2011 commemorates 16 years since SEM was established as a transformative learning organisation in Thailand. Our work has now expanded greatly into neighbouring countries, Laos and Myanmar, but using the same ethos of self transformation as the key to resilient and sustainable social transformation. This work first began with the Grassroots Leadership Training (GLT) programme for people from Burma, and has now expanded to six programmes in three countries, where SEM plays a role of facilitating or co-facilitating with local partners. These programmes include:

- A wide range of curriculum-based trainings for the general public in Thailand
- Strengthening civil society and targeted capacity building for marginalised sectors of society in Myanmar
- Creating a community of grassroots leaders in Laos PDR through the Sangha

SEM's core curriculum promotes holistic, value-based and empowering learning that is effective within differing contexts and differing target groups. We have found across our programmes the similarity of outcomes, namely the empowerment of individuals to be able to work together as agents of social change.

We are also focused on strengthening the institutional capacity of local partner organisations and promoting local ownership and programme sustainability. Activities across our programmes include cross-organisational sharing platforms, whereby local organisations are able to learn from each others’ experiences, share knowledge and resources, and work together to meet shared goals. In Thailand, our work supporting the organisational development of governmental agencies, businesses and NGO’s encourages the participation of all staff in organisational processes thereby strengthening their ownership and commitment, and helping to create happiness in their workplace.

Religion is also often an entry-point for our work because of the importance that we place upon education as a means to know oneself and the world around us. Faith-based groups are often well-placed to engage in social issues as part of their wider mandates of bringing spiritual-based values into the world around them. In Myanmar, both Christian and Buddhist institutions offer alternative channels to engage civil society, working together for constructive social change. In Laos, the position of the Sangha provides an important entry point for facilitating civil society to engage in defining and working towards their own wellbeing.

As part of this approach, we also promote interreligious and inter-ethnic collaboration, by bridging divisive social and politically motivated gaps through shared experiential and participatory learning that emphasises the integration of the ‘head’ and the ‘heart’, as well as exploring common values and goals that provide the ‘social glue’ for people to be able to work and be together.

Our work in Thailand is mainly centred in Bangkok, with projects in the past year also reaching out to people in three provinces in the Northeast, and Central Thailand. In Laos, we work in nine of the country’s eighteen provinces, and in Myanmar, our work covers all States and Divisions except Rakhine State.

Executive Summary

SEM Programmes
Thailand
- SEM (Semikkha)
Myanmar
- Buddhist Youth Empowerment
- Cyclone Nargis Capacity Building and Networking
- Sustainable Empowerment of Civil Society in Myanmar
- Center for the Promotion of Monastic Education
Laos
- Lao Grassroots Leaders Training and Action
Overview of SEM Course Contents

Life
- Death and Dying
- Living Happily in a Consumer Society
- Balancing Body, Mind and Wisdom through Conscious Relaxation
- Mindfulness and Awakening
- Engaged Buddhism
- Personal Growth: Enneagram, Transformation Game
- Co-Active Coaching
- Leadership with Awakening
- Natural Healthcare
- Tibetan Healthcare
- Contemplative Dance

Society
- Understanding Social Structures
- Exposure Trips: Impact of Globalisation on Rural and Urban Society
- Human Rights

Nature
- Natural House Building
- Deep Ecology and Forest Walks
- Eco-villages
- Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Ecological Worldviews

Relationships
- Facilitation for Transformation
- Training of Trainers
- Non-Violent Communication, Mediation and Compassionate Communication
- Community and Team Building
- Leadership and Interpersonal Relationships
- Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding
- Empowerment Counselling
- Love, Sex and Marriage
- Interpersonal Communication

Beauty
- Art Therapy
- The Art of Tea Making
- Flower Arranging for Harmony
- Happiness from Music
- Cross Cultural Exposure and Exchange
- Vernacular Crafts

Knowledge
- Critical Thinking
- Buddhist Theory and Critical Thinking
- Strategic Planning

