Converging Streams: Engaging for Holistic Development

Colombo & Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka
January 22 - 28, 2016
Converging Streams: Engaging for Holistic Development
An Interfaith Dialogue for Peace and Sustainability
INEB Biennial Conference

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Sevalanka Foundation
International Buddhist Confederation

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Editorial Team
Rita Litwiller, Narumon Paiboomsiti (Mon), Naphawan Sittisak (Nam)

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Naphawan Sittisak (Nam)

Contributors
Dr. Nigel Crawhall, Jill Jameson, Jon Watts, Dr. Amanda Kiessel, Dr. Nilanjana Premaratna, Jordan Baskerville, Somboon Chungpramprue and many others for sharing their insights and experiences

INEB Secretariat Address: 666 Charoen Nakhorn Road, Klong San, Bangkok 10600, Siam (Thailand)
Tel: (+66) 2 860 2194 Fax: (+66) 2 860 1277
Email: secretariat@inebnetwork.org
Website: www.inebnetwork.org
Facebook: INEB - International Network of Engaged Buddhists
It is with gratitude and deep appreciation we sincerely thank you for making INEB’s biennial conference in Sri Lanka possible. The INEB circle continues to expand as the conference was specifically designed with many spaces for dialogue during all the events which brought people together from various country contexts and faith traditions. The two study tours gave participants a unique exposure to Sri Lanka’s ecosystems, the impact of climate change and sustainable development, in addition to the post-civil war conditions in the north. The key note presenter, Dr. Joanna Macy, and all the resource persons brought a wealth of knowledge and depth of understanding to the conference. INEB thanks the organizers and sponsors not only for their financial support, but their ongoing relationships which strengthens and widens the network. Specifically, we thank the organizers: Sevalanka Foundation, the International Buddhist Confederation of India and the Sadaham Sevana. Thanks also goes to our sponsors the Jungto Society and the Gaya Foundation. The entire conference team composed of INEB and Sevalanka staff worked diligently in order for the conference activities to be coordinated in various locations and to accommodate the participants’ needs. Your many contributions and acts of generosity supported all the conference activities from the opening public symposium, the Good Market, the study tours, and the 2 day conference. In addition to scheduled conference activities there were many other opportunities for participants to interact during cultural presentations of tea ceremonies, performances by musicians and dancers, as well as mealtimes and informal sharing that took place.

Being together during this time gave the opportunity to form new relationships, renew friendships, and experience learning together. Approximately 200 persons from 22 countries interacted in various processes of interfaith dialogue focusing on peace and sustainability. The majority of persons came from Asian countries including Laos, Myanmar, China, S. Korea, Siam/Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan, Taiwan, India, and Sri Lanka, with others coming from Canada, the USA, Hungary, Austria, and Australia. We acknowledge INEB’s increasing involvement with China as evidenced through the participants who attended as well as the cultural performances.

We believe that the conference objectives were accomplished that allowed us to:

- Reflect on the agendas of the Millennium Development Goals, while supporting their
further articulation and expansion in the new mandate for Sustainable Development Goals.

- Increase knowledge and understanding of holistic development, and help create new programs and projects to realize its full potential, especially in the areas of environmental resilience, pluralistic societies, gender equality, youth empowerment, and sustainable growth.

- Promote inter-faith dialogue, exchange, and collaborate on issues of common concern.

- Celebrate and expand the spirit of kalyanamitta and inter-faith friendship.

The successful outcome of INEB’s conference has yet to be realized, however the seeds have been carefully sown across countries and cultures as people return home with new ideas and approaches to holistic development, as well as a having a clearer understanding of the negative effect structural violence has on everyone. Your commitment and dedication to learning together and taking action for social change through engaging in dialogue across faith traditions brought a vibrancy and energy to the conference events that we hope will translate into taking positive steps for social change in your country contexts.

As Dr. Joanna said in her closing comments during the first day of the conference, “We have to liberate each other and ourselves. We can do this because we have a love a life. It is calling us in all our converging streams through the teachers of the main religions. I see structural violence as a way to address if we speak together that we are all victims and we are all accountable. It is the work we are born to do.”
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Joanna Macy
The 2016 INEB conference theme of *Converging Streams: Engaging for Holistic Development – An Interfaith Dialogue for Peace and Sustainability* encapsulated the issues and the approaches for addressing it. Conference activities provided many opportunities to increase understanding of holistic development on a range of topics including climate change, environmental resilience, development in the post conflict era, gender equality and the ordination of nuns to name a few. Various platforms for interfaith dialogue were integrated into conference activities to help people from many countries, cultures, social sectors and faith traditions interact in meaningful ways. Additionally, the conference was designed with an exposure into Sri Lanka’s development experience through the lenses of climate change and pluralism in the post-civil war context. Participants could be part of two study tours, one of which took place in the south focusing on ecosystems, climate change and sustainable development, and the second took place in the north focusing on the post-civil war situation, pluralism, inclusiveness and development.

INEB recognizes that its network platform is reaching beyond its core group of Buddhist organizations in the areas of climate change, pluralism and peacebuilding. Nearly 200 participants arrived from 22 countries to attend the conference activities and experience which speaks to INEB’s inclusive and pluralistic values and approach for engaging across faith traditions, Hindu, Christian, Buddhist and Muslim, in collaboration on shared issues of concern.

The conference activities took place in several locations and venues in the country, Jaffna in the north, the capitol Colombo, and in the south – the Islander Center, Anuradhapura, and the Sinharaja National Forest (Pinnawala and Kuruegala). All the pre-conference activities, in addition to the opening ceremony and public symposium took place in Colombo or a nearby location. This year’s conference planning and implementation involved more leaders from the younger generation of the conference organizers, INEB and Sevelanka.

Keynote presenters and notable resource persons were available throughout the conference activities with expertise in the areas of holistic sustainable development, engaged Buddhism, climate change and environmental issues, as well as peacebuilding. Dr. Joanna Macy, scholar in the areas of Buddhism, development, general systems theory and deep
ecology, with an extensive history of involvement in development in Sri Lanka, as well as nuclear disarmament in other parts of the world, presented at various conference activities including a pre-conference workshop, as the keynote speaker at the public symposium and as a conference panelist on structural violence. Other notable presenters included Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne from Sri Lanka that initiated and lead the Sarvodaya Shramadana movement which used participatory development approaches to build communities based on engaged Buddhist principles. Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa who founded the Sathirakoses-Nagapradeppa Foundation, as well as co-founded INEB and the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM), presented on sustainable development and engaged Buddhism. Resource persons and participants alike shared a deep concern for peace and sustainability.

The very essence of holistic development was carefully examined against the backdrop of structural violence in which its invisibility enshrines systems based on social, economic and political inequality that perpetuate conditions of poverty and unequal access to education, health care, the food supply and more. One clear message was that Buddhist monks, and leaders in faith traditions need to work closely in communities so they can become familiar with the spectrum of issues people face in their day to day lives. Through building relationship with local people spiritual and religious leaders can become more involved in helping to bring about social change from the grassroots level.

Structural violence is one of the primary obstacles to holistic development projects. Presenters emphasized how deeply rooted it is as a source of violence that is part of systems and structures as it has been institutionalized and hidden within them. Being institutionalized makes structural violence that impacts people seem normal. Its coercive, conforming and corrupting character perpetuates inequalities throughout society which contribute to many conditions where access to education, water, economic benefits, health care, and input into public policies that directly affect people’s lives are all limited. Some of these conditions also are polluting the earth through the spread of agricultural chemicals, the use of nuclear energy, and using hydraulic fracking for natural gas supplies. All of these assaults against the natural environment and all beings are creating negative karma which will affect the children who are our future and the farmers who feed the world.

The impact of structural violence was discussed in small and large groups where participants talked about its impact in their own lives. This new expanding awareness carried into the second day when they applied it to how through building partnerships, collaborations new ways would emerge for entering into holistic projects together.

The relationship between structural violence and holistic development needs to be critically examined in order for development to be self-sustaining for the long term. The root cause of much suffering is based in greed and delusion that is manifested through rabid consumerism based on people’s feelings of wanting and inadequacy. The Middle Path in Buddhism directly confronts this greed and delusion and can be applied though using various development approaches.

Everyone was reminded that the sum of the parts is always greater than the whole. This is an affirmation that all consciousness and life on the earth is interconnected and interdependent on each other in order to continue. Embracing inclusiveness and diversity brings new perspectives and vibrancy when working together. Removing exclusionary thinking and forming relationships across diverse groups will strengthen society as the grassroots level that establishes solid foundations for holistic development projects to be enduring. Using these approaches structural happiness is possible and more local, national, regional and international platforms are needed to make it a reality.
The 2016 INEB Conference in Sri Lanka provided participants with many opportunities to learn from and be exposed to Sri Lankan culture with inter-sectoral and inter-faith dialogue and collaboration. In addition to the scheduled conference activities, the participants had a chance to share stories and get to know each other while building new kalyanamitra friendships.

Specifically, the 2016 conference provided an opportunity to increase understanding and engagement in holistic development as it offered the time to reflect on the newly mandate for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how they could be attained outside the pre-existing domains of structural violence.

The specific outcomes related to each objective were:

Objective 1: Reflect on the agendas of the Millennium Development Goals, while supporting their further articulation and expansion in the new mandate for Sustainable Development Goals.
- Well-known resource persons and keynote speakers with deep background in holistic development coming from diverse interfaith perspectives gave presentations during all events.
- Participants expressed that they were returning home with new dreams, energy and inspirations for putting new ideas into action.

Objective 2: Increase knowledge and understanding of holistic development, and help create new programs and projects to realize its full potential, especially in the areas of environmental resilience, pluralistic societies, gender equality, youth empowerment, and sustainable growth.
- The conference drew people from diverse backgrounds, academics, social entrepreneurs, NGO’s, inter-faith traditions that came together in Sri Lanka. It was beneficial to have resource persons with backgrounds in social change sharing throughout the conference events which provided continuity for the participants. The panelists all provided insights from their traditions in the areas of structural violence and holistic development.
- The conference design incorporated many activities that lent to a progressive learning experience. Pre-conference workshops provided opportunities for participants to deepen their understanding of climate change, as well as how to serve society and save the environment. Through the study tours participants gained more understanding of both the Sri Lankan country context and their own home country situations.

Summary of Outcomes

The 2016 INEB Conference in Sri Lanka provided participants with many opportunities to learn from and be exposed to Sri Lankan culture with inter-sectoral and inter-faith dialogue and collaboration. In addition to the scheduled conference activities, the participants had a chance to share stories and get to know each other while building new kalyanamitra friendships.

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Participants had opportunities for learning about models of holistic development especially when they visited the Good Market where they learned more about how a social enterprise model can manifest in post-conflict societies. This also took place during the study tours, for example, when the forest conservator talked about how people living in villages surrounding the Sinharaja National Forest coexisted with the forest eco system. Several others were part of the intensive eco-temple work session following the conference during which persons from specific country projects had in-depth sharing and exchange of information. The World Café and Open Space empowered participants to participate and share and interact which were dynamic, energizing and enriching processes.

Objective 3: Promote inter-faith dialogue, exchange, and collaborate on issues of common concern.

The conference reached out to more persons from other faith traditions. Bring people from other groups who are ordinary people, invite people to participate such as Hindus and others. Ask resource people to bring people from their organizations.

Since INEB is focusing on dialogue processes, the conference design which included afternoon sessions of the World Café and Open Space allowed the conference participants to share at a deeper level in small group sharing and large group summarizing which was very well facilitated.

