thus, after nearly 40 years of establishment, social security activities for Buddhists and the people have significantly contributed to affirming the position and role of the Vietnamese Buddhist Association. Through specific activities of social security, the Association's prestige has been affirmed to the Government and people. At the same time, affirming Buddhism has been and will continue to accompany the people of Vietnam in the process of innovation, development and integration.

3.2. A Number of Activities to Ensure Social Security for People of Vietnam Buddhist Association from 1981 to the Present

The Buddha taught: "For the happiness of the people, for the peacefulness of the people, for the compassion for life, for the sake, for the sake of happiness, for the welfare of gods and humans"². It can be seen that the "happiness", "peacefulness", "compassion" mentioned by the Buddha are the foundation and purpose of social security activities for

According to the Buddha's concept, the seven kinds of generosity need to be widely disseminated in order to increase merit and virtue, considering this as the basis for establishing the common for the social community (Buddhist sutras in the virtues of merit): *firstly*, to build legal pagodas, praying rooms; *secondly*, to establish fruit orchards, swimming pools, green trees; *thirdly*, to give medicine, helping the sick beings; *fourthly*, to build sturdy boats, welcoming people to cross the river; *fifth*, to install bridges and to help the elderly; *sixth*, dig wells near the road, helping thirsty people to drink; *seventh*, make a toilet, giving a convenient place. Those are the seven Pham Thien blessed deeds. It can be seen that the seven kinds of generosity of the Buddha have clearly shown the "Compassionate mind", compassion for human life, wanting to bring the gifts initiated from the mind to bestow joy, peace, and blessings for all sentient beings.

When teaching about destinies, the Buddha said that all sentient beings in this life are due to their harmonious conditions and dependence on each other, and at the same time they take the thought of "Unconditional Love"³, Universal Love⁴ và "Living together"⁵ as a basis for

2 Buddhism Research Institution (1993), *Samyutta Nikāya (Volume 1)* tr.234.

3 *Unconditional Love* is love without hesitation, with motivation (predestination). From inside (like a lonely, empty mood wanting to be your friend for grief), or outside, like when you see an "eye-catching" person. Unconditional Love is natural love, no condition, no cause, not a phase emotion, an inner (inner) feeling or an external stimulus, a permanent love in it there is not the subject "love" and the object "be loved", completely absent from the "I" in it.

4 *Universal Love* also calls Universal Compassion. Visualizing all sentient beings is the same nature that arises the mind of compassion and equality to save suffering and to give joy. The Bodhisattva of the Land or above, considering sentient beings as oneself, taking the suffering of sentient beings as his own suffering, generating mercy.

promoting and developing social security assurance. Nearly 40 years of establishment, the philosophy of human life of the Buddha was thoroughly understood and applied by monks, nuns, and Buddhists in daily life. Therefore, activities to ensure social security for people are increasingly appreciated and actively implemented by the Vietnamese Buddhist Association. The Social Charity Committee of the Vietnamese Buddhist Association was set up to connect Buddhism with sentient beings; monks and nuns with Buddhists. Human resources of the Board are increasingly consolidated and developed in all aspects. The activities of the Social Charity Committee have been increasingly expanded in many areas to attract and call for many Buddhist followers of good faith and sincerity to participate. Currently, the Vietnamese Buddhist Association has 53,941 monks and nuns on 18,446 worshiping facilities and over 12 million Buddhists with Refugees message, tens of millions of compatriots who love and believe in Buddhism are operating in the institutes, ashram colonies. Particularly, the Social Charity Committee has been structured with members with full capacity, prestige, ethics and experience; with a collective consciousness, democratic spirit, responsibility in the assigned tasks. Therefore, ensuring social security for people of the Vietnamese Buddhist Association is increasingly diverse in both the form and the program of activities:

Activities of hunger eradication, poverty reduction and sustainable poverty reduction, multidimensional poverty reduction: With the tradition of "defending the country, bringing peace to the people", Vietnamese Buddhism always accompanies with the ups and downs of the nation, the lives of the people. Right from its inception, although the financial resources are still small, the Vietnamese Buddhist Association has made a special priority for caring for disadvantaged people in society (especially the poor, the disadvantaged people). The spirit of Buddhism's "helpful religion, beneficial life" has partly helped vulnerable people to rise up in life; coordinated with socio-political organizations to launch a number of vocational orientation and training courses for poor households, the youth in rural and extremely difficult areas.