Transformative Education
- Right View about internal and external development
- Right Thought through critical self awareness, and defined as unselfish, non-violent, and free of hatred and excessive desire
- Right Speech through compassionate communication and reconciliation
- Right Action through ethical conduct
- Right Livelihood through exposure trips to sustainable and non-exploitative practices
- Right Effort, Mindfulness and Concentration through self awareness practices and integrating spiritual practice into daily life
SEM has been involved in cyclone Nargis recovery and rehabilitation work since the cyclone struck in May, 2008. Initially, local groups were supported for emergency disaster relief, which evolved into a community organising response through the lessons learned from community groups in Thailand in the wake of the 2004 Tsunami.

Local partner groups were supported to strengthen the capacities of affected communities in order to initiate their own recovery and rehabilitation through participatory and empowering means, leading to long term self reliance. A further aim has also been to strengthen the capacity of local partner organizations to initiate community organising, and in the long-term, be part of a growing movement of local grassroots organizations with the means and vision to perpetuate sustainable and community led development in Burma.

The built capacity of local partner organisations has enabled SEM’s role to shift towards facilitating networking among partner organisations and their targeted communities. This has brought a macro-level analysis from which networked communities have been able to see themselves as a key driver of change to solve larger social problems that express themselves across their communities.

This is SEM’s final year supporting local partner organisations, as their capacities have grown to initiate and drive their own community development. During this final year the main outcome areas are:

- The building of local resource persons and strong community leaders
- Improved capacity of SEM’s partners
- In management and capacity to facilitate community organising
- Increasing community initiatives
- Learning platform and inspirational circle set up for continuing community actions
- Enhanced social capital within and across communities
- Strengthened accountability in communities

**Programme Overview**

**Capacity Building**

During this year, the project equipped necessary skills for self-reliance and community mobilising for 67 community leaders and members on understanding climate change and adaptation, leadership skills, and natural house building.

Several values and practices from the workshops have been applied by the community leaders and villagers for their community organising processes, particularly in terms of inter-ethnic and inter-faith collaboration and women’s empowerment. There are now some community leaders who are able to be resource persons for other communities and NGOs. This is an empowerment process for the community leaders and villagers from being recipients of development aid to becoming community mobilisers for their area who are expanding their expertise, knowledge and skills to other communities.

During the process of community exchanges, a check-and-balance system was set up informally. As a host of exchange visits, the leaders and members needed to prepare themselves to be observed and questioned by leaders and members from other visiting communities in network. Due to this process, they have kept themselves transparent and accountable. In addition, the culture of giving advice and receiving feedback across communities has become more common among community leaders and villagers in the network.

**Network and Exchanges**

Intra and inter-target area community exchanges with more than 220 members of Nargis-affected areas took place, facilitating the learning and sharing of their hands-on experiences in community organising. The visits essentially generated learning platforms and inspiration for the participants to implement self-reliant community development practices.

Most of the community leaders pointed out that friendship built during the exchanges were essential for their community organising process. As inter-ethnic and interfaith peacebuilding is one of core values of the project, the community leaders and villagers realise how to understand and connect with people from other ethnicities and faiths.

**Highlights for 2011 include**

- Consultation, management and monitoring
- Community mobilising and participation
- Learning and networking platform set up for continuing community actions
- Enhanced social capital within and across communities
- Strengthened accountability in communities

**Intra and Inter Target Area Community Exchanges**

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SEM (semsikkha) Thailand

SEM’s local activities run separate from the regional programmes. SEM’s local office (known as Semsikkha) is involved in offering trainings for the public on a wide variety of topics. Most courses are open to the public, but trainings are also specifically requested from government offices, businesses and NGO’s for organisational and relationship development. In 2011, twenty three public trainings were completed, and seventy three requested trainings. In total, 3,382 people attended SEM’s trainings from various occupations, educational backgrounds and age, and the learning processes utilised also help to link people from various sectors of society to share their ideas and sensibilities with each other. SEM believes that everyone has the ability to learn, grow, and return to the true joy of being human.