Objective 4: Celebrate and expand the spirit of kalyanamittra and inter-faith friendship.

The Islander as a conference venue was conducive in providing opportunities for people to interact more informally during mealtimes, while walking the foot paths, taking breaks between conference sessions and so forth. Relationships formed spontaneously and independently as individuals and groups explored issues more deeply. Many participants said that meeting and getting to know each other was most significant to them in addition to what they learned.
Recommendations for INEB

Recommendations for INEB that emerged throughout all the conference events will be reviewed by the Executive Committee and workgroups to ensure that they are addressed. They include both content and logistics.

General comments
- More time for planning was needed as everything felt rushed, as well as for the core team to educate each other.
- The scheduled time was too short and the conference needed to be longer to accommodate so many events.
- Announcing schedule changes needed to happen in a more timely manner both prior to the conference and during events.
- Encourage younger bhikkhunis to speak out and participate, especially in sessions related to their ordination.
- Translators need to translate the full content of presentations. Also, identify whether more translators needed and available.

Logistics, accommodation, signage, and so forth
- Careful consideration needs to be given to having the appropriate person assigned for logistics. Conference staff/volunteers need to be available to answer questions about workshop timing and transportation, etc. Having appropriate and adequate resource persons available needs to be carefully monitored.
- In order to reduce confusion signs need to be posted and clearly visible in order for participants to locate venues. Venues need to be large enough to accommodate the number of participants.
- Accommodation in Colombo – Having participants stay in the same place where they can receive all the information would have reduced confusion. Some accommodation needed better amenities such as having mosquito nets and generally being more accessible instead of walking many flights of stairs to rooms.
- Coordinate transportation during times when traffic was heavy to ensure that participants reach conference activities on time.
- Future planning needs to have a flexible accommodation space which allows for increasing numbers of participants.

Study Tours
- As a learning critique, an orientation was needed for both study tours and all the participants would have benefitted from a time of sharing and debriefing before the first conference session on structural violence.
- Pluralistic and Inclusive Societies Study Tour – A background paper or presentation was needed so that all the participants had the same basic understanding of the conflict situation, as well as the various Buddhist groups in Sri Lanka.
- Reducing driving long distances would have improved the experience. Adequate lodging needs to be available that will accommodate all the participants comfortably.

Advisory Committee/Executive Committee Meeting
- Allow adequate time for the agenda so that each item can be fully addressed.
- Possibly discuss items that require action first, then have an open space in the afternoon. This would allow for sharing and country reports for people who want to stay longer.
- More observers could have been invited to attend.
Human beings seem to have an insatiable desire for consumerism and commodities. This consumerism and desire for material goods is a fundamental driver, both individually and culturally, which contributes to poor treatment of the Earth, the natural world, and a disregard for the suffering it causes to others.

Within this mind-set of mindless consumption and production exists a mental state of feeling disconnected with other living beings and the environment. Disconnection and desire combine to weaken our inherent capacity to feel our interconnected and interdependent nature, in addition to compassion for others and ultimately for ourselves.

“Dr. Nigel Crawhall
Venerable Athuraliye Ratana Thero welcomed the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Commission for Environmental Economic and Social Policy (CEESP), scientists from Colombo, Sri Lanka, environmentalists, and religious leaders to discuss interfaith issues around climate change. A combination of 20 participants participated including Christians, Buddhists and Muslims and Hindus to consider the implications of the recent Paris climate negotiations on Sri Lanka. This post COP21 workshop included a panel presentation discussion that continued the issues presented during the December 2015, 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris, France. COP21 was a significant event where world leaders hammered out a new agreement aimed at stabilizing the climate and avoiding the worst impacts of climate change.

Dr. Nigel Crawhall from IUCN CEESP presented the background on the role of religion in the context of climate change. In 2009, INEB held its first workshop on climate change and climate justice issues in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The UNFCCC Secretariat invited faith-leaders and faith-based organizations (FBO) to formalize their relationship with the Secretariat during COP19 in Warsaw, Poland. CEESP subsequently set up a list serve for FBOs, including INEB members, and there has been an Interfaith Liaison Committee facilitating communications since Warsaw.

In September 2012, INEB supported the first pan-Asian Inter-religious Climate and Ecology (ICE) network conference in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. In 2012, it was already evident that climate change was impacting Sri Lankans and other peoples in South Asia, South East and East Asia. It was agreed in Anuradhapura to continue coordinating and mobilizing FBOs and spiritual leadership to understand the causes of the climate and environmental crises, and to improve coordination and sharing of strategies, particularly across religious traditions in Asia.

The first ICE conference in 2012 established an important dialogue between scientists and faith communities. The climate and environmental problems faced by humanity have substantial technical aspects that require understanding and being responded to. At the same time, the drivers of the problems and the impacts raise major moral and ethical considerations. This moral and ethical dimension, including the provision of emergency services, food aid, disaster responses all place a burden and responsibility on religious leadership. The interface between scientists, religious leaders, civil society and policy
makers creates an opportunity to understand the problems, threats and opportunities, and to create a shared vision and alliance for addressing the drivers and protecting the planet.

ICE I at Anuradhapura was followed up by ICE II in Seoul, Korea, in April 2015. Delegates to ICE II were active in Paris during COP21, and faith-based leadership, including Venerable Ratana contributed to the Sri Lankan national delegation in Paris.

Ahead of the next regional INEB conference on social justice and sustainable development, it was agreed to provide a forum for scientists, civil society, government and faith leaders to share with each other the relevance, analysis and challenges coming out of Paris COP21. These issues are pertinent to all Sri Lankans and need to be shared publicly to help develop a shared vision for action and resilience.

Dr. Nigel noted in particular that the current political leadership in Sri Lanka is seriously concerned about issues of sustainability, climate vulnerability and the need to develop a national economic and development strategy that will help Sri Lanka weather the major challenges ahead.

Key points made about Paris COP21:
1. First major agreement in the UNFCCC to include moral and ethical issues within the treaty agreement. Paris COP21 agreed to include language on human rights, gender equality, intergenerational equity, indigenous peoples’ rights and other social justice issues;
2. There was opposition to human rights in the Paris Agreement which was led by Saudi Arabia, China and South Africa, with some confusing messages from Norway and others. Eventually consensus was reached on including the human rights references in the preamble;
3. The high profile of ethical and rights considerations appeared to have been supported by the release of the Papal Encyclical, Laudato Si, as well as other supportive climate justice statements from Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu networks;
4. Paris COP21 agreed that the global target for slowing global warming should be below 2 degrees, ideally aiming for an overall increase of 1.5 degrees centigrade;
5. The US strongly opposed any language making the outcomes of Paris binding on State Parties;
6. COP21 received Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) pledges from all of the treaty’s member states. On the one hand, the INDCs are a tacit acknowledgement that no binding global decision can be taken at this stage, however, on the other hand, the INDCs mark a step forward in national action plans and targets. The analyses of the INDCs clearly indicate that they are inadequate to reduce global warming. The current targets (without considering whether they would really be achieved) would set the planet on a temperature increase of at least 4 degrees centigrade, a scale that would likely threaten the survival of most or all of humanity and many other species.

Human beings seem to have an insatiable desire for consumerism and commodities. This consumerism and desire for material goods is a fundamental driver, both individually and culturally, which contributes to poor treatment of the Earth, the natural world, and a disregard for the suffering it causes to others. Many humans are made to suffer as a result of meeting the production demands of growth-based consumerism (poor working conditions, poverty, environmental and health degradation, inequality), as well as many other species all of whom have no say in human behavior and the destruction of the planet. Within this mind-set of mindless consumption and production exists a mental state of feeling disconnected with other living beings and the environment. Disconnection and desire combine to weaken our inherent capacity to feel our interconnected and interdependent nature, in addition to compassion for others and ultimately for ourselves.
The current paradigm promotes suffering and obscures its causes and consequences. In contrast, a sustainable development paradigm invites FBOs and society to reconnect with life, to reawaken compassion and find meaning within livelihoods and sustainable stewardship of the planet. Science, the science of biodiversity, climatology, agriculture and marine conservation, for example, are all tools for understanding the cause and effects of our current paradigm, and to consider a more informed way of living. Ultimately, this shift in paradigm must be driven by a right understanding of the current causes and effects of human behavior, including the moral and ethical components that are taught within our religious and spiritual traditions.

The meeting explored how these major civilizational challenges are channeled into a UN treaty process, the UNFCCC, where State Parties are meant to provide global leadership on our responses to both science and ethics. It is not clear that the current political configuration at the UN wants to or is capable of honestly addressing the problems we are creating. The economic paradigm that is killing the planet is still considered to be normal and acceptable within such forums.

One of the major tensions visible in Paris, and, generally, in the UNFCCC is that high level politics eclipse common sense. The most evident competition at the UNFCCC is between the industrialized Western nations (some of which were once colonial powers) and the block consisting of China and the Group of 77 – the bulk of countries making up the South or countries which liberated themselves from colonial control.

Some of the delegates questioned whether the political and economic competition between Beijing and Washington was in the interest of the peoples and the nations of the South. Clearly, national climate change policies can be developed from the grassroots, but these voices are not easily heard in the climate negotiations. Indeed, workshop participants drafted the following precedent setting statement entitled “Agreeing to Sustain Life: Our Ecological Conversion,” which has been accepted by the Sri Lankan Parliament. It was also read to the entire audience during the INEB conference’s opening symposium.

NGOs in the Colombo meeting expressed their despair at the UN process of negotiating the treaty. Their fear was that Paris COP21 offered
false hope and that it was covering an attitude of ‘business as usual.’ There was concern that multinational corporations and those who benefit from the fossil fuel economy are more influential than civil society, and that the outcomes are not going to be pursued. It was noted that there is a constant risk of despair when dealing with such serious matters and the frustrations of the negotiations processes.

Scientists noted that Paris was the first COP in a number of years to show some cooperation and progress. The INDCs and the new temperature target are beginning to show a more serious engagement with science. Climate change cannot be reversed, but a serious and sustained engagement with changing our energy systems, conserving the environment and changing human behavior can substantially mitigate the impacts.

Faith leaders observed that it is their duty to speak about issues of climate justice, sustainability and our relationship with creation/the natural world. All religious traditions have an ecological component in their scriptures, and, moreover, they insist on equity, justice and the taking of responsibility for our actions. The faith leadership acknowledged the importance of having an interfaith/multi-faith approach. Many worrying trends towards the misuse of religion and fundamentalism are contributing to human suffering. Universal solidarity between different faiths is part of the antidote to the contemporary crisis. Religious leadership needs to be well informed about the climate and environmental crises, as well as continue and strengthen their leadership and encouragement both with the general public and with those who hold political office.

Religious leaders noted the importance of the Papal Encyclical and embraced the notion of an Ecological Conversion which speaks to social justice, economic equity and environmental sustainability.
Agreeing To Sustain Life: *Our Ecological Conversion*

Colombo, Sri Lanka - January 2016

Our Earth is changing rapidly due to human interventions. The climate is becoming unstable due to the release of fossil carbon. We humans are disturbing the atmosphere and polluting the world. Life is unraveling due to us. We are disturbing and threatening all lives on Earth, now and for generations to come.

We have violated the right to life of billions of life-forms on Earth. Science calls this depletion of bio-diversity and environmental degradation: the Sixth Mass Extinction. This is now what we want. We must act now to protect future generations and our mother Earth.

