

Buddhist Action Month (BAM!): Results from the 2017 Surveys



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1 Introduction

Buddhist Action Month (BAM!) is an annual Buddhist festival initiated by the Network of Buddhist Organisations (NBO) in 2012 to inspire and support social change and care for the environment. For the month of June, BAM encourages Buddhists of all traditions to take their practice off the cushion and into the world, to exemplify compassion, ethics, meditation, and insight in the real world and in contact with others. Five years after its inception in Britain, BAM 2017 was represented by actions and activities across Britain, but also in Europe, Australia and North America.

The theme of BAM 2017 was ***Connecting for Change***, with the premise of reaching out and connecting with others, whether Buddhist, other religious groups or other. The theme was also chosen in order to address the barriers and divisions that are becoming increasingly prevalent in mainstream culture. This theme also acknowledges that we live in an “age of loneliness”, and that the crises we face are as emotional as they are ecological.

Engagement with BAM in 2017 marked the beginnings of widespread use of social media, and it was heartening to see that BAM was nearly “running itself” with little administration from the coordinator. At the same time, however, the BAM committee had become aware of the need to support and connect (with) individuals who don’t use social media. It was this awareness that formed to the remit of this project. Before moving into the methods and results of this report, it is meaningful to recall the development in thought on BAM.

1.1 Background to the project

In September 2016, Christine (the BAM coordinator for NBO) attended Green Earth Awakening camp (GEA), ‘a five-day retreat exploring a sustainable, socially-engaged dharma’. In a spontaneous morning session titled “BAM, DANCE and Beyond”, 25 participants explored common needs and wishes, of which the resounding outcome was the need for a central and straightforward platform that connects (people, actions, etc.). The circle included individuals active in topics including permaculture, refugee care, the badger cull, and “Art not oil”.

To kick off the session, Mokshini and Christine presented BAM (as Triratna and NBO, respectively), while Kirsten Krantz and Julia Wolland presented DANCE (Dharma Action Network for Climate Engagement). (DANCE was established at Gaia House as a self-organising network serving individuals interested in engaging with issues around climate change. Although a natural affinity exists between those representing BAM and DANCE, no links had existed before.) How could someone find out about BAM events happening near them if they happened to be new to, or visiting, an area? Would a centralised platform, with an interactive map, serve to connect people better than social media, like Facebook, since not everyone uses this application, has an internet connection, or a smart phone? Would a monthly newsletter be feasible, acknowledging that many people struggle with overloaded inboxes? Would a well-maintained website be possible?

As a result of the session, Christine was encouraged to connect with Robin Leonard and Chris Jack, who are specialists in Human Computer Interaction with an emphasis on mindfulness. A key part of their work entails better understanding the behaviours of technology users so that workable solutions can be found. Beyond social media and other



forms of 21st century technology, they assert that pen and paper are also important and may at times be as or more useful than, for instance, a mobile app.

After some initial conversations over Skype, Christine met with Chris and Robin in London, before the NBO AGM in October 2016, and they gained an overview of BAM from her presentation there. The AGM effectively initiated the project, which ran the course of 2017 in various stages.

In November 2016, the BAM committee reviewed the BAM campaign with respect to these developments. The BAM committee members at that time included Val Stephenson, Munisha, Jamie Cresswell, Juliet Hackney, Pamodha, Mokshini and Christine Thuring. When considering the potential of BAM, Val Stephenson (then-NBO Chair), agreed with the ambition of “*making BAM even bigger and more widespread, using the NBO as the central hub for information exchange and publicity, and encouraging Buddhist groups across traditions to work together*”. Robin and Chris were duly brought on board, both generously offering their services and expertise for a number of hours on a pro bono basis.

