



# A Development of Local Government Supporting Officers through Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*): A Case Study of Samutsakhon Province Phrakhrusripariyatvitan (Maen Thongvijit)

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## Abstract

The objectives of this research were as follows: 1) to study the knowledge about *Sangahavatthu 4* of local government supporting officers in Samutsakhon Province; 2) to examine the development of the local government supporting officers in Samutsakhon Province according to the principle of *Sangahavatthu 4*; 3) to compare the development of the local government supporting officers in Samutsakhon Province according to the principle of *Sangahavatthu 4* classified by personal factors; 4) to investigate a correlation between the knowledge about *Sangahavatthu 4* and the development of the local government supporting officers in Samutsakhon Province; and 5) to explore other suggestions of the development of the local government supporting officers in Samutsakhon Province according to the principle of *Sangahavatthu 4*. This research applied a mixed research methodology, using both quantitative and qualitative method. The sample group was 282 people who were local government supporting officers in Samutsakhon Province, and in-depth interview was conducted with nine key informant people. The research instrument used to collect data was the questionnaire and structured in-depth interview. The statistics used were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, T-test F test and Chi-square.

The results of research were found that the knowledge about *Sangahavatthu 4* of local government supporting officers in Samutsakhon Province was at high level in all aspects. The development of the local government supporting officers in Samutsakhon Province according to the principle of *Sangahavatthu 4* was also at high level in all aspects. The results of hypothesis testing were found that the local government supporting officers in Samutsakhon Province with different genders, position, and monthly income had no difference in the development according to the principle of *Sangahavatthu 4*. However, the officers with different ages, and educational level had difference in development according to the principle of *Sangahavatthu 4* with the statistical significance at .05, and there was a statistical relationship between the knowledge about *Sangahavatthu 4* and the development of the local government supporting officers in Samutsakhon Province. In addition, the officers had other suggestions on the development according to the principle of *Sangahavatthu 4* in that officers should work and dedicate themselves for the benefits of people without expectation of anything in return. They should also have willingness to work and serve people with a sweet eloquence, establish appropriate behavior without exploiting others, and adjust themselves to work with colleagues.

**Keywords:** Development, *Sangahavatthu 4*, Local government supporting officers, Samutsakhon Province

## Introduction

The National Economic and Social Development Plan Version 11 (B.E.2555-2559) has identified the development strategy of Thailand to be the base of production with strength, balance creatively, and build good environment that can facilitate production, commerce, investment. The main aim is to develop human quality in terms of knowledge and virtue, build the society to have mental stability in maintaining good virtue, ethics, kindness and compassion. It focuses on how people get along with environment to have sufficient energy and food by increasing competency in competitiveness of the country. The local government holds the ruling principle which has been decentralized to the local community to have authority to provide public service to the people in the community, and people in the local community have freedom to manage public services including



infrastructure by themselves. Thus, the local support officers should be knowledgeable and honest persons to perform duties with transparency, which is the most important mechanic to prevent all kinds of corruption. Moreover, the government needs to support the operation of officers to be free from bribery and corruption because the country leaders can provide growth, happiness and peace to the people. At the same time, they can bring misery and suffering to the people if they do not adhere to good virtue and ethics. Even though the country has National Anti-corruption Commission, its responsibility is mainly to solve corruption problems among politicians, regarded as the resolution at the consequence only. In most people's views, the government officers are those who are rich and influential, having their own business and seeking for their own benefits. Some local government leaders, after having elected by the people, pay more attention on maintaining their power and position more taking care of welfare and well-being of the people. Such behavior leads to a lack of transparency, causing corruption and injustice in the society. Even though local government supporting officers are elected rightly, their administration is not efficient because some do not follow nor practice Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavutthu 4*).