The Association has allocated funds to support the living, to pay for school fees and school supplies for children of poor households. With determination to eradicate hunger, reduce poverty and sustainably reduce poverty, multidimensionally reduce poverty for people in remote areas, especially people affected by floods and typhoons in the Central region, Northwest region and Mekong Delta, the Association has mobilized and actively contributed to stabilizing the lives of people. The Association is focusing

on funding for relief work and helping fishermen in some central provinces affected by environmental incidents caused by Formosa Company to stabilize their lives and continue to working on sea; mobilizing monks and nuns, Buddhists and the whole society to contribute money, goods worth tens of billion dong to help people in flood-hit areas in Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Yen Bai and Lao Cai , ... quickly overcome damage, stabilize life. Particularly, the Central Nun Committee and the Buddhist Nun Committee of the provinces and cities visited and presented gifts with a total value of over VND 2.8 billion. The financial source donated for charitable, humanitarian and social security assurances in 2016 is estimated at over VND 1,330 billion. In particular, Ho Chi Minh City Vietnamese Buddhist Association contributes over 433 billion VND and many provinces contribute over 50 billion VND such as: Kien Giang, Soc Trang, Dong Nai, Long An, Ba Ria - Vung Tau,... [16].

In the seventh term (2012-2017), the Vietnamese Buddhist Association has donated to social charity, social security worth 6,838,199,841,000 VND, including Ho Chi Minh City Vietnamese Buddhist Association with VND 1,471 billion, the Central Nun Committee and provinces, with VND 1,000 billion [2]. The Central Buddhist Affairs Division has mobilized and effectively used financial resources for charity work, increasing social security rapidly; from 2013 to early 2019, the amount of donation amounted to VND 1,431.3 billion. [6].

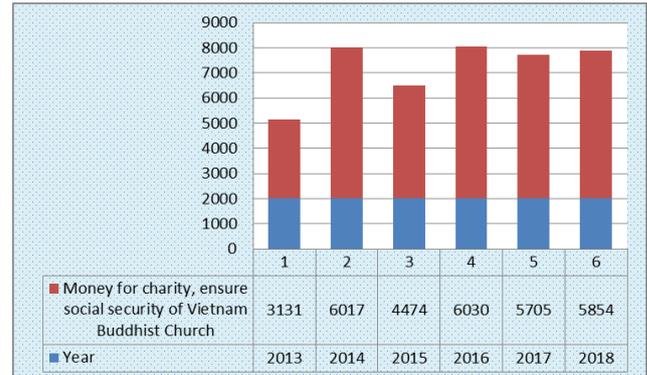


Diagram 1. Money for charity, ensure social security of Vietnam Buddhist Church (Source: The authors compiled statistics from Vietnamese Buddhist Association reports from 2013 to 2018)

Tue Tinh system construction and expansion: Medical examination and treatment activities for disadvantaged people in society will help them have a peaceful, comfortable inner life in a healthy body. Through these activities, it contributes to popularizing medical knowledge, applying Buddhist medicine in real life and to spreading Buddhist thought to the masses of believers. Therefore, monks, nuns and Buddhists participating in the medical examination and treatment in the Tue Tinh Clinic system must be good at medicine (Buddhist medicine) of Buddhism to effectively treat patients to ease the pain of their bodies and minds.

Due to the tight budget of the State and localities while the population increases rapidly, the maintenance and improvement of health service provision for people still face

5 It is only for everything in the universe that they are in harmony, coexisting together. That is, human beings are resident animals (living together), regardless of whether they eat, wear, live or go - the things that they receive daily are the fruits of mutual interaction. Especially with the modernity of the mass media, people can not leave the masses to live alone. (See the article "Ethics of Buddhism", published in Tinhvan's Buddhist and secular works, . Shanghai Publisher, 2008, p.103).

many difficulties. Therefore, the construction and expansion of a non-profit health service system are essential and deeply humane. This service focuses on disadvantaged people in society, especially for the poor people living in remote and difficult areas. Tue Tinh system was established and expanded throughout the country to provide free medical examination and treatment for people by traditional and modern medicine methods. This is a social resource effectively participating in the provision of non-profit health services for the community. In 1999, at the 3rd term of the Association, the country had 25 Tue Tinh clinics, 655 traditional medicine clinics up to the VIII term in 2017, up to 165 Tue Tinh clinics, hundreds of traditional medicine clinics with acupuncture, reflexology, examination and distribution of traditional medicines for people throughout the country. There are more than 10 Western and combined Eastern - Western medical clinics in Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho, Da Nang, Thua Thien Hue,... [2].