Scientists have alerted us to the grave risks and threat to our species and many other species. With all this science our global leaders have failed to act wisely and in time to protect the planet. Instead of focusing on saving life, our world leaders argue about economics, profits, and political dominance – they set their short-term agendas ahead of the well-being of creation and all humanity.

Without a healthy environment, there is no economy, no wealth and no life. It is time for what Pope Francis has called Our Ecological Conversion. It is time to set our priorities in order, to put life and well-being ahead of politics and growth-based economic doctrines.

We who have gathered in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 22 January 2016, representing many different faiths from 20 countries declare that:

◆ Recognizing the need for a paradigm shift from destructive development to sustainable development was agreed at the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals summit;
◆ Observing that world leaders agreed in Paris at UNFCCC COP21 in December 2015, to avoid emitting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and to keep global warming far below 2 degrees against pre-industrial levels;
◆ Highlighting the science recommendations of 100% shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy well before 2050 by all countries;
◆ Insisting on toxin-free agriculture and elimination of persistent pollutants worldwide;
◆ Noting that we are wasting time and money without achieving a binding decision or sufficient actions to address the causes of this crisis;
◆ Envisioning sustainable systems that will be universally accepted, protecting life, agro-biodiversity, diverse ecosystems, as well as human dignity and well-being;
◆ Understanding the need to change the way we govern the planet, to grow a culture of solidarity, and to transform selfish negotiations into generous cooperation within a new global social contract;
◆ Stressing the need for a set of universal common values to which human beings as one family can subscribe within our great culture diversity;
◆ Noting that all spiritual traditions hold that greed and accumulation are unjust and unwholesome; and that happiness arises through wholesome generous co-existence, in accordance to our scriptures and collective wisdom.

We call on all world leaders, faith leaders and all peoples of this planet:

◆ To unite for our common good, to collectively embrace a new paradigm where economics and politics serve life and sustainability; where our differences enrich us to live as one human family, mindful of what is needed now and those generations yet to be born.
◆ To abandon growth-based economics; to commit to the Great Turning towards sustainability, total elimination of fossil fuels, healthy and toxin-free agriculture, moral and physical wellness, and a life-centered approach to sustainability.

May we be rigorous in our efforts, respecting all life-forms and embrace the opportunity of this Ecological Conversion. Let us be guardians and champions of these changes; let us have faith in our common destiny.
Dr. Joanna Macy, renowned scholar in the areas of Buddhism, general systems theory and deep ecology led a workshop that examined the theory and practice of ‘the work that reconnects.’ Dr. Joanna returned to Sri Lanka for this workshop, the place from where she studied and participated in the late ‘70s in the Buddhist inspired community development program called the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement. Dharma and Development was the first of many books and a basis for her on-going teachings. This was reflected in the workshop where Dr. Joanna guided the participants through the spiral or cycle of work which begins with recognizing the abundance we are surrounded by in nature and on the planet, then expressing our gratitude for all we have been given. This was followed by honoring the suffering and pain in the world, which can help us open our eyes to new ways of seeing that allows us to go forth as we opt for a life-sustaining world.

Key to nurturing a life-sustaining world are the stories we choose which are the lens through which we make sense of our world, forming our version of reality. Stories in today’s industrial world essentially can be broadly presented in three: 1. Business as Usual is the story of the industrial growth society where the central plot is about getting ahead. In this story economic recessions and extreme weather-conditions are seen as temporary difficulties from which we will surely recover, and even profit. 2. The Great Unraveling which is the story from environmental scientists, independent journalists and activists which draws attention to the disasters that Business as Usual has caused and continues to create. It is an account backed by evidence of the on-going derangement and collapse of biological, ecological, economic and social systems. 3. The Great Turning is the third story we hear from those who see The Great Unraveling and don’t want it to have the last word. Its central plot is about joining together to act for the sake of life on Earth by using a process through which new creative human responses make the transition possible from the Industrial Growth Society to a Life Sustaining Society.

Dr. Joanna facilitated a series of three exercises in which the participants explored ways to make the transition to The Great Turning. Some of the topics discussed included trying out new ways and systems, seeing power as relational and supporting the emergence of a new world view of the Earth as a living expression of The Great Turning through changing consciousness and behaviors of consumption, as well as relationships.

“The Industrial Growth Society depends on not caring. To feel compassion is a revolutionary act.” Through bringing this awareness to our thoughts and actions, The Great Turning can take place in dynamic and profound ways that will endure. ‘Going forth’ was the final part of the workshop, where participants each had the opportunity to think about actual steps they would take in the following week, being ‘free from fear and awake to the power of life.’
Sharing and Discussion on
The Revival of Ordained Nuns
(Bhikkhuni) in the Theravada Tradition

Gothama Thapowanaya Monastery, Sri Lanka
Friday morning January 22, 2016

A sharing and discussion on the revival of the lineage of fully ordained nuns (bhikkuni) in the orthodox Theravada Buddhist tradition was held at the Gothama Thapo Wanaya. The leading monk of the temple welcomed everyone and emphasized the need for different Buddhist traditions to work together. Venerable Kalupahana introduced the session, the bhikkunis and acted as the moderator. The leading senior Bhikkhuni Vijithananda from Sri Lanka, and Bhikkhuni Dhammananda from Thailand were the two key bhikkuni panelists. Approximately 25-35 Sri Lankan bhikkunis were sitting in the audience. The discussion focused on Buddhist historical perspectives and practices, as well as highlighting the specific country contexts of Thailand, Sri Lanka and Taiwan. More than 100 persons attended this pre-conference workshop.

During the introduction Venerable Kalupahana highlighted the need for all four assemblies who have taken various vows including: bhikku (ordained monks), bhikkuni (ordained nuns), upasaka, and upasika (lay devotee or devout lay follower), in order for there to be there to complete the body of Buddhists. He also spoke about:

- the ordination of bhikkunis and the support offered by the Sri Lankan monks to the process
- the Sri Lankan monks, as well as others who supported the ordination process are facing repercussions as a result of their support which involves being unable to enter Thailand and/or being required to have special permission to enter Thailand.

Gauthama the Buddha did not accept social class systems which is reflected in his belief that men and women were equal and appreciated them as such. Rules and regulations were not intended to be the Sangha’s primary consideration, and their guiding principle needed to support a common place where women and men could come together to practice dhamma. Since dhamma guides developing the mind and character men and women will benefit by studying and practicing together.

The panelists encouraged bhikkunis to:
1. Stand up, to speak with courage and know the meaning of society in the world. Younger bhikkunis are especially needed for to come forward and take on new responsibilities.
2. Working together for increasing the practice, which decreases prejudice against bhikkunis and women.
3. Serve and work together, which demonstrates caring and compassion to the broader community.

Bhikkhuni Dhammananda pointed out that the Buddha intended for the bhikkhuni sangha to be there from the beginning. In the recent past, 1998, the movement was revived when a group of nuns from Sri Lanka were ordained in Bodhgaya, India, which was not accepted. In fact, in 2012 ordinations were invalidated by someone in Thailand’s larger sangha. Bhikkhuni Dhammananda emphasized Sri Lankan monks supported her ordination during which she acknowledge that Venerable Kalupahana played a key role in her personal ordination.
Bhikkhuni Vijithananda said that generally Sri Lankan monks supported the bhikkunis more than what was experienced in Thailand, especially at the ground level, and that there is more tolerance and acceptance to the idea. She went on to say that it is growing as a moment and gave an overview of the bhikkuni movement in Sri Lanka. Fortunately, dhamma proceeds, and women throughout Asia continue to be drawn to become bhikkunis which is reflected in the increasing numbers of women who have been ordained throughout Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand.

Bhikkhuni Jenkir noted that in Taiwan 2,000 lay persons study with nuns each year. As in any family where both a mother’s and father’s energy is essential, the same is true for the sangha which needs both bhikkunis and bhikkhus.

Ranjani de Silva, a founding member and a former president of the Sakyaditha (International Association of Buddhist Women) also spoke during the comments session. She highlighted how the movement has grown with male and female allies. Ms. de Silva also noted that she was the only lay female person at Bodhgaya, who attended the ordination of the first group of bhikkunis.

The overall impression was that the seminar was a wonderful idea, but what was missing was more of a sense of the practical struggle and issues within the structure and how patriarchy impacts their struggle. The broader significance of their struggle and what role structural violence played in it needs to be carefully examined.

Book Launching – Bhikkhuni Dhammananda’s book, My Sri Lankan Lineage translated into the Sinhalese language, was launched which gives the bhikkuni history in Sri Lanka. She feels that Sri Lanka holds the heart of Theravada Buddhism and is happy to give back through this book which has been translated into Sinhalese. The Tibetan Dhammapada was also available at the same time.
Opening Ceremony and Welcome

The INEB Conference's public symposium opened with students chanting the Maha Mangala Sutta accompanied by musicians which set a calm yet inspired atmosphere for the evening. This was a particularly auspicious occasion as seated on the stage were well-known persons in the areas of Buddhism, social activism and development, in addition to Maithreepala Sirisena, the President of Sri Lanka. Harsha Navaratne, Chairperson of INEB's Executive Committee and Chairperson of the Sevalanka Foundation welcomed the audience and distinguished guests who had come from many parts of the world to the symposium. He said that Sri Lanka was honored to be the host country and reminded everyone of the significance of Sri Lanka’s name as being Dhammadipa as the island of righteousness and Dhanyagara being the land of plenty.

In keeping with the conference theme, Converging Streams: Engaging for Holistic Development – An Interfaith Dialogue, Chairman Harsha continued by stating that the focus was on the current global problem of climate change, and that the conference was especially timely following December 2015 United Nations COP21 meeting in Paris, France. He challenged the audience, people of all faith traditions, to change their behavior in order to save the world and invited everyone to ‘walk together as engaged Buddhists to the future of sustainability and peace.’

Venerable Lama Lobsang, Secretary General, International Buddhist Confederation-IBC, India, made some opening comments highlighting that the IBC and INEB were natural partners whose combined efforts can have a very positive impact as they move out of the monastery and temple to look for common solutions to our problems.

Reading and presentation of the statement:
Agreeing to Sustain Life:
Our Ecological Conversion

The announcement was made that during a pre-conference session on climate change, an agreement entitled Agreeing to Sustain Life: Our Ecological Conversion was written. Pope Francis has called this the time for our Ecological Conversion. Bhikkhuni Dhammananda of Thailand read the agreement, followed by Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa presenting it to the President. This symbolic act requests that the President carry forth with the specific declarations included in the agreement by initiating it in Sri Lanka. The agreement ends by saying, “May we be rigorous in our efforts, respecting all life-forms and embrace the opportunity of this Ecological Conversion. Let us be guardians and champions of these changes; let us have faith in our common destiny.”

Keynote Presentation - Sustainable Development by Dr. Joanna Macy

Dr. Joanna Macy, a scholar of Buddhism, general systems theory and deep ecology, began her keynote presentation by asking the audience, “What is development – a vision, a mental picture of a desirable future for a society and a means to achieve it.” She reminded them that the concept of sustainable was an interesting notion that came to the world’s attention with the 1987, was
defined as the kind of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Since then the United Nations took a step defining the Millennium Goals. However, now sustainable development goals have been formulated with more participation from governments and civil society organizations including 17 goals, 169 targets for reaching them.

Dr. Joanna pondered as she said “one wonders what is considered to be attained when transnational corporations have attained such power and such reach. And it begins to look as it was the capitol and profits are more quickly sustained.” However, now efforts have been established within these sustainable development goals to reduce consumerism, reduce greenhouse emissions, the spread of agricultural chemicals, reduce the arms manufacture and sales, and so forth.