To be a good leader accepted by people in the community, the government officers should act as a good model by adhering to *Sangahavutthu 4*: 1. Donation and charity (*Dāna*); 2. Soft and sweet words (*Piyavāchā*); 3. Consistency or equal treatment to everyone (*Samānattatā*); and 4. Being benevolent person or doing something for the benefits of other people (*Atthachariyā*). Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P. A. Payutto) (2016) explained that the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavutthu 4*) are the bases of social solidarity; bases of sympathy; acts of doing favors; principles of services; or virtues making for group integration and leadership. The principles of *Sangahavutthu 4* consist of generosity, kindly speech, useful conduct, and equal treatment. Vannapok (2007) discussed that the best way to create charm, fascination and attractiveness in Buddhism is to follow the principles of the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavutthu 4*). These virtues are very important to build a good relationship, and create connection and linkage with other people and organizations. Dhattachivo (2007) presented the benefits of the Four Objects of Sympathy:

(1) When people follow the principle of generosity, they can eliminate their greediness and selfishness; they will be full of kindness and compassion towards human beings, which can support people in the society to live with harmony, unity and peace.

(2) When people follow the principle of kindly speech, they can build a good relationship and friendship among each other. They will live together with good understanding, and accepting the different ideas of each member. Moreover, kindly speech can help people to void conflict caused by hard words, condemnation, and blasphemy.

(3) When people follow the principle of useful or beneficial conduct towards other people, they will behave for the benefits of the society. They will be free from corruption and bribery, and act in the way that benefits other people without taking any benefits and exploitations.

(4) When people follow the principle of equal treatment, they will treat other people equally. They will be full of impartiality with fair and just mind; they will be free from prejudice caused by love, hatred, fear and ignorance.

Sedthavuttingsom (2008) conducted the research on an application of *Sangahavutthu 4* to Administration: A case study of Thai Steel Profile LTD., Nikompattana Sub-district, Rayong Province, and found that an application of *Sangahavutthu 4* of the samples is at moderate level. The obstacles in implementation of the Four



Objects of Sympathy are selfishness, hard words using, priority on their own benefits, and unequal treatment. He provided some useful recommendations in order to improve an application of the Four Objects of Sympathy as follows:

- (1) Employees should be aware of their speech; they should consider and ponder carefully before speaking.
- (2) Employees should dedicate more time and effort to work for the organization.
- (3) Employees should have an equal treatment towards employees or customers.
- (4) The company should give reward or promotion to employee who strictly follows the Four Objects of Sympathy.

If the government officers adhere to *Sangahavatthu 4*, i.e. helping people in the society, speaking good words to them, treating them equally without discrimination in terms of sex, gender and religion, and performing the activities that benefit the society and other people, people will love and respect them. Moreover, the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*) can help create loyalty, harmony, and unity of people in the society.

As described, it is considered that the development of local government supporting officers is very much important to create good and acceptable behavior of the government officers so that they can operate their duties with responsibility and transparency for the benefits of the local government administration. This study therefore looks at the development of the local government supporting officers in Samutsakhon Province with the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*).

#### **Purposes of the Study**

1. To study the knowledge of local government supporting officers of Samutsakhon Province about the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*)
2. To examine the development of local government supporting officers of Samutsakhon Province according to the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*)
3. To find a difference in the development of local government supporting officers of Samutsakhon Province according to *Sangahavatthu 4* classified by demographic profile
4. To investigate a relationship between the knowledge about *Sangahavatthu 4* and the development of local government supporting officers of Samutsakhon Province according to the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*)

#### **Research Hypothesis**

1. There is a difference in the development of local government supporting officers of Samutsakhon Province according to the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*) classified by demographic profile.
2. There is a relationship between the knowledge about the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*) and the development of local government supporting officers of Samutsakhon Province.

#### **Research Methodology**

This is a mixed research methodology, using both quantitative and qualitative method. The samples used in this research were 282 subjects who are local government supporting officers working in three district of Samutsakhon province, i.e. Muang district, Kratumabaen, and Banphaew district. The sample sizes were derived



by using the table of Krejcie and Morgan. Stratified Random Sampling was used to find the proportion of population in each district, and then the sample random sampling was applied. The questionnaire was used as a tool to collect data and was divided into 4 parts. Part 1 consisted of demographic profile of respondents. Part 2 consisted of knowledge and understanding about the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*). Part 3 consisted of the development of local government supporting officers according to the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*). Part 4 consisted of open-ended questions asking about the opinions, suggestions and recommendations of respondents. In term of in-depth interview, the researcher had interviewed five key informants, which are consisting of administrators and staff with high performance. Data from interviews was written in the form of content analysis by reading and capturing the meanings in order to answer the research questions.