Table 1. Number of Oriental medicine clinics of the Vietnamese Buddhist Association as of early 2019

Ordinal number	Province	Number of clinics	Number of checkups (01 month)	Number of doctors
1	Khanh Hoa	1	600	3
2	Đak Lak	1	1500	10
3	Ben Tre	6	6290	8
4	Bac Lieu	2	1050	2
5	Đa Nang	1	295	42
6	Can Tho	2	6219	6
7	Quang Tri	1	30	3
8	Tien Giang	1	13204	31
9	Tay Ninh	2	600	5
10	Đong Nai	9	15800	30
11	Binh Dương	3	2400	5
12	Thua Thien Hue	1	795	40
13	Gia Lai	1	1000	1
14	Quang Ngai	2	1515	20

(Source: Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam (2019), *Final report on Buddhist work in Department of social volunteer Central Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City, page.3-4*)

For Tuệ Tĩnh đường activities is frequent, continuous, prestige in medical system we must pay attention to training, improving the quality of the medical, Eastern, Western doctors team. Therefore, the Sangha frequently enroll and open training classes about medical (traditional medical and Western medical) for monk, nun teams at every provinces. In which, Department of social volunteer Central Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam has trained 250 monks, nuns to basic medical and 98 Tuệ Tĩnh đường doctors to improve efficiency for medical activities so as to share the burden with the community and people on the account of mercy, intellect of Buddhism [11]. What's more, with innovative, flexible ways, Tuệ Tĩnh đường model from all over the country has

attracted hundreds of volunteers with good masters, doctors from big hospitals to come to do medical check-ups for free for the poor. One notable model is that of modernized medical check-ups area, combining Eastern – Western medicals in examining and curing at Southern Trúc Lân temple (Cần Thơ city).

Starting from positive value of this activity, the financial resources serving Tuệ Tĩnh đường activities are rising. The activity has attracted attention, help from social communities, Buddhists in and out of the country. The total budget for Tuệ Tĩnh đường activities are fast increasing. Budget serving examining, curing and delivering medicine in tenure V (2002-2007) and tenure VI (2007-2012) with total cost estimated of 90 billion dong [1] and in VII tenure (2012-2017), total cost of treatment estimated some trillion dong⁶. Most notable is Traditional medical class of Buddhism Sangha Hanoi City, Tuệ Tĩnh Đường of Pháp Hoa pagoda, Ho Chi Minh City Central Buddhist Monastery, Diệu Đế pagoda, Thừa Thiên – Huế, Kiên Giang province, Sóc Trăng province, Cần Thơ province, Cà Mau province, Đồng Nai province, Bình Dương province,... With the exception of tenure V, the number of Tuệ Tĩnh đường and pharmacy is unchanged but the total treatment value has been up to 35 billion dong, In which, Đồng Nai's Tuệ Tĩnh đường reached 11.921.956.000 dong. Hồ Chí Minh City reached above 6 billion dong. Thừa Thiên – Huế reached 3.852.337.920 dong. Most clinic is Eastern Clinic⁷.

Caring for physical and mental life for people who contributed to the nation's activities: With “When drinking water, remember of its source” moral code, Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam always positively responds to the movements, activities showing appreciation to people who contributed to the nation. As of now, Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam at all classes are supporting and caring for more than 100 Vietnamese heroic mothers and thousands of families that contributed to the nation; combine to help for victims of Agent Orange; providing hundreds of health insurances and savings-books for families that contributed to the nation and victims of Agent Orange. What's more, Buddhist Sangha is doing activities celebrating Remembrance Day such as having requiem for heroes, martyrs and people fallen to protect the Nation and the people's peaceful lives.

Building orphanages and caring for the disabled children, orphans activities: In the past few years, the Sangha has built orphanages raising disabled children, orphans. This is an activity that is especially important as it represents deepened humane values of the Sangha and Buddhists all over the nation. Tenure III, Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam had built 116 day-boarder kindergartens, orphanages for disabled children with more than 6.467 children [11]. Especially, in 2007, teacher Thích Phước Ngọc established project, build the first Buddhist Central Orphanage of Buddhist of Vietnam

6 Central Social Voluntary Board (2017), *Final report on Buddha work tenure VII (2012 -2017) Central Social Voluntary Board Buddhists Sangha of Vietnam, Hồ Chí Minh City, October 21st 2017.*

7 Nguyễn Minh Ngọc (2014), “Some details about social volunteer work of the religions in Vietnam today”, *Buddhism research magazine*” no. (3).

called “Fountain of love”. From that initial achievement some other schools, facilities were born: Bồ Đề orphanage school (Bình Dương province); Khánh Quang temple (Khánh Hòa province); Phật Quang Social volunteer Centre (Kiên Giang province); Sen Hồng home – raising disabled children, children that are victims of Agent Orange (Quảng Trị province);...). Nowadays, the Sangha has more than 1.000 free classes, 36 day-boarder kindergartens raising orphanages, or disabled children with more than 20.000 children [4]. Notable cases include Đức Sơn orphanage (201 children); Long Hoa temple in district 7 (100 children), Diệu Giác temple in district 2, Hồ Chí Minh City (100 children);...