Poignantly Dr. Joanna asked everyone to question the kind of sustainability we desire.

Sustainable development goals treat symptoms not the disease, the distress afflicting humanity not the causes for the distress. Social suffering rises from greed, hate, and delusion – organized and institutionalized forms of greed hatred and delusion. The forces, whether they are seen in terms of the consumer society, military, the economy, the media, compound each other.

Bringing a Buddhist perspective, Dr. Joanna noted places in the scriptures of the Pali cannon which have inspired her toward ever fresh thinking about what sustainable development could be. The key points of these scriptures showed that they were guided by early principles of holistic development by being politically self-governing as they lived in a network of sanghas. Economic sharing was at such a level that there was no private property. Additionally, people lived together in a radically inclusive social model than continued to grow as a network of sanghas. These are the same principles and models that inspire Dr. Joanna today.

Dr. Joanna closed by saying that, “If we are looking at the development of our planet, there is great wealth here. I speak my own gratitude for you and for coming together to continue to exercise your moral imagination, your love of life and each other and your devotion to the on goingness of life. I thank you.”

Responses to the Keynote Presentation
Dr. Nigel Crawhall, moderator for the responses to the keynote speech, began his opening comments by saying what a historic gathering this was as “We are facing the greatest challenge on earth.” He went on to introduce the three respondents as all having lifetime commitments to life on the planet for peace.
Dr. A. T. Ariyratne, a legendary pioneer of participatory development and founder of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka, briefly commented that the country was trying to find it way forward using environmentally friendly and sustainable methods. Having worked closely with Dr. Macy, he reinforced that she made clear the direction we need to go and went on to say that through accessing a combination of communication technology and spirituality problems around the world can be solved.

Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa, co-founder of INEB, brought the engaged Buddhist perspective. He spoke to how an individual’s spiritual practice leads towards advancing our common humanity, and how active participation in society informs one’s personal inner quest. This personal spiritual inner practice is essential to understanding that each and everyone’s personal development is directly linked to our common humanity.

Ajarn Sulak went on to examine how globalization, capitalism and trans-national corporations perpetuate structural violence. He defined structural violence as the systematic way that a society’s resources are distributed unequally and unfairly in ways that prevent people from meeting their basic needs. This phenomenon can be seen in every country by looking at whether and where conflict exists, as well as who is marginalized from these societies.

Structural violence actually perpetuates suffering through the three poisons of greed, hatred and delusion which are also the root of individual personal suffering. He described the three poisons as the building blocks for structural violence as follows: first greed is the insatiable desire for accumulation, an ever-expanding ‘possessiveness’ and ‘growth’ that ignores the limits of the natural environment. Second, the individual seeds of hatred manifest in the world as militarism; and third, main stream media and advertising which leads people to believe that they are not enough, do not have enough which leads to being discontent, poverty and unhappiness.

Ajarn Sulak urged the audience to return to a personal spiritual practice which will support their participating in restructuring political and economic institutions. Transformation of ourselves is the starting place. Through practicing meditation and contemplation these poisons can be uprooted and transformed into generosity, loving-kindness and wisdom. Then peace can prevail in society when people are at peace.

Lodi Gyari Rinpoche, co-chairperson of INEB’s Advisory Committee and chairman of the Conservancy for Trans-Himalayan Arts and Culture, brought the responses to a close with swift insightful comments. He said that the sustainability of our belief, whether it be Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, and so forth, begins with our self. “We need sustainability within ourselves and to put our beliefs into action. If we can do that, then our task can become much easier. The most important is to have the sustainability within ourselves.” He further urged the participants to get in the trenches for what they believe and to take advantage of the wealth of resource persons attending the conference who have a long experience of working with people deeply on issues.

Acharaya Dr. Lokesh Muni of Ahimsa Vishwa Bharati spoke about the relationship between peace and sustainability, as they are interconnected and interdependent on each other and essential for ending conflict. He summarized by saying that everyone can play a great role, and that all religious teachings ask us to unite.

Closing comments were made by Venerable Athuraliye Ratana Thero who spoke to the Sri Lankan context, specifically asking that the agricultural system be converted to one that does not use chemicals which are causing disease and death throughout the country. He further appealed to the INEB conference participants to support the declaration Agreeing to Sustain Life: Our Ecological Conversion that was read earlier in the evening. The Sri Lankan parliament had approved the declaration, but not the government. What is needed is a collective effort with spiritual leadership!
In keeping with INEB’s conference theme, Converging Streams: Engaging for Holistic Development, participants were given an overview of The Good Market which is a social enterprise. Amanda Kiessel, Kanchana Weerakoon, and Anuradha Ranasinghe presented the context within which it was formed since 2012, as a mission-driven social enterprise to promote products and services that are “good for the planet, good for the country, and good for you.” It is based on the idea that people create the world they live in. By being more reflective about the decisions people make every day, then they will have the opportunity to make better choices and create a better world. It is a platform where socially and environmentally responsible producers, services providers, and consumers can come together.

In the past finding organic products in Sri Lanka has been difficult. Now, the country has many organic farmers, social enterprises, and responsible businesses that are creating eco-friendly, socially responsible, healthy products and services. The Good Market prioritizes products made by local people from locally available resources. This practice of ‘local first’ helps Sri Lankan resources to stay within the country whenever possible which contributes to strengthening the national economy. It also helps the planet by reducing “food miles” and carbon emissions. Many well-educated consumers want to feed their families natural, organic food and choose products and services that match their values. The cost of organic produce is gradually being reduced as production is expanded and supply chains are improved. The Good Market is a place for these groups to meet and learn from each other.

The market is located in a central area of Colombo which is easy to reach by people from many communities including Muslim, Tamil and Sinhala. In order for any society to integrate holistic healthy living concepts and practices everyone needs to be involved from children to adults. It is a place where people can move freely, children can play, and friends eat and drink together while listening to musical entertainment. The Good Market now has 2 weekly events in Sri Lanka, Colombo and Galle, plus a permanent store within walking distance of the Colombo market. Hate speech and proselytizing are not allowed. Nearly 300 producers are part of the Good Market with 5 – 15 new vendor applications being received each week. Products and services range from organic foods such as eggs, dairy, coffee, tea, fruit, meat and other food products, health and body products, clothing, green construction and so forth.

The Good Market uses many approaches in order to appeal to diverse people and groups. Kanchana Weerakoon, an ornithologist and environmental activist, talked about Nature Kids which is a holistic approach to reconnect kids and youth with Mother Nature in Sri Lanka bringing them back to bees and pelicans!
Some of the challenges organic producers have difficulty accessing an adequate water supply and access to seed that is suitable for organic conditions. Producers, families with gardens and others are encouraged to save their seeds to increase diversity and support climate change adaptation.

After the presentation the conference participants walked as a group to the Good Market to see the products that were displayed, bought things of their choosing and talked with the producers. Everyone enjoyed mingling among the stalls and shopping before eating lunch at the market.

Establishing the Good Market as a successful social enterprise was only possible after the civil war ended. Eventually, Sri Lanka, as a small island nation, can become an international sustainability hub through focusing on its roots and develop a reputation for wellness, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability. The Good Market is good for peace and good for the planet!
Study Tours

January 23 – 25, 2016

In order to deepen and enrich conference participants’ overall experience and understanding of holistic development through the lens of peace and sustainability, they had the option of going on one of two study tours that took them to various places in Sri Lanka. Both groups traveled long distances to have these unique country exposures. Group A study tour traveled to the Sinharaja National Forest in Pinnawala and Kurunegala, to learn about the eco system and effects of climate change in the Sinharaja Forest Reserve. Group B study tour traveled north to Jaffna where participants learned about the post-conflict conditions with the focus being on pluralistic and inclusive societies.

Study Tour Group A

Ecosystems, Climate Change and Sustainable Development

After returning from the Good Market, approximately 60 conference participants, boarded two buses for the long drive to the Sinharaja National Park. Arriving in evening the group ate a late dinner before retiring for the night and waking early for the forest walk the next morning. The group was briefed and asked to form small groups for the walk based on their pace – fast, medium, slow - as walkers/hikers. After a late start the group learned about trail etiquette and to be aware of leeches and how to remove them. Each small group had a guide that helped the walkers distinguish various plant and animal species, including snakes in the trees, forest hens and other birds, forest cats, water monitors and so forth. The 6 hour walk of approximately 12 kilometers took the entire morning with between 45 and 50 persons returning to the entrance to the park around noon where others were waiting who opted not to join the walk. Because of the late start and size of the group on the path fewer birds were seen. Walkers enjoyed their time in the forest surrounded by the rich vegetation and appreciating nature. The entire group was guided through a meditation where they could focus on the sounds around them, monkeys, birds and other animals as well as feeling of being in the forest.

An assistant conservator of forests gave a presentation on the history and background of the Sinharaja National Forest Reserve. During the reflection period questions were asked about how local villagers are involved in forest activities to protect nature. Sri Lankans believe in tree gods which increases the spiritual value for certain trees which are worshiped and protected as the god’s homes. Local people will not destroy trees,
especially bodhi trees. People living in the buffer zone are allowed to remove some materials for construction, firewood and extract palm sugar. The water they drink is pure and free from contamination. Eco-tourism also benefits local people. In exchange the local people protect the forest, collect information and report any illegal activity. They also participate in programs and events.

In terms of how climate change is affecting the forest no specific findings were available for the flora and fauna, however, new unnamed species of amphibians may be threatened. It is also unknown whether invasive species are due to climate change, one example being local birds are entering the forest. Generally, temperatures and rainfall patterns are recorded as having unpatterned and unpredictable fluctuations. For example, two to three months of rain may fall in one week that damages the environment and causes flooding.

After the tour many participants expressed their appreciation for this exposure to a diverse eco-system and commented that the experience of being together, walking in the woods was the time they got to know each other.

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Overview of the Sinharaja Forest Reserve

The Sinharaja Forest Reserve covers an area of approximately 22,500 kilometers located in the southwestern part of Sri Lanka that receives 2,500 – 5,000 mm of annual rainfall. Actually, 43% of the total forest area is located in the wet zone belonging to the Sinharaja Forest reserve and other surrounding associated forests known as “Sinharaja Complex,” which includes several ridges and a large number of streams. It is one of the least disturbed and biologically unique lowland rain forests in Sri Lanka.

In the past Sinharaja was largely ignored by scientists and the general public until the late 1960’s when the country turned to the lowland rain forests to meet its growing demand for timber and the forests became a source of plywood. Soon by the 1970s mechanized logging began to destroy the forest. With the support of wildlife and nature protection societies, in combination with the clergy, scientists and the general public, a protest movement forced the authorities to reconsider the decision to exploit the Sinharaja.

After the new government was elected in 1977 all logging operations in Sinharaja were halted, and by 1978 the status of the forest reserve was enhanced as logging equipment was dismantled. It was made into an International Man and Biosphere Reserve that became part of a world-wide chain of such protected areas. Then in 1988, the Sinharaja’s status was further strengthened when it was designated as a National Wilderness Area and added to the list of World Heritage Sites in 1989. Now it consists of three zones with the core zone being a virgin forest, a buffer zone, and transitional zone where local communities can access the forest.