The variables used in this research consisted of independent variables and dependent variables. Independent variable is consisted of the demographic profile of respondents consisting of gender, age, educational level, position and monthly income, and knowledge of the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*), and knowledge about the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*) of respondents. Dependent variable is consisted of the development of local government supporting officers according the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*), consisting of donation and charity (*Dāna*), soft and sweet words (*Piyavāchā*), consistency or equal treatment to everyone (*Samānattatā*), and being benevolent person or doing something for the benefits of other people (*Atthachariyā*). Statistics used in this research consisted of mean, standard deviation, T-test, One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Chi-square.

#### Data Analysis

With regard to demographic profile of respondents, it is found that out of 282 respondents, a majority of local government supporting officers who answer the questionnaires were female at 51.20%. As for ages, 38.70% were aged less than 36 years old. As for educational level, 53.20% graduated Bachelor Degree. As for position, 91.10% were operating staff. As for monthly income, 54.60% received monthly income between 10,000–15,000 Baht.

Respondents had knowledge and understanding about the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*), in total, at high level. In particular, *Samānattatā* (Being consistent, treating other people equally, and avoidance of condemnation of others) had highest mean value, followed by *Piyavāchā* (kindly speech, soft and sweet word), and the item with least mean value was *Dāna* (Donation, giving advice and forgiveness).

The development of local government supporting officers according to the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*), in total, was at high level ( $\bar{x} = 3.90$ , S.D. = .48). In particular, *Samānattatā* (Being consistent, treating other people equally, and avoidance of condemnation of others) had highest mean value ( $\bar{x} = 3.92$ , S.D. = .63), followed by *Piyavāchā* (kindly speech, soft and sweet word) ( $\bar{x} = 3.91$ , S.D. = .60), *Dāna* (Donation, giving advice and forgiveness) ( $\bar{x} = 3.89$ , S.D. = .51), and *Atthachariyā* (useful conduct, doing good for the benefits of other people) ( $\bar{x} = 3.86$ , S.D. = .57) (See table 1).



**Table 1** Mean and Standard Deviation of Development of Local Government Supporting Officers According to the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*)

Items	Level of Development		
	( $\bar{X}$ )	(S.D.)	Interpretation
1. <i>Dāna</i> (Donation, Giving, Generosity, Charity)	3.89	.51	High
2. <i>Piyavāchā</i> (Kindly Speech, Soft And Sweet Word)	3.91	.60	High
3. <i>Atthachariyā</i> (Useful Conduct, Doing Good)	3.86	.57	High
4. <i>Samānattatā</i> (Being Consistent, Equal Treatment)	3.92	.63	High
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.90</b>	<b>.48</b>	<b>High</b>

The result of research hypothesis showed that respondents having different gender, position, and monthly income had no difference in the development according to the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*), whereas respondents with different ages and educational level had different development according to the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*). The results of a relationship analysis showed that there is a relationship between knowledge about *Sangahavatthu 4* and development of local government supporting officers according to the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*) at 0.01 level of significance (see Table 2).

**Table 2** A Relationship between Knowledge about the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*) and Development of Local Government Supporting Officers According to *Sangahavatthu 4* with Chi-Square

Level of Knowledge	Level of Development			Total
	Moderate	High	Highest	
Low	14 (13.60)	79 (76.70)	10 (9.7)	103 (36.50)
High	48 (26.80)	103 (57.50)	28 (15.60)	179 (63.50)
<b>Total</b>	<b>62 (22.00)</b>	<b>182 (64.50)</b>	<b>38 (13.50)</b>	<b>282 (100.00)</b>