Building nursing homes and caring for homeless elders activities: As the society’s practical requirement, with merciful mentality, helping the poor homeless elders. They could only rely on “alms-giving” mentality of Buddhist, Buddhist Sangha has established some nursing homes to help the elders with extreme conditions. Started from caring for people of some temples (1988 in Huế, nun Diệu Thành established Đức Sơn nursing home and temple, after which quickly spread across the country) until now the Sangha has built 20 nursing homes, caring for more than 1000 elders [4]. Nursing homes are mainly in Hồ Chí Minh City, nursing homes can be found at Pháp Quang, Lân Quang (district 8), Kỳ Quang 2 (Gò Vấp district), Diệu Pháp (Bình Thạnh district), Hoàng Pháp (Hóc Môn district)... has cared for more than 500 elders; Thừa Thiên – Huế province has Tịnh Đức, Diệu Viên... nursing homes. Beside that, the Sangha do not just care for physical, mental life for the elders but also care to the aftermath after they pass away;...

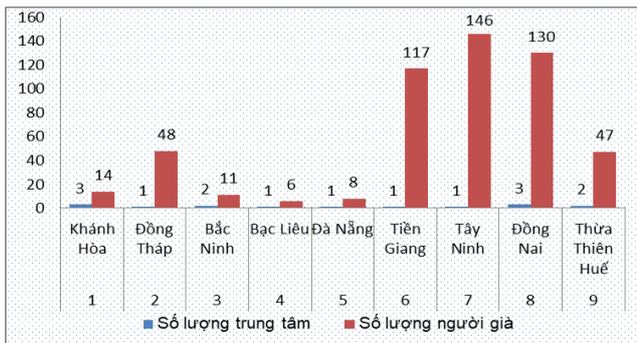


Diagram 2. Number of nursing homes and number of homeless elders (Source: *Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam (2019), Final report on Buddhist work in Department of social volunteer Central Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City, page.2-3*)

Prevent and response to HIV/AIDS activities: In Vietnam, since discovering the first case of HIV in Hồ Chí Minh City (December 1990), until now 63/63 provinces, cities have HIV/AIDS patients. At the Online Conference concluding 2017 and the direction to mission, solution in 2018. Number of HIV patients in Vietnam still alive are 209/450 people, in which men hold 70%. 90/100 case turns to AIDS; number of people died of HIV/AIDS of the country up until the above time are 94/620 people⁸.

Instill the teaching of the Buddha in Dhammapada: “Do good, don’t do evil, hold a pure mind and soul” or “Love the world as the love the mother gives her child”. And the mentality of “Buddhism of the world, can not leave the world to be enlightened,...” in Buddhist book of prayer by the Sixth Patriarch Huệ Năng⁹. To cultivate as the road Buddha has shown, Buddhist must bring the mentality of “metta”, “karuna”, “mudita”, “upekkha” to save the people who are in “tremendous pain”. Going for a society that improve solidly and sharing the pain, synchronize with the patients are the necessary things to do of the Sangha. With the support, help of UNICEF Vietnam, Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam has established “Idea of leading Buddhism to participate in prevent, response to HIV and AIDS”, pushing to propagate, directly or indirectly advise for thousands of Buddhists knowledge of HIV and AIDS.

Each year, the Sangha has established hundreds of classes training monks, nuns, Buddhists and local people; organize caring, giving thousand of gifts for HIV and AIDS patients; support the budget for studying and creating jobs for individuals and family members of the patient; organize shroud, chanting sutras for thousands of people died of HIV and AIDS. In the process of establishing “Idea of leading Buddhism to participate in prevent, response to HIV and AIDS”, The Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam has positively establish activities; media activities prevent, response to HIV and AIDS; activities caring for patients and influenced at homes or hospitals; temples participating in growing, making southern medicine to cure for disease of the patients.; care to activities supporting them (vocational guidance, introducing jobs, lend produce funds,...)

