

The Roles of Charity Activities at Kinh Pagodas and Solutions to Improve Their Performance: The Case of Soc Trang Province

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to evaluate the roles of charitable works at Kinh Pagodas in Soc Trang province and provides recommendations to improve the functions of these charitable works. The research employed combined research methods, including key informant participants and interviews with 255 related stakeholders. Results indicated that charitable works in pagodas are targeted toward many different purposes. The activities are also different between pagodas. The charitable works are varied and these activities play an important role in local communities. This paper also provides recommendations for improving the functions of charitable works at pagodas in Soc Trang province in which the improvement role of local government is the most important factor to strengthen the function of charity activities in pagodas.

Keywords: Charity Activities, Pagodas, Soc Trang Province.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Soc Trang province is the main living area of three ethnic groups: Kinh, Khmer and Hoa. Each ethnic group has its own cultural identity but also mutual exchange and influence. Kinh people make up the majority of the population of Soc Trang province. According to statistics (Soc Trang Statistical Office, 2020), there are about 900,000 Kinh people in Soc Trang, accounting for about 65% of the total population of Soc Trang province. The pagoda system of the Kinh people is also quite varied and plays an important role in many aspects in the life of the community. According to data from the Religious Affairs Department under the provincial Department of Home Affairs, the province has more than 110 pagodas of the Kinh people.

Research on Kinh pagodas in particular and traditional cultural values in Vietnam and Soc Trang Province, in general, have been mentioned in many research works of the authors. Typical works are of Mai Thanh Hai (2008), Huynh Ngoc Trang, Truong Ngoc Tuong, Ho Tuong (1999), Nguyen Quoc Cuong (2010), Nguyen Minh Tam (1991), Nguyen Van Dung (2003), Nguyen Minh Tam (2003), Soc Trang Province Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism (2008). These studies have mentioned the foundation basis of pagodas such as the origin, characteristics, relationship with spiritual life, community beliefs, traditional cultural values, and solutions to preserve and promote the values of the pagoda... Studies on pagodas in Soc Trang province are also mentioned from the perspective of historical and cultural relics.

The current reality is raising many issues that need to be researched in order to preserve and promote the value of pagodas in the life of the Kinh people in Soc Trang province. Pagodas are historical and cultural relics associated with community life and traditional values of the nation that should be preserved and promoted positive values, contributing to improving the material and spiritual life of the local community. Due to many different reasons, the cultural values of the pagoda have received little attention from research, survey, description, analysis, evaluation, etc. Therefore, few people are aware of the pagoda's significance. The Kinh people are an important part of Soc Trang province's population, but the role of Kinh pagodas in the life of the Kinh community is rarely mentioned and perhaps not paid enough attention in recent years.

Besides festival activities, the pagoda also focuses mainly on charitable activities in general including helping the poor, the lonely elderly, poor students, orphans, and the disabled. Particularly for pagodas under the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, following the Buddha's criteria and teachings and the Six things of goodness (giving, keeping precepts, patience, diligence, meditation, and wisdom) is the path that leads to enlightenment, in which the first thing that must be done is the practice of giving. In addition, Buddhist teachings also believe that people should have compassion (in the Four Immeasurable), this is the key factor to help develop compassion, conduct to save suffering and guide all activities of Buddhism for people in society. Due to this criterion, the charity activities at the pagoda are diverse with many activities to help the society, including the charity clinic.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

The study used mixed methods to achieve the expected results, including the following main methods:

Key informant interviews: The research team consists of multidisciplinary experts with experience in research including those working in the fields of history, geography, culture, religion, ethnicity, livelihood, development tourism, and community development. Representing the informants are knowledgeable people working at state management agencies, Organizations at all levels of local government in the province, and pagodas in the study area. The content of the discussions was prepared by the research team before conducting the exchanges. The key informant interviews are applied to agencies that have close relations with the research content of the topic in Soc Trang provinces, such as the Department of Religion and the Provincial Committee for People Mobilization, the Department of Religion-Department of Home Affairs, the Department of Science and Technology, the Department of Health, etc. This approach will provide both qualitative and quantitative information including primary and secondary data that will make a meaningful contribution to the results of this study. A total of 30 experts were interviewed in this study.