What makes the Sinharaja significant is that it is home to over 50% of Sri Lanka’s endemic species of mammals and butterflies, many kinds of insects, reptiles and rare amphibians. The rich bird alone has 147 species recorded and is the only locality with 18 out of 20 bird species endemic to Sri Lanka. Fifty six (56%) of the species are either rare of have low population densities. More than half (13) of the 25 genera endemic to Sri Lanka are represented in the Sinharaja. Additionally, 98% of all sub-canopy species and 85% of all under storey species fall into the categories of “Rare,” “Vulnerable” and “Endangered.”

Currently, primary threats to the Sinharaja are from encroaching cash crops such as tea plantations located near the buffer zone, over exploitation of agar wood being illegally logged, and biopiracy.

Source: Taken from a presentation by Bharatha Dissanayanke, Assistant Conservator of Forests, the Forest Department Sri Lanka.
Study Tour Group B

Pluralist and Inclusive Societies: Jaffna, Thellippalai and Nagadeepa Island

Following the conclusion of conference activities in Colombo on the 23rd of January, one group of participants participated in a closed-door session with the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) group. During this discussion, the representatives of BBS offered an overview of the aims and objectives of the group’s work coupled with a defense of some of the more controversial actions and events they have been involved with. The representatives stated that the goal of the group was to uphold the constitution and to defend Buddhism.

Following this session, the group discussed topical concerns with a Sri Lankan and Indian former Member of Parliament, both of whom are Muslim. These officials offered some lessons in Islamic history to the group. One of the most important messages from the former Sri Lankan MP was an expressed desire to live in peace with his Buddhist country men and women of Sri Lanka. Moreover, a clear call for more tolerance by the Sri Lankan Buddhist majority was articulated. Later into the evening, participants assembled and embarked on an overnight bus trip to the northern region of Sri Lanka and the town of Jaffna.

Upon arrival to Jaffna, participants enjoyed a brief rest period, some breakfast and an informational session with a local member of parliament, Anandi Shashidharan. The discussion offered one of the multiple historical interpretations and perspectives about the country’s recent civil war. Following the dialogue, the group travelled to the nearby town of Thellippalai. There they participated in a walking tour of two refugee camps. At each site, they met relocated villagers and heard some of their personal stories of war, displacement, and resettlement. Many of the displaced in the Jaffna region are widows.

One participant remarked how important it was to see people affected by the conflict and that it added considerably to their understanding of the situation. Another person shared that it was important to see the effects of the conflict in such a visceral way and that the experience was a clear reminder of the devastating legacy of violence and warfare. One of the messages that came through to some of the participants was the relatively ineffective role of the government and the UN to provide jobs for displaced individuals. It also became clear to some that the infrastructure and economy of the region needed to be rebuilt so that the many jobless persons could find gainful employment.

The final activity on the study tour itinerary took place on the morning of January 25th and included a visit to the Nagadeepa Rajamaha Vihara and Hindu Kovil temple. The group was able to tour each site and some participated in religious activities.

Background for the Jaffna Study Tour

Jaffna, Sri Lanka is located in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka with a population of just under 100,000 people, a majority of whom are Sri Lankan Tamils. In 1983, civil war broke out between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Sri Lankan government with the Tigers seeking an independent Tamil state. The war lasted for twenty six years until 2009 when the Sri Lankan military defeated the Tamil Tigers. During the course of the war, the population, economy and environment suffered greatly including tens of thousands of deaths. The region is now in the process of slowly being rebuilt and refugees are returning yet much work remains.
The topic of Structural Violence Today was deconstructed by three panelists and moderated by Reverend Jokan Ono, a Japanese Tendai Buddhist Priest from the Fugen-ji, Tendai sect, and CEO of Kechien Planning, Inc.

Dr. Joanna Macy exclaimed her delight that the conference topic was centralized during conference events. She described structural violence as being “where economic, legal, political, commercial structures take an institutionalized legal form and inflict damage, violation, oppression, not only on humans, but on all beings and all living eco systems on our planet has a reached a time in which we are living that is critical to life that is going on.”

She challenged the audience by saying, “This is something we are called to understand the powers of the human mind in a different collective way where the anguish we see, the suffering that we see around us cannot be attributed to individual causes for misbehavior, but where the sources of suffering as we understand them in the Buddha dharma—greed, hatred, delusion - have taken institutionalized forms.” Pointedly, she stated that people who are considered themselves to be good and noble, on the personal level are complicit within these structures of collective violence. Many forms of structural violence are evident today which are predominantly economic, military, legal, and commercial. Dr. Joanna compared this condition to be like a fever, this fever, that “if we dare to look can help us with a break through to a new realization our interdependence, . . . and our interbeing.”

Dr. Joanna used Dr. Ambedkar’s example for addressing the problems of the suffering of India’s outcast and tribal peoples which, in turn, helped the whole society to see that these were a structural problem and not a personal one. Those who were the most broken by it realized that it was not their fault, nor was it their personal fate or an individual punishment, rather it was within the structure. The privileged understand they are both complicit and accountable for the systems of structural violence.

“I see the immensity of the structural violence in this historical moment. For us certainly on the dharma path, and for the whole world actually, as a fever from which we can reawaken to see the capacity and reach of our minds and our solidarity with each other.”

Among the greatest assaults on climate change are the economic campaigns and most trade agreements that are designed to be forced on the people of the world. The trade pacts are kept secret from everyone including members of Congress in Washington, D.C., who are being asked to vote for them cannot even to read them. Dr. Joanna called this “a madness” that required using our minds and intelligence if we are being asked to agree to this structural violence. Since “it is a collective problem, we do not have the comfort or luxury to point to one or the other evil doer.”

Sources of structural violence are many and most often propagated by economic institutions. More pressing at this time are the very visible aspects of climate change, and technologies that are used for rapid financial gain such as nuclear energy, hydraulic fracking and genetic modification of organisms. These sources create an endless karma, the damage which is being done by them cannot be undone. She has found that “in facing this that there is a wonderful liberation of heart.
and mind that occurs with people, because we realize that here at this moment there is with structural violence so much danger put into our hands, so much threat to life, it is like the future generations and the ancestors – the past and the future generations - are with us here at this moment. The choices we face now affect them as well.”

The future generation will think of the current generation, all of us, as the generation that put these poisons into the body of earth. Dr. Joanna challenged us to form “rough weather networks” which work underground, locally beneath the radar and cross cultural meetings that are radically open to everyone. She said that, “We have to liberate each other and liberate ourselves. We can do that. We can do that because we have life on our side. We have a love of life on our side. It is calling us, it is calling us actually in every tradition of these converging streams.”

Dr. Joanna closed by saying that she sees “structural violence as a way that if we dare to speak the truth together and open our eyes with hearts so big that we can embrace each other and see that we are all victims and we are all accountable. It is a work we are born to do, you are born to do it, we are born to do it because we are alive in this time.”

Dr. Yayah Khisbiyah, Universitas Mohammadiya Surakarta, Center for Dialogue and Cooperation among Civilizations, Jakarta and the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, Siam Reap, Cambodia, talked about direct versus structural violence through the lens of the psychology of peace. In her opening remarks, she said how happy she was to be there with everyone as ‘it makes the divisions diminish entirely.’ During the morning meditation she felt in solidarity with her Buddhist and Christian friends. She felt that while sitting with the other meditators that her belief, her faith in the Muslim tradition strengthened and felt she was in one shared destiny with everyone.

It was during university when Dr. Yayah first learned of structural violence and chose the path of using non-violent approaches for promoting social transformation. She elaborated on structural violence and how it is different from direct violence, as it is horrific and its brutality can be seen in many forms - bombing, shooting, physical death. Structural violence, on the other hand, is invisible as it is imbedded in political social structures, normalized by institutions and through everyday experiences.

Johan Galtung defined structural violence as occurring when basic human needs are not met. Human potentials are constrained and life spans are shortened because of inequalities in the way political and economic structures of the societies distribute resources. It occurs where ever people are disadvantaged by unjust political, legal and economic structures or cultural traditions, because of long standing structural inequities they usually seem natural. We see it as the way things are and always have been.

But structural violence produces suffering and death, and often, perhaps more than direct violence does. Although the damage is slower, more subtle, more common, and more difficult to repair. We unconsciously tend to practice a powerful cultural mechanism which creates and maintains them for generations – cultural violence. Galtung has stated that cultural violence “refers to aspects of a culture that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence,” and examples can be found in religion, language and art, the sciences and so forth. “Cultural violence makes direct and structural violence look or feel “right”, or at least not wrong, according to Galtung.”

Unequal access to resources, to political power, to education, health care all are examples of structural violence. Unfortunately, even those who are victims of structural violence often do not see the systematic ways in which their lives are orchestrated by unequal and unfair distribution of society’s resources. It is dangerous because it frequently leads to direct violence. Armed violence in various parts of the world is easily traced to structural violence through structural inequalities as was the experience in Northern Island, Rwanda, Indonesia.
Recognizing the oppression of structural forces us to ask why we tolerate structural violence and the answers are often painful. Exclusionary thinking promotes the false thinking that people deserve to suffer and keeps us from caring from people outside our group, excludes others who are different from us. We need to reach out to those who are different, who are far away from us.

The military machine is used to promote patriarchy in which we are heroes to become the savior. It is in our character that we want to be good and to be the savior, but this attribute is being appropriated by nationalism. So we have to find an alternative way to channel this moral force into something normal, something good.

Dr. Yayah shared her own understanding growing up and doing social activities with Muslim friends in Indonesia and beyond as being for everyone, not just Muslims. The literal meaning of Islam is peace or surrender – we surrender to the will of the Creator with the main goal be the leaders of the world to transform for the better which is not only for fellow Muslims, but for all creatures. When we see violence declared in the name of Islam, it is not the Islamic teaching generally. All too often, extremists chose the violent methods which perpetuates violence.

She shared about the Muhammadiyah organization which was founded 130 years ago and now has more than 30 - 35 million members in Indonesia. It has country wide programs based on three pillars of education, health care and small and medium scale businesses to transform society in mitigating structural violence. Its programs are reaching the population through providing health care which is sorely needed as the government does not provide adequate health care, and death rate due to lack of health care is very high, more than the wars in Amman, Papua, or Ache. Health care professionals are trained to serve underserved and oppressed persons. Livelihood projects are set up through using bottom-up grassroots projects that empower local communities which are setting up small and medium scale business, cooperatives, as an alternative to capitalism. The education component is designed with a non-violent curriculum that promotes appreciating diversity and trains young students to be aware of conflict and to be able to mediate conflict directly. This curriculum design directly confronts violent extremism in the name of Islam.

Dr. Yayah asked the audience to consider how to encourage others to use non-violent approaches for confronting the giant corporations and to government. She pointed out that if we don't find ways to engage with each other non-violently, then we remain confined to our own spaces where we are not meeting each other soon. Building a common platform for dialogue will lead to further collaborations and ways to address differences through shared peacebuilding efforts.

**Father Anura Perera**, Methodist Church of Sri Lanka was the third panelist and provided more insight into understanding structural violence. He discussed the hidden causes of structural violence which are behavioral and visible, contextual and invisible or structural. He talked about the dimensions of violence which and asked why are some countries more violent than others or more prone to violence. Father Perera expanded on the main factors that make cultures more pre-disposed to violence which are structural where there is no direct harm, invisible, and violence is built into structures; political; economic; and cultural and perceptual.