With philosophy of “step into it for Buddha, for life we serve”, a lot of Sangha facilities have found a logical way so that they have contribute greatly in prevent, response to HIV/AIDS. From there, the temples are places for the unfortunates who carry this disease. Buddhist in temples like Pháp Vân, Bồ Đề (Hà Nội) and Kỳ Quang II, Diệu Giác, Linh Sơn, Quang Thọ (Hồ Chí Minh City) have established a network of volunteers in communities to support the patients and the influenced of HIV/AIDS. Main parts are monks and nuns, volunteer students in universities, academy, people in communities and ones that have HIV; establish the “self-dependent” or “Friends help friends” groups for HIV patients, create income for HIV patients;...

Buddhists participate to support financially, technical specialized solutions so that HIV/AIDS patients have the chance to take part in shows, project erasing poverty multi-dimensionally. There has been a lot of residences that have HIV/AIDS patients succeeding in model increasing economics, stable income, out of poverty, They even help back for those who have similar circumstances and local

achallenge, <http://www.tapchiconsan.org.vn>, December 29th 2017.

⁹ Huệ Năng (Năng, zh. huì néng/ huì-neng 慧能, ja. enō), 638-713, at Tân Châu, Lãn Nam region. When he was born, there were two monks visting giving him his name Huệ Tăng. He attained awakening before leaving home, is the Sixth Ancestor of Zen, disciple and successor of the Fifth Ancestor Hoàng Nhãn.

people to improve economics.

What's more, with unshaken determination, the Sangha has contributed to helping the HIV/AIDS patients to be treated with ARV (medicines that reduce the production of HIV in the body). Up to now, Vietnam has had nearly 140,000 HIV patients treated with ARV, accounting for 70% of the patients. The number of HIV patients being treated with ARV taking part in health insurance rose from 40% in 2014 to 89% at the end of 2018. Moreover, Vietnam is leading in stalling number of virus (no possibilities of carrying HIV to other people through sex) with more than 93% [10]. This is the base for Vietnam to successfully achieve the goal of 90 – 90 – 90¹⁰ in 2020 of the United Nations, most difficult of which is the *criteria relating to justifying medicine reducing virus (ARV)*.

Protecting the environment activities: Improving the environment is one of eight goals of the millennium that the United Nations discussed in the era where the world is in danger, serious challenge of the environment that people have caused. Vietnam is one of the countries that have been suffering a lot of consequences from climate change, being one of four countries that have been and is suffering the greatest cause of negative weather in two most recent decades. Each year catastrophe have caused death of 466 people, damaged more than 1,5 billion USD equaling 1,5% GDP.

In recent time, Vietnam frequently battled with irregular types of catastrophe like heavy storm, super storm; heavy local rain, flood, heavy snow in the North, floods after floods in the Central, extended drought in Southern Central and Central Highlands; soil sanity deep into lands in Cửu Long Delta, serious mudslide in river and beachside,.. Damage in economics in 2016 is nearly 40,000 billions dong; first 9 months of 2017 more than 17,000 billions dong. The flood, mudslide early in August 2017 in Sơn La, Yên Bái, Điện Biên, Lai Châu provinces has caused death of 44 people, missing, damage in economics estimated 1,1909 billions dong and flood number 10 (catastrophe level 4 – level directed to cope with by the Minister) middle of September 2017 had caused 153,000 houses to lose ceiling, nearly 3000 electric pole broke down, 11,000 houses were flooded, economical damage estimated 11,300 billions dong [8].

Damage to people and properties have caused the countries problems, lives of people having more trouble so that the Sangha of all levels always have responsibility in protecting the environment. This is a serious problem

ensuring the improvement of the nation, Social Affairs for the people.

We can see that, under the glasses of Buddha, the main problem to damaging the environment started from greed-hatred-ignorance of people. Though not directly protect the environment but in fact Buddhism is born to solve to the core all the serious problem to the environment [15]. With the mentality of “Buddhism rules is not separated from the world's rules”, Buddhism has had contributions to protecting the environment in local in the nation: through lectures in Buddhism's temples, the lecturers propagate for Buddhist like an important content helping buddhists acknowledging the importance of protecting the environment. This is the most important thing to ensure Social Affairs for people nowadays; encourage them to live closer to the environment, minimize the direct impact on the environment; organize vegan meals for buddhists; lecture buddhists about the pain, the aftermath of killing animals, rare sea, forest creatures (have names in “Red book”); Propagate to Buddhists about the roles of green usage (or solid usage), all business production must relign with reborn natural environment.