1.2 The project itself: a series of surveys

The heart of the project was based upon the committee’s reflections on the potential of Buddhist Action Month. In an email to the committee, Christine expressed this as follows:

... BAM could become a "new" annual Buddhist festival, contemporary to our time, that initiates and supports meaningful progress for individuals and society. Could BAM serve to bring important issues relating to justice and compassion into the practicing lives of practicing Buddhists, such that Buddhist wisdom can truly serve the world? ...The world needs more wisdom, compassion, fearlessness, etc. Is there a possibility that we could put BAM at the heart of modern Buddhism? (Nov. 10, 2016)

The committee discussed the prevalent need that emerged from the GEA session, namely the possibility of creating an interactive platform that would facilitate communication and engagement by connecting individuals and communities. The committee considered a new website, referring to a quote (£1500 + 10 days work at £10/day + maintenance costs of £100/year), but this was concluded not be financially viable at that time. Jamie advised that the existing website, which is Wordpress, could be adapted to be used for this function, though someone would need to be recruited to help with this.

As well, new ideas for better use of social media and Facebook were discussed, and it was concluded that outside help would be needed to develop this further, too. It was agreed to continue using the Facebook page set up in 2016, as this had already assembled a following and could continue to offer postings to a wider audience.

The specific aim of the project was to determine how BAM activities could attain the greatest awareness by NBO member organizations and individuals. Some questions directing the mandate included: Do we wish to facilitate improved connectivity next year? How have existing participants managed; what technologies do/ don't they use?

2 Methods

2.1 *Site visits*

In spring 2017, Chris and Robin visited a few Buddhist Centres of various traditions in order to understand how the Centers are used, how people interact and connect with each other. Specifically, these included the Triratna Buddhist Centres in Colchester (**Figures 1 and 2**) and Taplow Court HQ (SGI-UK) (**Fig. 3**). These visits allowed Chris and Robin to better understand the culture of two of the main traditions that engage with BAM, and also provided opportunities to speak casually with individuals who happened to be present. While the site visits held little weight with regards to the results of the survey, they provided physical and human contexts for the project, which were useful for later interpretations of the data.



Figure 1. New Colchester Buddhist Centre, top—main upstairs hall, bottom—downstairs hall.



Figure 2. Old Colchester Buddhist Centre, upstairs hall.



Figure 3. Taplow Court site visit.

2.2 Survey

In collaboration with the BAM committee, Chris and Robin prepared a ten-question survey that was circulated from May-July. The survey sought basic demographic information and affiliation with particular traditions, if relevant. It inquired how people engaged with BAM, their preferred modes and frequency of technology usage, and – given the BAM 2017 theme of *connecting for change* – how often and via which technologies do they connect with other Buddhists. These questions included:

- 1) What is your age?
- 2) What is your gender?
- 3) What if any of the following Buddhist traditions or organisations are you affiliated with (this list is NOT supposed to be exhaustive/definitive)..
- 4) In the last month how often have you:
 - felt like you connected with other people in your regular Buddhist centre(s) or group(s) on environmental and/or social justice issues?
 - felt connected to other centres or groups, within your Buddhist organisation or tradition, on environmental and/or social justice issues?
 - connected with someone from a different Buddhist organisation or tradition, for any purpose at all?
 - accessed the internet using a smartphone (e.g. iPhone)?
 - accessed the internet using a tablet (e.g. iPad)?
 - accessed the internet using a desktop or laptop computer?
- 5) How confident do you feel using the following technologies: SMS (text messaging), Phone call, Email, Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter, Printed or written material, Video call (e.g. Skype).
- 6) Via which media do you communicate with other Buddhists most frequently? Please rank the following, with 1 being the most frequently used (see Q5)
- 7) Have you heard of Buddhist Action Month (BAM) before?
- 8) How relevant is the BAM invitation to "take part and get involved in actions that express our care and concern for our planet and our environment, and all living beings that exist on it, in a practical way" to your practice?
- 9) Would you like to be contacted by the NBO by email about future BAM activity?
- 10) What is your email address?



Questions and feedback that were invited in the closing questions are given in the Appendix.