Father Perera asked why we get so upset when we someone is killed violently with guns, versus not be as upset at killing by malnutrition which is typically caused by structural violence. He shared a warning about weak states where security is lacking that will typically cause harm and violence, and individual groups begin to defend their own people. He sited how structural violence has been institutionalized in the Sri Lankan government as seen when the permanent majority in Sri Lanka stops some pro-minority legislation which effectively leaves the minority behind. Father Perera closed by emphasizing that, “We must collectively challenge the structural violence so it can be uprooted.”
A lively exchange took place during the reflection period when common points such as respect were examined within the context of sustainable development. Dr. Yayah said that respect can be learned through education and dialogue processes between interfaith groups. Dr. Joanna gave a practical example of confronting structural violence in the food system where large transnational corporations are able to secure the votes and legislative body. One approach is to become involved at the local scale working below the radar without the larger structure knowing about it by labeling to show products are not GMO modified; reclaiming land to raise grains. She feels that creativity happens when it is close to the ground.

One question focused on how to reach out to others who choose not to be involved. Dr. Joanna responded by saying that people who work for multinationals are ‘tools’ for them; actually hostages who are treated very well. We can feel compassion for these people who are prisoners of these inhuman systems whose hearts can be changed for the better. She emphasized beginning with communities of practice where everyone can learn and practice together while discovering how creative everyone can be. Communities such as these need be radically open to everyone. Dr. Yayah responded from her experience in Indonesia where 80% of the population are Muslims and reminded everyone that they are not monolithic, but at heart individuals who can benefit from inclusive education.

Can organized religion be part of the structural violence, and, if so, what can be done to stop it? Father Perera responded by saying that religions cannot escape the structural violence, but dhamma is always pure even when structures are corrupted. Dhamma brings everyone together. Dr. Yayah made reference to religious leaders who were part of religious movements in the Philippines, the USA and Iran who used people’s power to confront structural violence, they teach everyone how to act strategically.

Another person asked what to do when religion has been nationalized such as in Sri Lanka and Myanmar. Dr. Joanna responded by saying how fear is effectively used to control people. Unfortunately, fear breeds extremism and fundamentalist interpretations of religions that cause divisiveness and reactivity. Many extremist religious groups are being supported by large weapons groups. Grassroots efforts are one effective approach for addressing the extremism. Father Perera said that the political transition that took place in Sri Lanka is very promising. However, in situations of violence all the underlying root causes are not addressed which is why dialogue in Sri Lanka is ongoing.
World Café – INEB Café
Dialogue on Structural Violence & Holistic Development

Islander Center, Anuradhapura - January 26, 2016

The two conference afternoon sessions of World Café and Open Space were skillfully facilitated by Nuttarote Wangwinyoo (Nut), managing director of the Kwanpandin Contemplative Learning Institute, Chiang Rai, Thailand. Nut introduced the World Café as one form of dialogue in which a process of natural interactions between people takes place. The World Café – INEB Café was a time for the conference participants to interact with each other as they more deeply examined their understanding of structural violence on personal, cultural/societal and country levels. It was also a time for reflect on the two study tours and other experiences related to the conference many of which took place outside the conference activities such as during breaks, eating meals together and other times of informal sharing.

In reviewing the guidelines, Nut reminded everyone that the purpose of the café was for them “to be alive, to express their passion.” Since everyone has such a unique journey, participants were encouraged to share, make a contribution. Everyone was asked to slow down, listen deeply.

The process involved four rounds with a new question posed for each round. After sharing responses to one question, the persons formed a new group with a new facilitator which allowed them to connect with different ideas as they moved from one group to the next for each consecutive round. Nut described this cross pollination of ideas metaphorically in that everyone was all bees and flowers. Through listening and looking for a new understanding, the debate culture was left behind and participants could appreciate differences before challenging each other. Practicing deep listening forced everyone to put aside looking for a ‘quick fix,’ so conversations took place with an unknown outcome. The process cultivated trust and allowed themselves to have an innocent mind.

Approximately 19 groups with at least four person each formed with a facilitator. The questions for the rounds were on the morning’s theme of structural violence to which persons were asked to listen for patterns, focus on what matters, and speak with their heart. Each round took 30 minutes after which new groups formed for the next round.

Round 1. Who are you? What are you passionate about and why are you here? What does the term structural violence mean to you?

Round 2. How has structural violence effected your life, community and society? Please give specific examples of its impact.

Round 3. What are the root causes of structural violence?

Round 4. How can structural violence be uprooted and removed from society? Give examples from your own experience.

During the wrap-up Nut asked everyone to ‘harvest’ their shared experiences. The root
causes of structural violence were identified as greed and desire; specifically tribalism, gender inequality, identity, power struggles, and unhealthy hierarchies that are fed by greed and anger. Uprooting structural violence can happen when consciousness shifts at a collective level, and ‘real’ dialogue can take place by listening deeply with empathy, putting yourself into their shoes, not being attached to positions. In the café there is much less focus on who’s right, and much more exploring where things are going through shared understanding.

Another common understanding that emerged was the more you surround yourself with diverse groups, the more your understanding increases of the other. So if you don’t know where to start to address structural violence, perhaps begin with interacting with a more diverse group of people and look at things from their perspective, finding common ground with your own experience. This approach can become consciously incorporated into personal practice. Participants shared their experiences which reflected their individual, personal perspectives. “I think I went through a little transformation. I was in a group with a Korean girl and was impatient because I am older, speak English better, am more senior. Suddenly I saw my granddaughter in her and felt so accepting. I could feel heart to heart with this girl and her story about how women monks are suppressed in Korea.”

One person said that the group agreed that they as individuals played a role in structural violence. Her “message to INEB is that individual changes away from the ego, greed and personal power are needed, and to become eco-centric. By becoming eco-centric we will respect others when we understand those connect to Mother Nature.”

Another observed that the main word that came up was diversity. “Especially in China because we don’t respect others. The 20th century was the age of introspection, now the 21st century is the age of extrospection, so we need to step outside ourselves and step into new shoes. Please have empathy for us.”

A participant noted that the Indian Brahmanic system continues to dominate all systems in India, which creates inequalities. Although Buddhists do not honor or follow the caste system, living with the dominant system is discouraging and all people need to be respected in order to have dignity. He noted that caste violence was increasing, and for example at Hyderabad University many Dalit students, men and women, die every day.

An academic and activist noted how as global citizens structural violence can be uprooted with education. Since everyone had been born into structures of violence that were not of their own choosing, education can increase people’s awareness and realization of how interconnected and interdependent we are.

One person said that he had not felt structural violence in his life, but now sees that he is part of the chain of structural violence with no consciousness. Meditating helps him which leads to a good cycle.

In summary Nut asked whether everyone really believed that they could help bring about change. “What happens when we go home? Now we can leave with a sense of belief in ourselves and each other and acknowledged everyone’s honest expression of sharing.”

Dr. Joanna closed the World Café by saying that, “We were given the opportunity to talk among ourselves. Let us come together in gratitude for each other, for being here, for open heartedness for listening to each other; the process of the World Café, willingness to participate in it, Islander, Sevalanka. Here we are at this moment with gratitude for love in this historical moment in the world.”
Play! Experiment! Improvise!

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Holistic Development: How to Make it Possible

Islander Center, Anuradhapura - January 27, 2016

A panel presentation with four speakers who examined the topic of holistic development and how to make it possible was moderated by Sai Sam Kham, executive director of the Metta Development Foundation in Myanmar.

Venerable Pomnyun Sunim, of the South Korean based Jungto Society, began his comments by saying that the people’s mental and spiritual development is not happening fast enough. Clearly, regional and local development are happening at different paces resulting in uneven development between these areas. He emphasized that development needs to be pursued that is sustainable and can continue for the long term.

The driving forces behind development are human beings which, in turn, perpetuate the primary problem that all human needs and desires cannot be met. Additionally, satisfying all our needs is not a necessary condition for our happiness. He went on to say that even though the focus is on delighting in the satisfaction of all our needs, the suffering continues.

Sustainable happiness is about looking at others’ happiness, as well as our own and sustaining the happiness in the future through following the Middle Path, and by looking at the whole being as every one, all living and nonliving beings exist together with non-sentient beings.

Delusion is the cause of this self-centered desire of which we need to let go. Consumerism perpetuates the problem as it generates desire for more, a feeling of wanting, craving. Unless we abandon this erroneous belief that by producing more our lives will improve, the environmental problems cannot be addressed. In reality, it is by reducing our consumption we will be able to avoid competition with others and live in harmony and peace.

Venerable Athuraliye Ratana Thero is a Sri Lankan Buddhist monk and member of parliament who is leading environmental causes. Venerable Ratana began by saying that having an understanding our environment is very important and many approaches can be used to protect it from further degradation and destruction. He emphasized that today Buddhist monks need more knowledge of the outside world in order to adequately advise or address social and environmental issues in such as the food supply and health care more deeply. Monks live an insular and isolated lifestyle and tend to practice Buddhist teachings very individually, and, all too often do not interact with the people. Their lifestyle contributes to their lack of familiarity with societal and environmental problems.

Venerable Ratana closed by focusing on some of Sri Lanka’s challenges for holistic development which include: asking how to push government toward using renewable energy; how to promote organic agriculture in the face of well-established financial sources and interests; and finding a balance between traditional wisdom and
current practices for use in systems such as health care and education. Venerable believes Buddhist monks can be part of the solution and specifically urges them to consider effective ways to address the environmental crisis.

Third panelist, Reverend Dr. Hans Ucko of Arigatou International Movement’s World Day of Prayer and Action for Children, Sweden, began by examining the concept of holistic development by asking the audience questions: Whose development, what is to be developed, and when is one considered to be developed? “Holistic is often characterized by the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and the parts are intimately interconnected and explicable only by reference to the whole. The sum of the parts together adds something that the parts alone do not have.”

In holistic approaches there is an added space (soul) which is needed when we address words like holistic development, because in themselves they are difficult to grasp. Defining it is difficult and the ‘space’ is also difficult to define, so it is important to grasp. Dr. Hans Ucko sited an example from the Jewish tradition where “a small corner of a wall in a home should always be left unpainted. The practice goes back to the time when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed.” Keeping one small portion unfinished was a witness to what had been lost, but more importantly an indication that nothing is every complete. In this way “the unpainted corner is a reminder of any project that will never be finished. It is always there to be worked on.”

Holistic development is also never finished and is not a pre-fabricated thing like furniture you buy at IKEA. We need more than ourselves to find the way, this is the ingredient in intercultural dialogue. Dr. Hans Ucko described a man who was lost in the forest and bewildered and in a panic. He hid out of fear when he noticed a stranger approaching. After he realized the stranger was his only hope, he made himself know and asked for directions. The stranger responded by saying that he was lost too, but could show the way not to take, and together we can discover together the way out. They trusted each other because they shared the same predicament and could face the unknown together. This sacred breakthrough shows that together we can discover together the way forward. Too often we only listen to respond to the other, rather than listen to see how we can help each other.

Dr. Hans Ucko spoke of Arigatou International, which is a Buddhist lay movement that places the child at the center of its work. He emphasized how essential each other’s wisdom from the religious traditions was to supporting the wellbeing of the world’s children, “because it is with children that the cognitive, social, cultural, physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions of human development are integrally interwoven.”

Dr. Hans Ucko ended his comments by saying that when “we think of ourselves we have the capacity of feeling that nature and I are one, that God and I are one. The child in all its innocence brings forth in us the best in us. The cloud of unknowing in all of has to do with holistic development.”