What's more, the Sangha is participating in some other activities ensuring Social Affairs: under direction from Central Sangha, Provinces' Board of Directors of the Sangha determined to support financial, properties to do some activities supporting the other societies: In big holidays (Traditional Tet, Vesak, Ghost festival;...), volunteer work take part in giving present, supporting policy families, weaken individual in societies. The Sangha is actively taking part in supporting encouraging study funding, lighten dreams funding, supporting victims of Agent Orange. The Sangha has supported 22,028 cataract cases, 200 houses of affection, 1876 house of love, 422 big united houses, 370 canoes, 1510 fresh-water wells,.. [4]. These supportive activities is funded with up to 2,879,062,000 dong [4].

Moreover, Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam organizes classes of love, kindergartens, industrial schools; orphan and disabled schools; rehabilitate center for the disabled and victims of agent orange. As of now, there are more than 2500 children in schools of love, 1500 orphans and disabled children is taken care of at the good will facilities of the Sangha.

4. Discuss Research Results

Nearly 40 years of reunification and development, with the spirit of “loving-kindness”, “compassion”, “empathetic joy”, “equanimity” towards goodness of monks, nuns and buddhists throughout the country, therefore, the activities to ensure social security of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha have achieved a number of positive achievements, making significant contributions to the country's sustainable development:

On the basis of guidelines and policies of the Government of Vietnam, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha always

10 According to Master Nguyễn Hoàng Long, Chief Officer Prevent, response to HIV/AIDS (Medical Department), if 90% of the people know their HIV infection, the work on supervising and testing have been done well; if 90% of HIV patients is treated continuously with ARV, then we have done the treatment well, taking part in reducing the chance of infecting HIV for the community and from mother to child; if 90% people is treated by ARV control their virus number at low and stable, then number of HIV viruses is in the low under the seeable is an important stat in judging the quality of treatment and the obedience to treatment by patient. Therefore, if we achieve 90 – 90 – 90 then we can achieve the goal to end AIDS in 2030 just as the UN showed.

promulgate promptly and creatively apply guidelines and measures to ensure social security for Buddhists and people. Many social security programs have been implemented quickly and timely to help fellow Buddhists and people in areas hit by natural disasters, floods, and unusual accidents. At the same time, the Sangha’s departments have successfully organized scientific seminars on the basic pillars of social security policies to gain experiences and come up with solutions suitable to practical requirements;

On the basis of guidelines and policies of the Government of Vietnam, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha always promulgate promptly and creatively apply guidelines and measures to ensure social security for Buddhists and people. Many social security programs have been implemented quickly and timely to help fellow Buddhists and people in areas hit by natural disasters, floods, and unusual accidents. Research results from the survey showed that the local Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam implemented well the guidelines and policies with a relatively high percentage such as Hanoi Capital: 84.2%; Ho Chi Minh City: 87.3%; Hung Yen province: 82.9%; Ba Ria - Vung Tau province: 78.6%; etc. At the same time, the Sangha's committees successfully organized scientific seminars under the basic pillars of social security policies to gain experience and work out solutions in accordance with requirements set out in practice;

(Calculated unit: %)

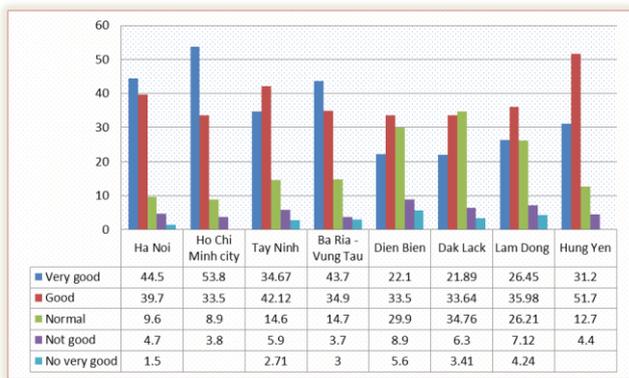


Diagram 3. Evaluation of Buddhists on the creative application of guidelines and policies to ensure social security of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in recent years (Source: survey of the authors in some localities in Vietnam, 2019)

Ensuring social security for the people has become the action goal of the Sangha to not only improve the spiritual spirit of Buddhism but also promote the tradition of "love your contry and your race", "The leaves protect tattered ones" of the people of all Vietnamese ethnic groups in the context of development, innovation and international integration. Therefore, the movements in ensuring social security implemented by Buddhism are quickly gathered, united with the compassion of monks, nuns and Buddhists throughout the country and are increasingly expanded and diversified in contents and form formats;

“In recent years, thanks to social security activities organized by the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, many poor households, especially poor households in remote areas, have the opportunity to access health insurance, medical examination and treatment; Free vocational training and especially the gifts on the holidays. This activity is the result of a continuous effort of teams of monks, nuns and buddhists with kindness and good hearts who want to help the people with difficulties and hard lives...”