**Highlights for 2011 include**

- **Listen with the Heart Project**
  From the political conflicts that have occurred recently in Thailand, Semsikkha held training sessions entitled ‘Listen to those close to you with your heart’ which is under the ‘Listen with the Heart’ project, offered to the public free of charge. These trainings were to help people in society listen to each other despite their differing point of views, and received an excellent response from many people. Most of the participants agreed that the content of the training is important and necessary in life, whether they were experiencing political conflicts or not. The training helped to create understanding and acceptance in one another. They requested for this project to continue and some of them even invited Semsikkha to organize this training for their organizations and communities as well.

- **Participatory Facilitators Training**
  Semsikkha has been continually organizing to form training facilitators for public health agencies in northeast Thailand including Nakhon Ratchasima, Khon Kaen and Loei Provinces. These training facilitators have returned to organize their own participatory training courses and engage with the public health target groups in their area. Hence, the learning opportunity of the participatory trainings is able to multiply into society, benefiting beyond those who attended the initial trainings.

- **General Trainings**
  Semsikkha organized 23 training sessions open to the general public throughout the year. The ‘Understanding Transformation in Life’ and ‘Relationship Invention’ training courses got the most attention from participants and feedback showed that these courses are not only meeting their personal needs but also helping them to maintain their relationships with others. Many realised that the knowledge gained from attending these trainings is important in but often disregarded in society. They recognise that this kind of knowledge is the key to real happiness and peacefulness, helps them to understand themselves and others, as well as gain a greater understanding of society.

- **Requested Trainings**
  Over 2,000 participants from public health agencies, academic sectors, students, government and business sector, and other interested people attended requested trainings. Semsikkha also continually organized trainings for public health agencies to modify their organizational structure in order to involve all staff in the process of planning, implementing and monitoring to achieve organizational transformation. As a result, their organisation has become a model governmental office in terms of modifying their organisational structure and creating happiness in the workplace. They have gained attention from other agencies who would also like to modify their organizational structure to lead to life transformation, working life transformation and relationship transformation at an individual level, social level and structural level.
centre for the promotion of monastic education

programme overview

The CPME programme began in 2009, a collaboration between Phaung Daw Oo Monastic Education School and a circle of friends who believe that the creation of a more socially just, peaceful, and sustainable society in Myanmar requires the engagement and attitudinal transformation of all segments of society. The entry point for such engagement is believed to be changing the education system within the monastery-based schools, which provide schooling to more than 10% of the poorest school-aged children (or more than 250,000 children).

By supporting transformation of the monastic schools system, the project hopes to change the learning in monastic schools to foster among abbots, teachers and children ethical values, self-esteem, critical thinking and life-skills to build better lives for themselves and their communities. That is believed to be the most effective way to empower the poor towards personal and communal transformation and progressively break the cycle of poverty and climate of hopelessness that pervades most of the poor of Myanmar today.

To achieve this long-term vision, the decision was to establish an institutional umbrella and centre for provision of effective and systematic training for monastic school abbots/principals and teachers to change the way they traditionally run monastic schools. The aim is to develop a selected number of monastery-based schools as model centres of holistic learning for children and members of the community which simultaneously transform attitudes, promote analytical thinking, and inculcate practical life skills. This is promoted through training and exposure of Abbots/principals in management of ‘child friendly’ schools, and training of teachers to develop their knowledge and skills to stimulate children’s learning and thinking by focusing on self-awareness, pedagogical methods and practical life-skills.

highlights for 2011 include

training of abbots and teachers

Abbots training included how to manage and administer child-friendly schools. In addition, they were also taken on an exchange visit to alternative education sites in Thailand and Laos to expose them to innovative and creative ways of education delivery which are progressive and socially relevant.