The fourth panelist, Hans van Willenswaard of the School for Wellbeing in Thailand said that his angle of trying to contribute to holistic development is that, together with his wife as social entrepreneurs in Thailand. In the late 1990s they started a business with 3 components: a publishing house, the School for Wellbeing which is an exchange platform for academics and lay persons to conduct action research, and Towards Organic Asia. The major characteristic of their enterprise is that it contributes to systemic social change in the business sector which is based on a holistic worldview connecting the micro with the macro.

Hans spoke about how farmers are also the victims of structural violence all around the world. Reductionist science reduces reality until it can
be quantified and is looking for shortcuts and has made farming a terrible profession. Recognizing the role of farmers is critical because they work with the soil and care for our food supply. The care of farmers is very important especially by religious communities. Additionally, consumers need to become aware of their food sources and the role farmers play in providing it, then they will be able to link with their hearts with the farmers. The food we receive is from the farmers and we want to thank them for it, this creates mindful markets. Mindful markets belong in society because democracy cannot work without them. In this way good governance, equality, and community will thrive.

Hans closed by saying that our liberation comes from individual efforts as meditators; the sangha, based on the principle of community, in turn, provides in a symbolic way food to the monks which binds us together. This brings us back to focusing on the farmers awakens our consciousness of the food we consume.

A reflection period followed during which held several highlights. Participants were reminded to be humble and accept that they do not know everything as life is a process of continual learning experiences. In fact, development is not about getting to a specific place, but is about continual incremental improvement that is long lasting. Participants were also reminded how Buddhism supports community-based lifestyle both inside and outside monasteries. All religions have a connection to children because they are the reason for being, a manifestation of the future. As an antithesis to structural violence we need to ask whether structural happiness is possible and can examine Bhutan’s example of Gross National Happiness for possible application in our country and cultural contexts. It is also possible to make the business sector aware of the people’s suffering through making good selections and buying the product helps whether it is from a farmer or a small shop. Platforms between citizens, business platforms and academics exist for examining how business can become sustainable.
Open Space for Creative Ideas and Networking

Islander Center, Anuradhapura - January 27, 2016

Open Space for Creative Ideas and Networking followed the morning’s panel presentation on Holistic Development: How to Make it Possible. The Open Space provided conference participants with the opportunity to ‘market’ their interests and form like-minded groups that could work together. The facilitator, Nuttarote Wangwinyoo (Nut), described the Open Space as being about freedom and responsibility based on simple principles:

1. Whoever comes are the right people because they care and are the ones to take action.
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that you have. Be prepared to be positively surprised. So when you propose a topic, you are responsible to talk about it.
3. Whenever it starts is the right time so enter into the flow of creativity and contribute to it.
4. When it’s over, it’s over.

Several large groups formed from the diverse market place of ideas representing education, living simply, Dhamma teaching for the modern world, reducing gender violence, using rapeseed, finding the middle way in the contemporary Buddhist world surrounded by violence, veganism – stopping violence against animals and more.

The spirited small group discussions were spaces where individuals presented their ideas and found a common understanding for how their ideas complemented each other. The small group presentations were energizing and generated new ways of thinking that are summarized below.

1. Bhikkhuni lifestyle and its revival are an essential part of Buddhism that is forgotten in the mainstream. The group shared best practices and agreed that spreading the word of the bhikkhunis plight through raising international awareness and understanding of their situation is needed. They also believe that learning English, and possibly forming an English language institute will help them to accomplish this.

2. Mindful living across society was explored by having mindful markets, mindful education, mindful living, dying, healthcare, etc., which could be a blueprint for a consciousness revolution. The mindful living network group’s goal was to have mindful production systems. This would be accomplished through collaborating in education efforts; building mindful markets internationally; promoting simplicity – slowing down; designing and setting up ecovillages and cooperatives; and by confronting systemic structures through grassroots efforts.

3. Learn to live and live to learn – delve into what it means to be alive and how it relates to learning; the idea life as one big learning journey.

4. A new business idea launched connecting a recent discovery at Fukushima where farmers are unable to grow crops because of their proximity to Fukushima. They have found
that rapeseed grows well and extracts nuclear radiation by keeping it in the stem and leaves; the actual seed is completely free of the radioactivity. Nature is able to clean the part that actually propagates life. Its oil can be used for lights replacing kerosene oil, bring consciousness into temples, eco-temples.

5. Working with Diversity - Diverse group from many countries who were facing structural violence examined how to communicate with oppressors while facing cast discrimination in India, as well as for Buddhist minorities in some countries. Being around these diverse groups with diverse opinions is essential when collaborating and attempting to use non-violence approaches.

6. Suicide Prevention – A network of Japanese priests are actively working on suicide prevention by provide counseling, sharing healing Buddhist rituals, and working with families affected by suicide. The group wants convene a small international conference next year where their experiences can be shared and invited everyone who is interested to attend.
Gautham Prahbu began his closing comments by saying that the entire conference experience was a time of learning and unlearning. Being together felt like being with a large Buddhist family, with so many kalyanamittra. Everyone sitting in the large circle was invited to share ultimately described their experience as being at home as part of a close family. Walking in forest is where one person connected with many people; another said that she came to learn and learned more than she ever expected and met the most warm-hearted people. Many people expressed their appreciation and thankfulness for attending, as well as for the organizers.

Several people expressed how inspired they were and could carry dreams, new ideas and ways of relating to their work back in their home communities and countries. Some shared how their idea of Buddhism had shifted as they learned their personal practice could become more socially engaged. A person from the Chinese delegation said that it was an ‘ice breaking’ trip; another participant from China said it was good to feel that she was not alone. Many said that meeting people from other parts of the world and other faith traditions and learning together was the most significant thing that would take away from the conference.

Others were processing their feelings having realized they felt closer to Muslims and were very touched by the trip to Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka where they had discussions with Buddhist and Muslim leaders. It was also eye-opening to see the discrimination people faced during war, and how the so-called peace processes have also harmed people.

Harsha Navaratne expressed his appreciation for the Sevalanka and INEB staff efforts to coordinate the conference. He went on to say that this conference was the first time that the younger generation organized the entire event and was glad to see this transition taking place. He also acknowledge the various countries for participating and how much they contributed to it. Somboon Chungprampree (Moo), the INEB Executive Secretary, thanked the Sevalanka Foundation, The International Buddhists Confederation and the Thai INEB team and all the participants for attending.

Gautham’s final comments were that the INEB conference was only made possible with everyone’s participation, the participation is based on everyone’s connection between hearts, this is the basis kalyanamittra.
The Eco-Temple Community Development Project is a newly forming sub-network of the Inter-Religious Climate and Ecology (ICE) network of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). The Eco-Temple Community Development Project’s general goal is to develop ecological human communities that are sustainably interconnected with the natural environment through the community center of a religious facility/temple. Such temples will manifest ecological standards on the material, relational, and spiritual levels. INEB and ICE members have a wide variety of communities, resources, and needs. By working together to develop an Eco-Temple Community Design Scheme, a strategic base of best practices can be developed to help each community meet their specific needs.

The two day meeting held just after the INEB General Conference from January 29-30, 2016, was the first time this new sub network had an extended period together to share their activities and delve more deeply into the numerous interconnected issues in eco-temple community design. In this way, the meeting sought to: 1) share, identify, and begin collaboration among core members to support the development of eco-temple communities; and 2) from this shared knowledge, further develop and articulate an Eco-Temple Community Design Scheme, which can be a planning tool for our own and other eco-temple community initiatives. The focus was not on technology transfer or aid, but rather sharing perspectives and experiences to empower participants to develop answers in their own localities. With an eye towards an intimate and collaborative process, organizers of the meeting decided to keep participant numbers below 25 persons. In the end, about 20 people participated from 10 different countries. There were 5 main temple communities that offered presentations on their work and formed the center of the discussions.

Sukhavati Eco-Temple: Tamil Nadu, India - Foundation for His Sacred Majesty, Gautham Prabhu Nagappan (Director)

Socially Engaged Monastic Schools (SEMS): Myanmar - Salai Tial Awi Thang (Awipi), Coordinator

The Smart Pagoda: Chonburi, Thailand - Phra Sangkom Thanapanyo Khunsiri (Abbot)

Juko-in Temple & Kenju-in Temple: Tokyo, Japan - Reverend Hidehito Okochi (Abbot)

Zhengjue Temple: Mt. Lianhua, Shandong Province, China - Venerable Miao Hai (Head of Renewable Energy Application)

From the basis of these groups, presentations followed by peer review and extended discussion on each project. On the afternoon of the second day, the group had a final exchange, much of which centered on issues and difficulties in...
Conference Activities

What we can offer:
1. Food, lodging and hall for trainings related to eco-temple
2. Lands for eco-temple projects

What we need:
1. Funding for bamboo treatment ($5,000), construction ($10,000 for 1 building of 550 sq. ft. as an example) and resilient bamboo forestry
2. Renewable energy technologies

Unique in Sun Belt Area!
Major 3 issues: Energy, Water & Food, Solar is the Solution.

Western (2)
RE electricity touched 78% in Week 30

Germany

What's on in July, 2015?

Sun Belt (3)
Electricity in the Area Total 2005

Eastern (1)

Launching PV project

Zhejiang
ECO TEMPLE COMMUNITY
DESIGN COMPONENTS
Collective Responsibility & Sustainable Life Quality Improvement

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
- Education with faith leadership engagement (community levels: temple, locals, business, government)
- Collaborative solidarity/action
- Linkages with CSOs
- Relationship with gov’t & business
- Cultivating youth leaders

TEMPLE BUSINESS
- Medicinal plants
- Eco-products
- Selling excess electricity

SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT
- Gardens & Agriculture: natural biodiversity with flagship plants and/or organic produce garden
- Food Forests/Permaculture
- Forests/Water: rain water collection, grey water management, water systems storage and management
- Regeneration of environment: check-dams

ECONOMIC BASIS
- Seed capital: from religious institutions & other funders, creative use of dana from parishioners/followers
- Self sufficiency: low inputs
- Sustainability system (generation & maintenance of local activities): small and medium eco-cooperative social enterprises
- Community based micro-credit

TEMPLE STRUCTURE
Design: underlying principles (vision definition, strategy development, implementation schemes — priorities and sequencing)
- Energy system
- Building materials (including all connected buildings in complex): natural build, sustainable, long life
- Waste system: composting latrines and bio (kitchen/garden) composts; solid waste (non bio-degradable) management
- Use of water for air circulation and cooling
- Alternative design: creative ecological adaptation of traditional temple architecture

VALUES/DHARMA
- Eco Buddhist concepts: The Path is the Goal, “Waking up” (bodhi) Together through Eco-Temple; tea 茶 = eco life “people living between grass and woods”; decentralized production and consumption → people’s democracy away from centralized political/economic power and wars for oil/nuclear war
- Eco Buddhist lifestyle practices
- Environmental education of monks

TEMPLE BUSINESS
- Medicinal plants
- Eco-products
- Selling excess electricity
sustaining the shared work. The group wants to continue what it felt were the dynamic and practical conversations of the two days without getting bogged down in the building and maintenance of yet another new network requiring excessive amounts of email communication and documentation which is an added burden for non-native English speakers with poor internet access. In this way, we will seek to develop the Eco-Temple Community Development Project more as a meme, or as a method or path, rather than as a fixed project with fixed membership. This means that we will try to further develop the Eco-Temple Community Design Scheme so that it can be used as a planning and action tool for our own and any other eco-temple community initiatives in the world.