(Source: In-depth interview of the writer group with Doctor of Religious Studies Doan Thi Thu Ha - Lecturer)

The organization and management structure of social charity activities of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha is being completed everyday in a flexible and modern way. Social Charity Committee is set up from the Central to provinces and cities. The Committee has attracted the attention and participation of the prestigious monks in the Sangha and the laities, the sponsors (businesses, businessmen with good hearts). Survey results show that the majority of votes said that the contingent of monks and nuns in the localities performed well and very well their role when participating in the implementation of social security policies: Hanoi capital: 54.2%; Ho Chi Minh City: 43.8%; Hung Yen province: 43.1%; Dien Bien: 34.8%; ...

Therefore, charitable movements launched by the Sangha have always been actively deployed.

(Calculated unit: %)

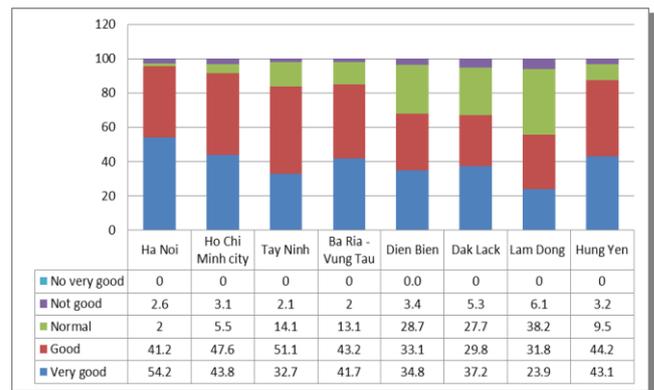


Diagram 4. Assessment of people engagement on the policy for social welfare for the sangha recently (Source: survey of the authors in some localities in Vietnam, 2019)

In recent times, there are more and more positive and creative models and positive examples of typical collective or individual of the Sangha for the activities to ensure social security. The models are generated and focused towards the painful fate in society, especially those who are unfortunate to be infected with HIV / AIDS or models that help each other to eradicate hunger, reduce poverty sustainably; Model of caring people with meritorious services to the country. In addition, there are many examples of the "true monks" who always feel painful before the scene of people beings

miserable, suffering by life's cycle trying to make a living. By their wisdom and virtue, they have contributed positively to help unhappy lives in remote areas, the "border" region of the country.

However, the process of implementing social security for people and Vietnam Buddhist Sangha also revealed some shortcomings and limitations that need to be overcome such as: activities to ensure social security for people of Buddhism are still movements, seasonal and not yet effective; The Sangha has not been proactive in financial resources for long-term implementation or dealing with some "unexpected" cases in life. The reality shows that the financial resources to ensure the social security of the Sangha are still little, mainly from the sources of offerings, worship ceremonies and some sponsors; not yet promoting the full potential of the manpower of the teams of monks, nuns and Buddhists in hunger eradication and sustainable poverty reduction; multi-dimensional poverty reduction; the staff in charge of ensuring the social security of the Sangha from the Central to local levels, were not properly trained, so the effectiveness is not high; There is no unity between the boards of the Sangha, so the activities to ensure social security for Buddhists and people are inadequately overlapping.

"... One of the most difficult things in ensuring the social security of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha is finance. In reality, the activity mainly relies on donations and sponsorships from "sponsors" so it is very passive and not much while there are so many orphans and elderly people with no places to live. Moreover, recently, floods, landslides and thunderstorms happen regularly, so many families have lost their homes, got injuries, ... what we can do to help them was not timely and not much so it did not achieve sustainable efficiency effect. We hope to have a stable, long-term fund and regular financial support"

(Source: In-depth interview of the writer group with Nuns in Tay Ninh Province, Vietnam).

5. Experience Obtained from Social Security Assuring Activities for People of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha from 1981 to Now

To eradicate suffering and to be liberated peacefully requires monks, nuns and buddhists to perform the Noble Eightfold Path¹¹. The path to end suffering is also the awakening of monks, nuns, Buddhists before the temptation of greed, hatred and delusion. One of the effective and quick measures to "eradicate suffering" requires monks, nuns and followers to make vows and actions that come from "Mind". Consciousness and work are all towards building a good life

for all people throughout the human race.