Questionnaire interviews: This method is used to survey and learn more details about different contents of the research according to different groups of people providing different information. The set of individual interview questions includes closed and open-ended questions to effectively exploit valuable information in different fields provided on a large scale by the community under local characteristic conditions. 110 representatives of pagodas and 145 pagoda visitors in Soc Trang were interviewed using this method.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Reason for Forming and Participating in Charity Activities at the Pagoda

The results of the interviews with the management boards of the pagodas showed that monks and nuns had opinions on forming organizations and participating in charity activities mainly because they wanted to show the spirit of incarnation to practice religion (accounting for up to 90.9%), followed by an opinion that the Temple Management Board together with local authorities helps maintain social security (accounting for 69.7%). The management boards of the pagodas found that the number of poor and re-poor households in society is still high (accounting for 63.6%). Other causes of charity activities are that orphans, abandoned children, homeless children, and the elderly and disabled tend to increase (33.3%). Besides, recently natural disasters, risks occur more and more (30.3%); and the gap between rich and poor tends to increase (12.1%). These are the main reasons for the formation of charity activities at pagodas to help solve current problems (see Table I).

TABLE I: REASONS FOR THE FORMATION OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

Reasons	Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)
Show the spirit of incarnation to practice of religious organizations	30	90.9
Help maintain social security together with local authorities	23	69.7
The number of poor and re-poor households in society is still high	21	63.6
Orphans, abandoned children, homeless children are on the rise	11	33.3
Lonely elderly people, people with disabilities tend to increase	11	33.3
Natural disasters, risks occur are causing loss of job opportunities	10	30.3
The gap between rich and poor tends to increase	4	12.1

Source: Survey results in Soc Trang province, n=110.

TABLE II: REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING IN CHARITY ACTIVITIES

Reasons	Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)
Expression of faith in religion	47	78.3
Accumulate virtue for children and grandchildren	43	71.7
Looking for inner peace	41	68.3
Due to better economic conditions	14	23.3

Source: Survey results in Soc Trang province, n=145.

Meanwhile, the results of interviews with Buddhists, believers, and other subjects show a group of opinions: its better economic conditions than before (23.3%), the expression of faith in religion (the highest was 78.3%), followed by ideas of accumulating virtue for children and grandchildren, like the quote "you reap what you sow" (71.7%). Another group (68.3%) wants to find inner peace by participating in charity activities, accounting for 68.3% (see Table II).

B. Level of Organization And Participation in Charity Activities at Pagodas

The pagodas' management board answered that their pagodas had all organized and participated in charity activities (97% of the comments). To which, the extent that they organize and participate in large-scale charity activities is at most 4-5 times/year (37.6%), 10 times/year (15.6%), and 1 to 3 times/year (12.5%),... In addition, survey data shows that up to 64% of people have ever participated in charity activities at pagodas. In which, the number of those participating 3 times/year accounted for the highest proportion of 13.1%, followed by 2 times/year accounted for 9.8% and 12 times/year accounted for 8.2%. Some Buddhists, believers, and others participate quite often, an average of 4 times/month (accounting for 6.6%), and 4-10 times/year (19.7%).

C. Target Groups of Charity Activities

Currently, at pagodas, both the management board and Buddhists, believers, etc. are interested in helping many different groups of people, regardless of age, young, male, female, or ethnicity. The target group that is most concerned by the management board of pagodas is poor in general. Next is the group of people with disabilities; a group of people who cannot pay for treatment, a group of lonely elderly, homeless elderly; groups of orphans, abandoned and homeless children, etc. (see Table III).

TABLE III: TARGETED CHARITY RECIPIENTS – ANALYSIS OF MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION ANALYSIS

Recipients	Management Board		People	
	Mean	std. deviation	Mean	std. deviation
Poor people in general	4.00	1.30	3.62	1.15
People with disabilities	3.48	1.30	3.65	1.21
The patient cannot afford	3.33	1.47	3.58	1.33
Lonely elderly, homeless elderly	3.30	1.29	3.62	1.22
Abandoned, orphaned, homeless children	3.27	1.40	3.73	1.30
Poor and studious students	2.76	1.12	2.78	1.15
People suffering from natural disasters or losing business opportunities, unemployed	2.61	0.83	2.57	0.96
Buddhists, laity, believers	2.76	0.87	-	-

Source: Survey results in Soc Trang province, n=110.