The 10-week training of monastic school teachers was also completed self-awareness training, Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT), and practical life-skills training.

As a result of the trainings, the CPME schools with curriculum including made remarkable transformation in teaching competencies, school and classroom management, and engagement of students and parents in the learning processes and improvement of the school environment. Enthusiasm of abbots, teachers, and especially parents for the program is high and all are eager to take actions to continue to make the school a better place for children’s learning and development.

Some examples include:

- Children are not afraid to ask questions in school and at home. Some parents and teachers are surprised by the level of sophistication of the questions children now ask.
- There are improvements in school environments. School grounds are clean and well-maintained, school gardens implemented with flowers and vegetables, and learning spaces set up under trees for learning in the open.
- There is strong team spirit among the teachers, and good cooperation from parents to improve the schools.
- Some schools have implemented a teachers and the students’ council, taking full responsibility in organizing students activities (art, drama, life-skill activities).

networking and sharing

During the annual meeting, each school talked about changes made as a result of the CPME program. The teachers by sharing their experiences were able to give concrete examples on how they found solutions to most of the challenges raised showing that such sharing and networking is a very effective way of resolving problems.

The first CPME Exhibition was organised to provide an opportunity for all participating schools to showcase the progress made, as well as initiatives taken to improve learning at their schools. The schools displayed photos, posters, children’s drawings and different types of products they produced, such as shampoo, soap, baskets, etc. Abbots, teachers, and all involved in the program were obviously proud of their work and were eager to share and to learn.

Developing “child centred” schools through integrated activity-based learning
sustainable empowerment of civil society in myanmar

programme overview

This is the fifteenth year that this programme has been in action. Previously known as the Grassroots Leadership Training programme for people from Burma, it began in 1996 with the aim of strengthening grassroots and religious leaders to begin to rebuild their local communities after decades of civil war.

The programme was developed around capacity building, equipping participants with knowledge and skills to build up community-led, resilient and self-reliant development initiatives to improve livelihoods and wellbeing.

Since then, the programme has extended towards building coalitions among local organisations for them to share knowledge and resources and identify solutions, leading to more sustainable and contextually appropriate responses to community development. More recently the programme has expanded into issue-based networking with the aim of building a strong, capable and networked civil society that is able to participate in the governance of their own communities through advocacy and education, leading to wider social transformation.

Within the context of the changing political landscape, this year has focused both on continuing community empowerment, complemented with increasing actions on advocacy and public policy development. The devastating civil war in Kachin State has also been an area of focus, developing locally-initiated support mechanisms that are able to respond timely and effectively to the growing number of IDP’s and affected populations.

highlights for 2011 include

capacity development

The team has continued to provide high quality transformational trainings on a wide scope of topics rooted in SEM’s educational principles. Some key outcomes are:

- Expanding networks with new civil society organizations for further collaboration and capacity development.
- Increasing training requests for capacity development from civil society organizations.
- Training participants increase self-awareness and begin to change their attitude and behaviour in order to work for social change.
- Capacity development team recognized by local organisations as a key resource in training for change, on topics such as globalization, holistic education, environmental and consumer education, leadership and sustainable development.

organising community-led sustainable development

The work in localised areas is very contextualised, and approaches and activities vary accordingly. New activities in Chin State during this period illustrate a process of participatory organising that involves bringing key stakeholders together to strengthen their organisational capacities to engage in collaborative community organising. The success of this approach is the build trust that develops over the process, which ensures that organisations continue working together beyond facilitation from SEM.

Local networking continues to develop organically after input and facilitation from local staff. Outcomes of activities demonstrate the nurturing of local wisdom through ideas and practices being shared and adapted across different communities, rather than relying on external inputs. This learning process is expanding synergistically.