With the goal: "**Intelligence - Discipline - Integration - Development**" of the Eighth Congress of Delegates of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (2017), Vietnamese Buddhism continues to promote collective intelligence, high spirit of solidarity and harmony in successfully implementing the tasks set out by the Sangha, in which focusing on effective implementation of activities to ensure social security for buddhists and people. Therefore, based on the assessment of the situation and discussion of research results, the writers group draw some experience from the Sangha's social security assuring activities from 1981 to now. This is also the initial experience to help the Sangha continue to promote its positives and reduce the limitations to further promote social security assuring activities for buddhists and people in the future.

1. To see the importance of the propaganda of guidelines, policies and laws on social security policies, the importance of activities to ensure social security in the process of innovation and international integration. Propaganda of the Buddhist Sangha should focus on each specific area of the social security policy (preferential policies for people with meritorious services to the country; policies to create jobs for young people in rural areas; social support and relief in Some localities that are often or unexpectedly exposed to natural disasters; ...). In addition, the propaganda should have a good example of positive and typical collectives and individuals when participating in social security assuring activities organized by the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha at the central and locals. The propaganda must be promptly transmitted through media (newspapers, internet, radio, television ...) or organize a meeting to talk about the experience of participating in activities to ensure social security of monks, nuns and buddhists, avoid perfunctory organization.

2. To see the importance of the professional perfection of the contingent of monks, nuns and buddhists in the Social Charity Committee, the Economic and Financial Committee and the Information and Communications Committee. The Sangha needs to combine with some training institutions to open specialized thematic classes to provide knowledge, skills on social security assurance: social protection; social assistance; lonely old people and orphans; policies for sustainable poverty reduction; creating jobs for workers; ... Through training courses to help the monks, nuns and Buddhists in the Committees, especially the Social Charity Committee, formulate skills when approaching and deploying charity programs implemented by the Sangha. In addition, the Sangha needs to strengthen training in integration skills, exchange of experiences and receive the help of Buddhism in countries, in the region and the world.

3. Build plans and bring out specific solutions suitable to each locality in order to mobilize financial resources for the Sangha's social security assuring activities. Financial resources must be mobilized from many sources but must towards sustainability. The Sangha should proactively coordinate with relevant ministries, departments, branches and socio-political organizations in building economic and

¹¹ The Noble Eightfold Path includes: Right View, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Samadhi.

production establishments in order to create jobs for disadvantaged people in society (focus on activities that have been implemented effectively and positively, such as helping Buddhists and people who got infected with HIV / AIDS; ...). Gradually create income for beneficiaries of social security policies, operating funds for social charity committees and others in the localities. In addition, the Sangha extends information to buddhists overseas, calling them to "support" the activities of social security policies, especially the lonely old people, orphans.

4. Monks, nuns and Buddhists are always engaged in the path of "saving the suffering" to use the financial resources and other resources to help ensure social security quickly and effectively. The Sangha needs to develop specific programs and measures when participating in the schemes in the projects to ensure social security. Such construction should be coordinated with other socio-political organizations in order to avoid wasteful or inadequate investment and focus appropriate to each object and area: mountainous areas need to expand the model of "meals of love"; allocating and providing free medical examination and treatment for ethnic minorities; building many boarding schools for children in remote areas of the country; In rural areas, it is necessary to support employment for young people; participate in educating and guiding kindness to young people who are caught in social evils; Large cities should focus on philanthropic activities and education about the ideal of living, start-up spirit for youth and students.

6. Conclusions

The doctrine or law of Buddhism is the basis and foundation for building and developing the world of peace and happiness with harmony, wisdom, care, embrace and sharing of its members in social. It can be seen that desire is the source of all suffering and war, poverty is the cause of immorality and crimes such as theft, lie, violence, hatred, cruelty.... [9]. Recognizing the importance of ensuring social security for the sustainable development of the country and the tradition of "for the contry, for the people" for thousands of years, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha constantly cares for the weaks in society. That spirit and action that have proved the spirit of Buddhism's reincarnation "good for the country, good for life". Ensuring social security for people is the beginning of "compassionate heart", the humanistic value of Buddhism is growing and spreading to all classes of people. This is also an affirmation of the position, role and responsibility of Buddhism in religious practice, helping life in the context of Vietnam being in the process of innovation, development and integration.

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