D. Types of Charity Activities

Through the surveyed pagodas, there are 4 pagodas that raise orphaned inpatients: Phat Hoc pagoda, Nang Nhon pagoda, Long Hung pagoda, and Vinh Hung pagoda, accounting for 39.4%. The charity works for poor students, sick people, and the unemployed accounting for the largest proportion (69.7%). Charity clinic for medical examination and treatment and inpatient treatment accounts for 54.5%. There are a number of pagodas with charity clinics: Phat Hoc Pagoda, Ngoc Phuoc Buddhist Recitation, Hung Hoa Tu, Buddha Mother Temple, and Vinh Hung Pagoda (very small scale). The other two forms of charity work are residential care for the lonely elderly and charity kitchens (see Table IV).

TABLE IV: TYPES OF CHARITY AT THE PAGODA

Form	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Charity work helping poor students, sick people, unemployed people	23	69.7
Raising boarding orphans	13	39.4
Charity clinics for medical examination, treatment and medicine	11	33.3
Inpatient treatment clinic	7	21.2
Caring for the lonely elderly in boarding	6	18.2
Charity kitchen	5	15.2

Source: Survey results in Soc Trang province, n=110.

The forms of distribution and contributions to charity activities are very diverse, everyone can donate anything on a voluntary basis to show solidarity during difficult times. There are three popular forms: food, cash, and goods.

E. Operation of Charity Clinics

The common reasons leading to charitable activities at religious establishments are the spirit of religion and using the doctrine to solve social problems. In this spirit, the interview results of the Board of Management representing the organization of charity activities have pointed out the main reason for them to organize these activities is that they want to show the spirit of the religious organization (66.7%). The next reasons are doing for public health (60.4%); helping local authorities maintain social security (58.3%), or the rate of poor households in society is still high (50%); lonely elderly people and people with disabilities tend to increase (37.5%); orphans, abandoned, homeless children tend to increase (27.1%). The other reasons are that social evils and natural disasters tend to increase (18.8%), and the rich-poor division tends to increase (12.5%).

Survey results at charity clinics in spiritual establishments the operation of the clinics show that pharmacies have had a very long time of operation, typically Hung Khanh Tu has established a pharmacy for 59 years, and the charity pharmacy at the Pagoda of the Mother Buddha has also been around for 21 years, the pharmacy of Niem Phat Duong Ngoc Phuoc has also been for 13 years, Phat Hoc Pagoda, Nam Son Pagoda, and Phuoc Lam Pagoda has also been around for 6-9 years.

Every day at peak times, the charity pharmacy at Phat Hoc Pagoda provides medical examination and treatment for about 200 patients on average, and about 150 times at the lowest. At the charity clinics of Niem Phat Duong Ngoc Phuoc, the Mother Buddha Pagoda, Hung Khanh Pagoda, and Phuoc Lam Pagoda, about 35-100 patients are received every day. Particularly in Nam Son Pagoda, the number of patients coming for treatment is insignificant partly due to the small size of the pharmacy and few people knowing about it due to the unfavorable traffic (3-5 times/day).

TABLE V: OPERATING TIME, NUMBER OF PATIENTS, FACILITIES OF THE PHARMACIES OF PAGODAS IN SOC TRANG PROVINCE

Spiritual establishments	Operating time (years)	Number of patients per day		Facilities	
		At most	At least	Rooms	Beds
Phat Hoc Pagoda	10	200	150	6	32
Niem Phat duong Ngoc Phuoc	13	100	80	1	7
Pagoda of the Mother Buddha	21	85	60	3	30
Hung Khanh Pagoda	59	60	40	0	0
Phuoc Lam Pagoda	6	60	35	2	9
Nam Son Pagoda	9	5	3	0	0

Source: Survey results in Soc Trang province.

There are a number of spiritual establishments that have rooms, and beds for critically ill and distant patients for inpatient treatment. Some other establishments only have clinics for medical staff and doctors. The management board informed about the fluctuation of the number of patients coming to charity clinics in spiritual establishments (see Table V) over the years that the number of patients tends to increase more.

F. People Who Come for Medical Examination and Treatment at the Charity Clinics

People who come for medical examination and treatment at charity clinics are very diverse. The results of descriptive statistical analysis based on the 5-point scale - Likert Scale showed that the most frequented visitors were the poor in general ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.80$) and those who could not afford treatment ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.80$). = 4.24, $SD = 0.77$); followed by Buddhists and believers ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.81$) and lonely, homeless elderly people ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 0.87$); the remaining people are fewer, such as people affected by natural disasters losing business opportunities and unemployed people ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.15$), poor students ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 1.25$), and abandoned, orphaned, homeless children ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 0.90$) (see Table VI).