Almost half the participants of local trainings are women, and as a result, more women are taking leadership roles within community activities, especially MCU’s, which are focal points for ongoing community-led development activities.

networking, public advocacy and mobilisation

Two issue-based networks have been formed, and are beginning to move beyond facilitation from SEM, by initiating local activities and looking beyond towards advocacy. The consumer network is beginning to look at developing a consumer protection law. The ecological network is facilitating smaller issue-based groups, such as alternative technology, organic agriculture, natural house building, carbon reduction, and more. A cross thematic meeting on consumers (Consumer network) and producers (Ecological network) is planned for the near future in order to develop fair-trade models at the local level.

Beyond the issue-based networks, the SEM Thailand team have been increasingly involved in activities on advocacy. This has included collaborative advocacy-based trainings with aims to build capacity of local leaders. Specific SEM-led activities are creating linkages between advocacy and public policy actors, and internal and regional advocacy efforts. One area outcome from these activities was the contribution to advocacy efforts influencing the cancellation of the 4000MW Dawei coal fired power plant through media and local campaigning.

SEM’s strategy is to continue to strengthen and link in-country advocacy and public policy groups, while also continuing the process of bridging advocacy work within the country with regional efforts, in order to build a regional platform for ensuring civil society is included in decision making over resource management, and the direction of development.

Community-based micro-credit training as a step towards women’s leadership in community development.

13
lao grassroot leaders training and action

programme overview

This programme was initiated in 2003 by the leaders of the Lao Sangha who joined a regional Grassroots Leadership Training Sangha Programme in 2001 and 2002. Seeing the relevance of the training to the Lao situation, the alumni monks formed an organisation, Lao Buddhism for Development (LBFD) in order to mobilise Lao monks and nuns for community development work. The programme was initiated in 2004 to equip Sangha members with skills and confidence to work in community, along with capacity support for LBFD, and networking and follow up of programme alumni across the country to continue supporting their ongoing needs. Through these efforts, “a Lao community of grassroots leaders” with a strong sense of social engagement and inter-faith/inter-ethnic values has emerged and has become increasingly recognized as a positive social force within Lao society.

The second phase of the programme (2010 – 2012), aims to consolidate, deepen and expand the work that has been achieved by continuing to support Lao faith-based and lay leaders to actively engage Lao people in understanding and shaping the development of Laos based on principles of social justice, cultural integrity, economic sufficiency, and environmental harmony. The programme is continuing in partnership with SEM, LBFD, and the Participatory Development Training Center (PADETC) of Laos.

This year the programme supported and provided various activities for its alumni, faith-based actors and youth volunteers such as exchange meetings, trainings and exposure trips. There continues to be a focus on capacity building, empowerment and education.

highlights for 2011 include

spiritual development and practice for social engagement

More than 10,000 youth and adults participated the meditation training course this year. The program is successful and receives very positive feedback.

dhamma sanchorn for education

Building on the success of its moral teaching program at schools throughout Vientiane Municipality, now the Dhamma Sanchorn (mobile dhamma) project has extended its work beyond education. Dhamma Sanchorn monks are playing an important role in environmental preservation and climate change adaptation.

public information and dissemination

The programme is committed to drawing experience and disseminating it to stakeholders and people who are interested.

Mostly, our publications are related to spirituality and sustainable development and contentment. This year the team has played a role beyond production of books and other materials by building interest of people in the programmes’ work by holding meetings, workshops, forums and other events. Additionally, these activities are another way in educating people in society, however, a limitation of media staff is very challenging for extending this work.

capacity building and community development

In 2011, grants were provided to GLT alumni to initiate small-scale community development activities. Community organising processes to promote learning, participation and restore confidence in communities were facilitated by alumni. Revolving funds were then provided after discussions and planning by the communities. Being community-driven, these small projects meet identified needs and help to build trust and confidence.

Capacity development to LBFD’s network also ensured that leadership skills are developed, and knowledge is shared and exchanged, enabling key leaders to be able to draw on each others capacities in undertaking initiatives without relying on continuing external support.
programme overview

This programme emerged in 2008, through the collaboration of an interfaith group who identified a lack of opportunity and hope for youth within the country, both in terms of livelihood opportunities, and space to contribute to society.