We want to continue to enrich the design scheme and further our own work based on a number of cooperative agreements mentioned in the above temple community profiles, and through an ongoing series of small meetings and site visits (often with a particular learning theme), which have already begun. Further, in order to save resources and increase the likelihood of participation, will be held group meeting during the next INEB and ICE conferences, while conducting the site visits before or after, as follows:

- April 2015: South Korea (ICE II conference) and site visit: Japan (theme: nuclear and clean energy)
- January 2016: Sri Lanka (INEB biennial conference) and site visit: south India (theme: earth bricks and environmental justice in new Buddhist communities)
- December 2016: Two site visits: Thailand (opening of Phra Sangkom’s Smart Pagoda) Myanmar (theme: ecological use of bamboo)
- July 2017: Indonesia (ICE III conference) and site visit: TBA: Muslim eco mosques?
- November 2017: Taiwan (INEB biennial conference) and site visit: China (theme: solar energy)

In the intervening periods, a basic homepage with profiles of the main member eco-temple communities and the evolving Eco-Temple Community Design Scheme will be maintained on the homepage of the Japan Network of Engaged Buddhists (JNEB) and the new ICE homepage.
We need sustainability within ourselves and to put our beliefs into action. If we can do that, then our task can become much easier. The most important is to have the sustainability within ourselves.

Lodi Gyari Rinpoche
Establishment

In 1989, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) was established in Siam (Thailand) by Sulak Sivaraksa and a group of Buddhist and non-Buddhist thinkers and social activists. INEB operates as an autonomous organization under the Bangkok-based Sathirakoses-Nagapradeepa Foundation. Over the years the network has expanded to include members, both individuals and organizations, from more than 25 countries across Asia, Europe, North America and Australia. From this diversity, an understanding of socially engaged Buddhism has emerged which integrates the practice of Buddhism with social action for a healthy, just, and peaceful world.

Nature of the Organization

INEB is comprised of distinguished activists, spiritual leaders, and academics representing the major schools of Buddhism, as well as non-Buddhists with shared concerns. INEB’s member activities address a variety of issues to serve their own communities. The members also support one another through collaborating on common projects and joint strategic planning for advancing INEB’s vision and activities. The Secretariat’s office facilitates the flow of information and support by offering programs to fortify members’ capacity through joint activities and shared resources. INEB welcomes new partners that will complement and expand the existing network.

Vision and Objectives

INEB’s overall vision is to develop the perspective and practice of socially engaged Buddhism that:

1. Promotes understanding, cooperation, and networking among inter-Buddhist and inter-religious social action groups
2. Acts as an information resource related to areas of social concern
3. Facilitates conferences, education, and training based on Buddhist values and practices that supports and strengthens socially active individuals and groups

Socially Engaged Buddhism

INEB members and partners are exploring the ways in which Buddhism and social analysis can enrich one another toward solving social problems together. This exploration seeks to develop new social paradigms based on Buddhist concepts...
and values such as the interdependency and interconnectedness of all beings to create more self-reliant and harmonious communities. This process has been taking place through linking regional and international groups with grassroots realities from which the social issues of concern and engagement have emerged.

Social Issues of Concern and Engagement

INEB’s philosophy and practice is based on compassion, social justice, non-violence, and co-existence as revealed by the Buddha. The core mission is to confront and end suffering using analysis and action guided by the Four Noble Truths. Activities focus on the following areas:
- General conferences
- Peacebuilding and reconciliation
- Human rights and social justice
- Alternative education
- Gender & women’s empowerment
- Buddhist economics
- Alternative development
- Environment & climate change
- Reform and revival of Buddhist institutions
- Youth and spiritual leadership development
- Buddhist art
- Inter-religious/faith dialogue and collaboration

Media/Public Relations and Publications

INEB maximizes its capacity to communicate effectively to the network through its website where all of its current activities are announced, as well as those of its members and partner organizations. It also has a Facebook site. In addition to the internet, INEB publishes the Seeds of Peace three times per year, which critiques modern society as well as proposes options for a more humane and livable world.

Other publications include a variety of books and other printed materials.

Participation

Anyone can become a member of INEB, Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike, as long as they share an interest in social issues and genuinely want to contribute in the spirit of giving (dana) with compassion. Through an annual donation of fifty US dollars ($50) new members will receive Seeds of Peace.

INEB is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation whose programmes are funded by outside donors and foundations. The Secretariat’s office operates solely on the generosity of individuals, groups, organizations and our regional networks. Your donation or dana to further INEB’s work would be greatly appreciated. If you are interested in becoming a member or making a donation, please contact the Secretariat – secretariat@ineb-network.org.

INEB General Conference

Over the years INEB has sponsored 16 general international conferences in various locations throughout Asia for its members and other participants interested in our issues of concern and engagement. In 2011, the bi-annual conference was held in Bodhgaya, India, where participants collectively and individually examined the future of Buddhism. The 2013 conference will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
History of INEB Conferences

The conference was held annually until 1995, since then they have been scheduled every two years.

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Uthai Thani, Thailand</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>Suan Mokkh, Surat Thani, Thailand</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Colombo, Sri Lanka</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Wongsanit Ashram, Nakhorn Nayok, Thailand</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>Seoul, South Korea</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Nagpur, India, Theme - <em>From Suffering to Nirvana,</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Taipei, Taiwan - Theme - <em>Engaged Buddhism: Social Welfare and Social Change</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Chiang Mai, Thailand - Theme - <em>20th Anniversary of INEB: Festival of Peace and Social Change</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Bodhgaya, India - Theme - <em>The Future of Buddhism: From Personal Awakening to Global Transformation</em></td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia - Theme - <em>Inter-Faith Dialogue for Peace and Sustainability</em></td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>Colombo and Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka - Theme - <em>Converging Streams: Engaging in Dialogue for Holistic Development</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Taoyuan, Taiwan, theme to be announced</td>
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INEB Organisational Structure 2016-2017

As a network organization INEB’s organizational structure is composed of Patrons, Honorary Advisors, an Advisory Committee and an Executive Committee. The Secretariat’s office is based in Bangkok, Thailand, where it coordinates network activities with a small staff under the guidance of the Secretary. The Advisory and Executive Committees convene joint annual meetings. Programme activities and new initiatives are guided by working groups composed of network members and partners.

INEB Members - Patron, Honorary Advisors, Advisory Committee and Executive Committee As of the January 2016 AC/EC meeting at the Islander Center, Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka.

PATRONS
His Holiness the Dalai Lama Tibet
Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh France/Vietnam
Venerable Maha Somchai Kusalacitto Siam (Thailand)
Venerable Bhikshuni Chao Hwei Taiwan

HONORARY ADVISORS
Venerable Lama Lobzang India
Venerable Pomnyum Sunim South Korea
Venerable Samdhong Rinpoche Tibet
Venerable Tsing Tao Taiwan
Venerable Bhikshuni Wu Yin Taiwan
Hisashi Nakamura Japan
Joanna Macy USA
Rinko Okano Japan
Urgyen Sangharashita United Kingdom

ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Sulak Sivaraksa (Founder Chair) Siam (Thailand)
Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari (Co-chair) Tibet/USA
Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi USA
Ven. Lama Duboom Tulku Tibet/India
Ven. Phaisan Visalo Siam (Thailand)
Ven. Sangasena Ladakh / India
Ven. Sumanalankar Bangladesh
Ven. Bhikkhuni Dhammananda Siam (Thailand)
Ven. Tsering Palmo Ladakh/India
Rev. Alan Senauke USA
David Loy USA
Dharmachari Lokamitra India
Douangdeuane Bounyavong Laos
Rev. Hidehito Okochi Japan
Hsiang-chou Yo Taiwan
Jamie Cresswell UK
Jill Jameson Australia
Joan Halifax Roshi USA
Rev. Masazumi Okano Japan
Park Gwang-seo South Korea
Raja Dharmapala Sri Lanka
Stella Tamang Nepal
Swee-hin Toh Costa Rica
Thant Lwin Maung Burma/Myanmar
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Harsha Navaratne (Chairperson) Sri Lanka
Ven. Geshe Dorje Damdul Tibet / India
Ven. Norbu Sherpa Nepal
Ven. Sithornh Xayavongsone Laos
Ven. Bhikkhuni Jenkir Taiwan
Amanda KiesselSri Lanka/USA
Anchalee Kurutach USA/Siam (Thailand)
Bobo Lwin Burma/Myanmar
Jaizhen Wang China
Jeung-yeon Choi South Korea
Dharmacharini Vajrapushpa UK
Dishani Jayaweera Sri Lanka
Gauthama Prabhu Nagappan India (Tamil Nadu)
Gregory Kruglak Switzerland/USA
Hans van Willenswaard Netherlands/Siam
Hesook Lee South Korea
Jonathan Watts Japan/USA
Junghee Min South Korea
Kyabgön Phakchok Rinpoche Tibet/Nepal
Lanh Thi Tran Vietnam
Linda Buckley USA (Alaska)
Linda Buckley India
Matteo Pistono USA
Nan Mya Thida USA
Nigel Crawhall USA
Otsal Wangdus Burma/Myanmar
P. Lalidamballe Tibet/Nepal
Poochawee Ruangwichatorn India (Puducherry)
Prashant Varma Siam (Thailand)
Ros Sotha India
Sai Leng Wan Cambodia
Santoshita Chakma Burma/Myanmar
Sarom Sek Bangladesh
Suresh Chandra Baudha Cambodia
Suresh Jindal India
Tashi Zangmo India
Thanomsing Kosolnawin Bhutan
Vidyananda (KV Soon) Siam (Thailand)
Wallapa van Willenswaard Malaysia
Wintomo Tjandra Siam (Thailand)

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
Somboon Chungprampree (Moo) Siam (Thailand)
Mangala Sutta: Blessings

Translated from the Pali by
Narada Thera © 1994 Alternate translations:
Piyadassi | Soni | Thanissaro This sutta also appears at Sn 2.4

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Exalted One was dwelling at Anathapindika’s monastery, in Jeta’s Grove, near Savatthi. Now when the night was far spent, a certain deity whose surpassing splendor illumined the entire Jeta Grove, came to the presence of the Exalted One and, drawing near, respectfully saluted him and stood at one side. Standing thus, he addressed the Exalted One in verse:

“Many deities and men, yearning after good, have pondered on blessings. Pray, tell me the greatest blessing!”

[The Buddha]

“Not to associate with the foolish, but to associate with the wise; and to honor those who are worthy of honor — this is the greatest blessing.

To reside in a suitable locality, to have done meritorious actions in the past and to set oneself in the right course — this is the greatest blessing.

To have much learning, to be skillful in handicraft, well-trained in discipline, and to be of good speech — this is the greatest blessing.

To support mother and father, to cherish wife and children, and to be engaged in peaceful occupation — this is the greatest blessing.

To be generous in giving, to be righteous in conduct, to help one’s relatives, and to be blameless in action — this is the greatest blessing.

To loathe more evil and abstain from it, to refrain from intoxicants, and to be steadfast in virtue — this is the greatest blessing.

To be respectful, humble, contented and grateful; and to listen to the Dhamma on due occasions — this is the greatest blessing.

To be patient and obedient, to associate with monks and to have religious discussions on due occasions — this is the greatest blessing.

Self-restraint, a holy and chaste life, the perception of the Noble Truths and the realisation of Nibbana — this is the greatest blessing.

A mind unruffled by the vagaries of fortune, from sorrow freed, from defilements cleansed, from fear liberated — this is the greatest blessing.

Those who thus abide, ever remain invincible, in happiness established. These are the greatest blessings.”