TABLE VI: PEOPLE COMING FOR MEDICAL EXAMINATION AND TREATMENT – BY ANALYSIS OF MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

People coming for medical examination and treatment	Mean	std. deviation
Poor people in general	4.67	0.80
The patient cannot afford	4.24	0.77
Buddhists, laity, believers	3.95	0.81
Lonely elderly, homeless elderly	3.05	0.87
People suffering from natural disasters, losing business opportunities, unemployed	2.71	1.15
Poor students	2.57	1.25
Abandoned, orphaned, homeless children	2.00	0.90

Source: Survey results in Soc Trang province.

G. Types of Medical Examination and Treatment

The forms of medical examination and treatment at charity clinics in spiritual establishments are also very diverse. The following are some forms in order of frequency: palpation; medicine supply; acupuncture and electric pulses are the main forms of medical examination and treatment; followed by acupressure massage; treatment by physical therapy methods; treatment with traditional medicine; medical examination for prescriptions, dispensing western medicine, injection methods and inpatient treatment.

There are many reasons for people to choose medical treatment at charity clinics in spiritual establishments. People said that they come for medical examination and treatment here because the doctors have good skills, good medical ethics, and effective disease treatment (94.3%); cost of treatment is free (74.3%); spiritual beliefs towards religion (62.9%); preference of treatment with Oriental medicine (57.1%); high equality in medical examination and treatment (45.7%), the low cost of treatment (14.3%).

H. How People Know about Charitable Activities

The survey results show that there are many different ways for people to seek out charity activities at pagodas. The highest percentage is the social relationships of Buddhists, believers (family, friends, etc.) through word of mouth to many people participating in charity activities (Management board: 91%, people: 67%). The next way is at the pagodas' preaching sessions, the Board of Managements' notification of charity activities accounts for 48.5% and the people receiving information from this form account for 60.0%. In other forms of public awareness, there is a clear difference between the Management Board and the people. The Management Boards' notification through State agencies/organizations has a direct impact, accounting for 36.4%. Meanwhile, this form, according to the opinion of the people, only accounts for 13.3%. Information through associations or other charitable organizations is less (according to the statistics of the Board of Directors: 21.2%, the people: 15%). Information is spread through other forms such as radio and television stations, written newspapers, and electronic information at a low rate, these forms are not yet popular in Soc Trang province because most of the pagodas here do not have their own websites.

For the medical examination and treatment at the charity clinic of the spiritual establishment, the results are word of mouth from people who have used medical examination and treatment here (68.6%); from acquaintances (51.4%); information searching (28.6%); from TV stations (5.7%), from other charities (3%).

I. The Role and Meaning of Charity Activities in the Community's Interests

Charity activities at pagodas and spiritual establishments are highly appreciated by local people for the practical benefits that have been brought. In general, the first two benefits identified by both the Board of Directors and pagoda-goers are Increasing solidarity and closeness between people; being a place to send spiritual beliefs to religion. The other four benefits are creating opportunities for other social sectors to participate in helping the life, living responsibly with the community; helping the beneficiaries to reduce their worries and sorrows and add a source of joy to their lives to rise up; creating conditions to improve people's living standards and develop the country; eliminating the gap between rich and poor and social inequality; and reducing social evils (drugs, prostitution, theft, etc.) (see Table VII). Through this, we can see that the benefits brought from charity activities at the pagoda are substantial. It really plays a great role, together with the state, in hunger eradication and poverty reduction, helping to maintain social security, and at the same time increasing solidarity among people.

TABLE VII: THE BENEFITS OF CHARITY ACTIVITIES TO THE COMMUNITY – ANALYSIS OF MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

Benefits	Management Board		People	
	Mean	std. deviation	Mean	std. deviation
Increase solidarity and closeness between people	4.48	0.67	4.17	1.03
A place to send spiritual beliefs to religion	4.06	1.20	4.22	0.94
Create opportunities for other social groups to participate in helping the life, being responsible to the community	3.85	0.71	3.75	1.02
Help the beneficiaries to reduce anxiety, grief and add joy to their lives to rise up	3.73	1.01	3.85	1.02
Create conditions to improve people's living standards and develop the country	3.61	0.93	3.23	1.27
Eliminating the gap between rich and poor and social inequality	3.42	1.12	3.37	1.21
Reducing social evils (drugs, prostitution, theft, ...)	2.97	1.10	3.12	1.32

Source: Survey results in Soc Trang province.