Within the context of the diversity of ethnic groups and ongoing conflict, the approach of the programme was to reach out to majority Buddhists who do not have much opportunity to learn about community development, participatory leadership and peace.

To date, the programme has been nurturing more than 400 Buddhist Youth and facilitating 13 Alumni Core Groups in different States and Regions since 2008 in order to empower youth to become socially engaged leaders for the peace and development of Myanmar. More young people have joined through the extended development awareness trainings and activities led by programme alumni, while intensive support is being provided to the alumni core groups in order for them to develop into local CBO’s and networks with capacities to take leadership roles in promoting peace and development in Myanmar.

appropriate skills trainings

Along with perspective and leadership development, specific skills-based trainings were also given on topics requested by programme alumni. This included:

- social and environmental issues
- leadership skills
- development concept
- PRA and project design

Many participants expressed significant changes in their attitudes through their understanding socially engaged spirituality. These trainings are also nurturing a new generation of women leaders and social activists, and most of these youth will go on to setting up or joining with existing core groups in their areas, which have potential to grow into active local CBO’s.

networking and solidarity

The peacebuilding element of the programme is expanding, with the first steps towards interfaith peacebuilding taken during this year, through a Buddhist-Muslim interfaith exchange. During the programme, the participants were able to explore shared values and diversity. Participants were also able to learn about each other’s religions, strengthening their respect for each other.

Summer work camps helped youth to expand their experience of community living and respect for diversity. Through spending their summer holidays in rural communities across the country. During their stay they initiated activities with local youth such as English language teaching and sharing on environmental awareness. They have brought back with them rich experiences from a cross-cultural perspective, which will support them immensely in working for peace and development in their own communities and at a wider level.

follow up support

This included activities such as core group meetings, and small grants for core group activities. Core groups are showing skills in community organizing, and advocacy with local community leaders, religious leaders and authorities. They are organizing activities with participatory planning, discussion, decision making and teamwork. They could illustrate their maturity through conflict management and interpersonal communication within their teams.

Importantly, youth are given opportunities to access resources and provided spaces to practice and learn from experience.

Over the past year, the programme supported 22 small grants, resulting in over 270 direct and 7,000 indirect beneficiaries. These activities run by alumni core groups included:

- livelihood support through pig banks, vermiculture, community forestry, fish seeding
- capacity building and awareness raising in communities through environmental exhibitions, PRA, youth leadership trainings
- Core group organisational development through annual review and planning sessions, and training of trainers.

follow up activities: seeding endemic fish into the Beluchaung river, Kayah State

Shwebo Buddhist youth conducting multiplication awareness trainings with local youth

Follow up activities: seeding endemic fish into the Beluchaung river, Kayah State

Strengthening solidarity: Buddhist youth annual assembly held in Chin State

Highlights for 2011 include

youth awakening

Core trainings were given to youth from around the country, including Rakhine and Kachin States, and Magwe and Bago Divisions. The course ran for 4 weeks and included topics on:

- social and environmental issues
- leadership skills
- livelihood support through pig banks, vermiculture, community forestry, fish seeding
- capacity building and awareness raising in communities through environmental exhibitions, PRA, youth leadership trainings
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SPRIT IN EDUCATION MOVEMENT
STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE
for the year ended December 31 2011

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<td>GLT-Burma Programme (SECSM)</td>
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**Surplus of Income Over (Less) Than Expenditure**

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* NOTE: The project ‘Cyclone Nargis Capacity Building and Networking’ was not included in this statement. SEM’s involvement in the project was completed in May 2011, and local partners are now continuing their community organising activities directly with donors.

* NOTE II: The project ‘Centre for the Promotion of Monastic Education’ was not included in the statement. SEM is a key partner of the project. A separate body holds the financial function of the programme.