Survey analyses and methods

The results are presented in two sections: demographics, and communication tools. The first section provides an overview of survey respondents, based on questions 1, 2, 3, 7, and 8. The second section gives the results from questions 4, 5 and 6, which inquired into connectivity and communication tools used by respondents.

Questions 4, 5 and 6 generated quantitative results, so statistical analyses were applied to discern correlations, which are useful for identifying the strength and direction of responses. Chris and Robin complemented these analyses with anecdotal evidence gathered through site visits and conversations. Given that Triratna and SGI maintain a strong culture relating to their Buddhist centres and socialising, both of which were considered important aspects on the theme of connecting people, and because both groups had strong representation in respect of BAM, analyses included a composite grouping comprising all non-Triratna and non-SGI-UK affiliates. Although Western Chan Fellowship members were represented more strongly than SGI-UK members in the survey, the anecdotal evidence suggested a different culture of gathering, and so WCF was not included in the composite grouping. All affiliations were investigated separately, too.

3 Results

3.1 Overview of the survey respondents (Q 1, 2, 3, 7, 8)

The aim of the project was to find out what technologies different people/ traditions used to connect with other Buddhists, what their involvement or attitude towards BAM is, and also what degree of connection existed amongst other Buddhists (from same and/ or from other traditions). In total, the survey received 83 responses (n=83).

Before reviewing the results, some caveats must be noted. Firstly, the survey inevitably missed many people who are Buddhist and who have not participated with Buddhist Action Month. Secondly, the principles behind BAM (e.g., social engagement, eco-justice) is not everyone's cup of tea. So the results that follow are from a sample of individuals who received the survey questionnaire via email or Facebook, and who were interested enough to take the time to fill it in. Green highlights are used to emphasise particular results or comments.

Q1/ Q2: What is your Age/ Gender?

The demographic questions reveal that the majority of respondents to the BAM survey were between 45-54, followed by the next age group, 55-64, and then 35-44 (**Fig. 4**). In other words, young people (25-34) were under-represented by the survey. While we cannot conclude from this survey that these age groups are most active with BAM, it might still be worth considering explicitly inviting younger people to get involved in BAM 2018.

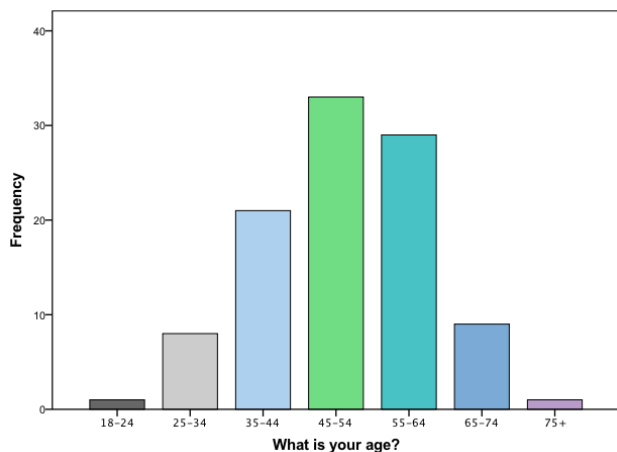


Figure 4. Age range of survey respondents.

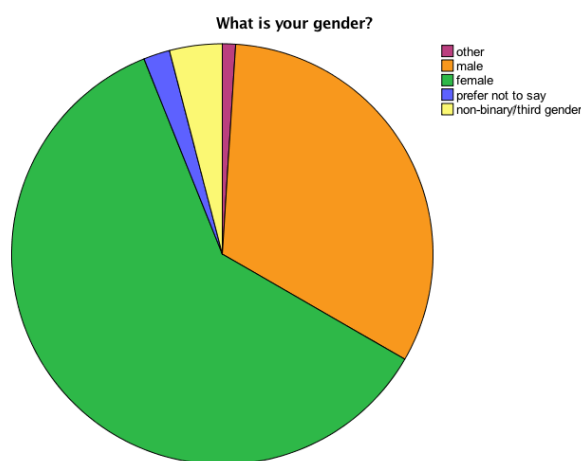


Figure 5. Gender range of survey respondents

With regards to gender (Fig. 5), individuals identifying as female were the predominant respondents to the survey (60%) compared to 30% male respondents. Individuals who chose not to specify on gender collectively comprised the remaining 10%. Although the survey is limited in scope, this is a strong result and worth keeping in mind for BAM 2018.