The results of descriptive statistical analysis based on a 5-point scale - Likert Scale show that the benefits that charity clinics in spiritual establishments have brought to the community are of great significance. From the perspective of members of the Management Board, the results are as follows: helping the poor, the lonely, the disabled... have conditions to access health care ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.51$); promoting the spirit of mutual affection ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.77$); being the spiritual support of the patient and the patient's family ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.67$); helping to reduce patient load in medical facilities ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.73$); being a

trusted intermediary between people who want to help and people who need help ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.17$). Results from the perspective of the people about the charity clinic are: Helping the poor, the lonely, the disabled... have conditions to access health care ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 0.95$); helping promote the spirit of mutual affection ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.89$); being the spiritual support of the patient and the patient's family ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.91$); being a trusted intermediary between those who want to help and those who need help ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.99$); helping reduce patient load in medical facilities ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 0.98$).

J. Satisfaction Level with Charity Activities

Charity activities are always associated with activities at a spiritual establishment such as pagodas, but they must meet certain criteria. Descriptive statistics results based on 5-point scale – Likert Scale shows from two subjects as follows:

1) For the board of managements

According to the survey results from the point of view of the Board of Managements, the most satisfaction is the good observance of the provisions of the law on building a charity fund or propagating teachings ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.99$); the next is the satisfaction of doing well the bridging task between the giver and the receiver ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.73$). Through charitable activities, they are also satisfied with meeting their religious perspectives ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.03$); meeting the spiritual needs of the community ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.11$); and meeting the needs of the beneficiaries ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.00$). This proves that the ability of the pagodas is limited, that they can only do within its capacity and it is impossible to satisfy all those who need help.

2) For the people

Statistical results showing people's satisfaction with charity work at spiritual establishments are: supportive attitude of local people ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.12$); how to organize charity activities of the pagoda committee and dignitaries ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.13$); meet the needs of people in need ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.09$); transparency in the operating fund of the temple ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.27$). The above criteria are evaluated by the people with a fairly high average score. However, the current state of facilities for charity activities ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.19$) for the people is the lowest.

TABLE VIII: SATISFACTION OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENTS WITH THE OPERATION OF THE CLINICS – BY ANALYSIS OF MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

Criteria for assessing satisfaction	Mean	std. deviation
Complying with the provisions of the law	4.38	0.92
Doing well the bridging task between the giver and the receiver	4.24	0.70
Responding to the wishes of the beneficiaries	4.14	0.73
Responding to religious perspectives	4.05	0.81
Meeting the spiritual needs of the community	4.05	0.92
Quantity and quality of medical staff	3.95	0.59
The variety and the quantity of medicines	3.90	0.70
Facilities for medical examination and treatment	3.62	0.67
Size of pharmacies	3.33	0.80

Source: Survey results in Soc Trang province.

The actual survey on the satisfaction of the Board of Management about the operation of the charity clinic in the table shows that the criteria for evaluation through the analysis of mean scores and standard deviations both have quite high average scores. Good compliance with the provisions of the law achieved the highest average score ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.92$). The following criteria are as follows: doing a good job of bridging the gap between the giver and the receiver; meeting the wishes of the beneficiaries; responding to religious views; meeting the spiritual needs of the community are both above level 4. The remaining criteria: Quantity and quality of medical staff; The variety and quantity of medicines; The size of the pharmacies are assessed with an average score from $M = 3.62$ - 3.95 , $SD = 0.80$ - 0.59 (see Table VIII).

K. Recommendations to Improve the Operational Efficiency of the Charity Clinics

The survey results also showed that over 90% of the people surveyed said that this model of charity clinic should be expanded to other pagodas in Soc Trang province. Thus, the far-reaching influence of these clinics on the community as well as the need to develop medical facilities in spiritual establishments to serve the community.

The survey results also show that the Management Board at these spiritual establishments thinks that the most important factor is the active support of benefactors, businesses, as well as charitable organizations ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.75$). This was followed by enhancing searching for more medicines and new sources of medicine and growing more medicinal herbs ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.75$); strengthening training and retraining classes to improve skills to supplement regular medical staff ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.90$); strengthen linkages between clinics, related associations, religious systems... ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.70$); expanding the size of the pharmacy ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.66$). The government needs to support more procedural and legal issues ($M =$

3. 38, SD = 1.24). The survey results of the people also rate the positive support of benefactors, businesses, and charity organizations at a high level (M = 4.60, SD = 0.78).