Chi-Square = 10.62; df = 2; significant = .00

The results of in-depth interview showed that most key informants place great emphasis on following the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*); they consider that local government supporting officers should learn to be generous without expectation for anything in return, having intention on providing service to people. Local government supporting officers should have a kindly speech, speak gentle and polite word to people, do not slander or defame the others. They should have service mind, helping the other people who need help and suffer. Moreover, the key informants suggested that local government supporting officers should help in transferring knowledge for public benefits, and know how to behave themselves appropriate with time and place. They should not be selfish, and they should not be moody. They should be easy to accompany with and should be able to adjust themselves to get along with friends and colleagues. The key informants also gave suggestions as follows:

1. Local administration of Samutsakhon province is a decentralized ruling system which allows people to participate in developing their community. Currently, the local administration had development in many aspects such as infrastructure, education and health care. However, the development is still lack of continuance and efficiency due to many unexpected factors, especially a lack of knowledge and capability of officers in bringing the policy into practice. Even though the development focuses on building infrastructure, the life quality of people in the community is not as good as expected.



2. The ways to develop local government supporting officers should prioritize developing knowledge and capability of officers to help improve more skill and expertise in their roles and duties to provide useful service to the people in the areas that they are responsible for.

3. A development of officers according to the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu* 4) is to train officers to apply virtue and ethics in working. This including having generosity and charity, working for the happiness of the people without expectation for their own benefits, speaking with soft and polite words, helping other officers in the workplace and other people, and behaving appropriately according to their status and position as government officers.

### Discussion

The research results showed that, in total, officers had good knowledge about the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu* 4). This can be explained that local government supporting officers had a good understanding about the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu* 4) which is the most important principle in Buddhism. Respondents had the least understanding about *Dāna*: giving, generosity, and charity. In Buddhism, there are there three kinds of *Dāna*:

(1) *Amisadāna*, which means giving, supporting and helping the other with materials and objects such as foods, medicines, clothes and residency; this is known as charity.

(2) *Dhammadāna*: Giving good advices, suggestions or directions to the others to solve their problems or to progress in their careers.

(3) *Abhayadāna*: Forgiveness, elimination of revenge, hatred and retaliation.

Local government supporting officers should be supported to learn more about the three kinds of *dāna*, and practice accordingly for the benefits of organizational development. However, respondents have a good understanding about *Samānattatā* (Being consistent, equal treatment). Equal treatment is very important to the development of an organization. If the local government supporting officers treat people equally, they will receive highly respect from the people. People will be satisfied with their roles and responsibilities. Therefore, the local government supporting officers should avoid prejudices in order to create fairness and justice in providing services to the people. Channuwong (2018) described that the Buddha taught people to avoid from the four prejudices which can create unfairness and injustice in the mind of human beings:

(1) Prejudice caused by love or desire; people who are dominated by this prejudice will lose impartiality; they will make a judgment or decision for the benefits of the persons that they are acquainted with or have much favor.

(2) Prejudice caused by hatred or enmity; people who are dominated by this prejudice will not be able to treat people equally. They are narrow-minded persons, treat the opposed parties as inferiors to the others, and act intentionally for the disadvantage and calamity of those people.

(3) Prejudice caused by fear; people who are dominated by this prejudice will lose fairness and will not treat people equally. They are afraid of power and influence of some influential people. When some powerful people commit a crime or mistake, they dare not punish them. They try to help them for the sake of their own safety.

(4) Prejudice caused by delusion or stupidity; people who are dominated by this prejudice are full of ignorance. They have no wisdom or reason to make a judgment on what is right and wrong.



Some practice this principle in everyday life for the benefits of themselves, friends and other people. This is relevant to the concept of Phra Dhammapidok (P. A. Payutto) (2003) which mentioned that *Sangahavatthu 4* is the Buddhist principle that is the bases of social solidarity; bases of sympathy; acts of doing favors; and principles of service. *Sangahavatthu 4* consists of:

1. *Dāna*: giving, generosity, and charity.
2. *Piyavāchā*: kindly speech, convincing speech.
3. *Atthachariyā*: useful conduct, rendering service.
4. *Samānattatā*: being consistent, equal treatment, and behaving oneself properly in all circumstances.