IV. SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF CHARITY ACTIVITIES AT THE PAGODAS

From the analysis, some measures to improve the efficiency of charity activities at pagodas in Soc Trang Province are recommended. The survey results show that the Board of Management and the people both choose the first two measures as the most important: The State needs to encourage and create favorable conditions for domestic and foreign organizations and individuals to participate in charity activities ($M_{BM} = 3.76$, $SD_{BM} = 1.00$ và $M_P = 3.62$, $SD_P = 1.12$) and financial support in investment and construction of works for charity from the government and benefactors ($M_{BM} = 3.76$, $SD_{BM} = 1.00$ và $M_P = 3.62$, $SD_P = 1.12$) (see Table IX).

The next measure is to strengthen the management and professional qualifications of the charity team, which is quite important, according to the Board of Directors and the people ($M_{BM} = 3.39$, $SD_{BM} = 1.32$ và $M_P = 3.75$, $SD_P = 1.16$). To organize a charity activity, many stages must be performed and each stage requires qualified people to perform. Therefore, this is a necessary measure to improve the effectiveness of charity activities. One measure that people consider quite important is the need for tax exemption and reduction policies for businesses and individuals participating in charity activities. ($M_P = 3.75$, $SD_P = 1.16$), while the Board of Management considers this measure less important ($M_{BM} = 2.97$, $SD_{BM} = 1.38$). The last measure of fully summarizing and updating the City's website about charitable activities receives little choice from the Board of Management and the people ($M_{BM} = 2.79$, $SD_{BM} = 1.34$ và $M_P = 2.85$, $SD_P = 1.33$).

TABLE IX: MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CHARITY ACTIVITIES AT THE PAGODAS – BY ANALYSIS OF MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

Measures	Management Board (MB)		People (P)	
	M	SD	M	SD
The State encourages and creates favorable conditions for domestic and foreign organizations and individuals to participate	3.76	1.00	3.62	1.12
Financial support in investment and construction of works for charity activities	3.73	0.94	4.03	0.97
Enhancing the management and professional skills of the charity team	3.39	1.32	3.75	1.16
Tax exemption and reduction policies for businesses and organizations participating in charity activities	2.97	1.38	3.75	1.16
Fully summarizing and updating on the city's website about all charity activities	2.79	1.34	2.85	1.33

Source: Survey results in Soc Trang province.

A. The State Encourages and Creates Favorable Conditions for Domestic and Foreign Organizations and Individuals to Participate

The State needs to have incentive policies to create conditions for domestic and foreign organizations and individuals to participate in charity activities to increase funds for charity activities such as reducing complicated procedures in exit and entry, regulations on the establishment of funds, etc. Since then, these activities will be organized more often and with better quality, bringing more benefits to the community.

B. Financial Support in Investment and Construction of Works for Charity Activities

Charity activities at pagodas are one way to help maintain social security. Therefore, local authorities and relevant agencies, departments, and branches need to have policies to support funding sources in investing in the construction of works serving charity activities such as building accommodation for orphans, abandoned children, homeless children, elderly people, lonely elderly, and upgrading, expanding and building more charity clinics at pagodas, etc. Investing in these activities will make them more and more effective, which will help to take better care of the people's lives.

C. Enhancing the Management and Professional Skills of the Charity Team

Charity is a complex activity in terms of organization and management: the general manager (usually the abbot of the pagoda and the dignitaries of the sanctuary), the secretary, and some related members. It requires the participants in the organization to have a high level of management as well as a high level of expertise and be mindful of what they are doing. Therefore, it is very necessary to increase the level of education. Every year, the Provincial Religious Affairs Committee should organize classes to standardize management qualifications for the Management Boards of pagodas and shrines and create conditions for

them to conduct field surveys at pagodas with strong and highly effective charity activities to experiential learning.

D. Tax Exemption and Reduction Policies for Businesses and Organizations Participating in Charity Activities

This is one of the necessary policies for the development of charity activities because it attracts donations to the fund of charity activities at the pagodas. With this policy, businesses and individuals will get more profits, from which they will contribute more to charitable activities. However, local authorities should take measures to avoid the dishonesty of organizations and individuals who are taking advantage of this form to evade taxes.

E. Fully Summarizing and Updating on the Provincial Website about All Charity Activities

Currently, most pagodas do not have a specific form to announce the operation process and results of charity activities to those who have participated or want to participate. Therefore, each pagoda needs to have a program to report the results of its charity activities every month at its preaching sessions and needs to have its own website to aggregate and update information about its charity activities.

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