It is also relevant to the study of Somsak Trabanpruck (Trabanpruck, 2006) “A study of implementation of ethics in everyday life of village fund members in managing village fund: A case study of Banmuang, Lanska district, Nakhonsridhammaraj province” which found that the villagers had a good understanding of virtues and ethics and implemented them appropriately for the benefit of the community. With regard to development of local government supporting officers, the research result showed that they had developed at high level. This can be explained that local administration of Samutsakhon province had applied the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*) to develop the behavior and characteristics of officers. Moreover, it can be interpreted that officers had always implemented the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*) in working in order to provide better services to the people in the community. They have service mind to work for the happiness and well-being of the people. This is relevant to the study of Vannapok (2007) which mentioned that fascination appeared in the mind of people who are full of virtue and ethics such as kindness, compassion, generosity and useful conduct. The principle which can be applied to make favor of other people or attract other people is consisted of generosity, sweet word, useful conduct, and equal treatment. It is also relevant the study of Pontue (2008) about “An implementation of ethical principles in performing duties of local government supporting officers: A case study of Suvannabhum district, Rio-et province” which found that local government officers helped people, gave useful advices, and provided service to people politely, and spoke to them with kindly speech. Moreover, it is also relevant to the study of Pornratanamethee (2009) entitled “An application of *Sangahavatthu 4* in working of employees: A case study of Louis Plastic Company Limited, Samphan District, Nakorn Pathom Province” which found that employees have applied *Sangahavatthu 4* to improve work performance at high level, and *Sangahavatthu 4* is the important factor in creating harmony and unity among each employees. With regards to a relationship between knowledge and development of officers according to *Sangahavatthu 4*, it has a relationship at 0.05 level of significance. This can be explained that if local government supporting officers had a good understanding about *Sangahavatthu 4*, they can apply this principle in working for the benefit of local administration organization. *Sangahavatthu 4* can be applied as direction for officers to increase efficiency and effectiveness in working, which can increase customer satisfaction. Moreover, *Sangahavatthu 4* can be applied as ruling principles to improve the behavior and characteristics of administrators. If administrators adhere to this principle, they can propel the organization to achieve sustainable growth and development. This is relevant to the study of Phra Nawin Tawaro (Chunsandee) (2007) entitled “Political sciences in Buddhist approach: A case study *Sangahavatthu 4*” which found that the governing system in Buddhist approach focuses on Buddhist moral and ethical principle, which one of the most important principles is *Sangahavatthu 4*. Politicians adhering to *Sangahavatthu 4* can create advancement and growth to the country, and help to develop the well-being of the people. Moreover, they can be the good models of other people.



### Conclusion

The research can be concluded as follows:

1. The knowledge about *Sangahavatthu 4* of local government supporting officers in Samutsakhon Province was at high level in all aspects.
2. The development of the local government supporting officers in Samutsakhon Province according to the principle of *Sangahavatthu 4* was also at high level in all aspects. In particular, *Samānattatā* (Being consistent, treating other people equally, and avoidance of condemnation of others) had the highest mean value, followed by *Piyavāchā* (kindly speech, soft and sweet word), *Dāna* (Donation, giving advice and forgiveness), and *Atthachariyā* (useful conduct, doing good for the benefits of other people).
3. The results of hypothesis testing were found that the local government supporting officers in Samutsakhon Province with different genders, position, and monthly income had no difference in the development according to the principle of *Sangahavatthu 4*.
4. The officers with different ages, and educational level had difference in development according to the principle of *Sangahavatthu 4* with the statistical significance at .05.
5. There was a statistical relationship between the knowledge about *Sangahavatthu 4* and the development of the local government supporting officers in Samutsakhon Province.

### Recommendations

1. The department of local governance should support local government officers to practice the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*) in order to increase work performance, unity and harmony among each employee.
2. Local government supporting officers should be educated to have a good understanding of the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*) so that it can be used as a direction for working in the organization.
3. There should be a study of people satisfaction towards performance of local government officers according to the Four Objects of Sympathy (*Sangahavatthu 4*).
4. There should be a comparative study about an implementation of *Sangahavatthu 4* between each local administration organization in order to find strength and weakness of each organization.

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