With regards to the question, “what is your involvement with BAM?” the majority (35) of the respondents identified themselves as having been involved in organising BAM events (Fig. 6). Around a quarter of respondents to this question (16) described themselves as participants, and nine (9) were contributors, teachers, or facilitators. A small proportion described themselves as promoters (3), two as volunteers/ cooks, and one reported they were not able to participate due to geographic isolation. The difference between promoter and other roles is worth emphasising. Rather than implying that organisers or volunteers do not also promote their events, the time and effort that goes into promotion is of a different calibre. Based on feedback provided by respondents, it would be easier to promote BAM if:

- Make it easier for individuals to promote BAM;
- Make it obvious that “promotion” is a role that needs filling;
- Equip respondents with materials to make it easy promote BAM.

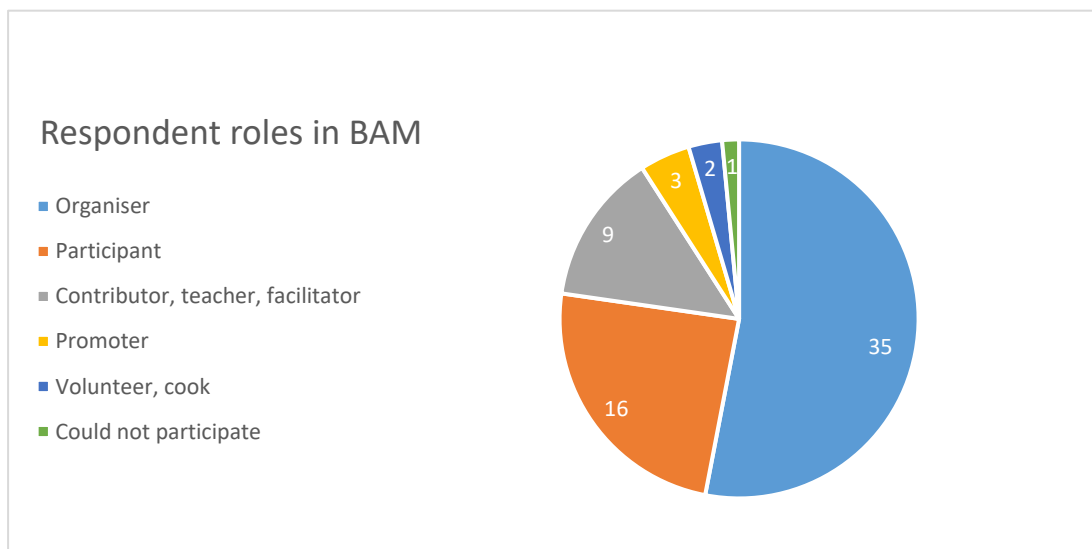


Figure 6. Respondents to this question were predominantly organisers



nisers, of which a quarter were participants, followed by contributors/ teachers/ facilitators, promoters and volunteers.

Q3: What if any tradition or organisation are you affiliated with (not mutually exclusive)

As evident in **Figure 7**, individuals affiliated with the Triratna Buddhist Community formed the bulk of survey respondents, followed by members of the Western Chan Fellowship, and SGI-UK. It is not likely a coincidence that the BAM committee consists of affiliates from these three traditions. The opportunity to list more than one affiliation on this question explains the fact that the results to this question (115) outnumber the individual respondents (n=83). The affiliations listed for the NBO may partly explain some of these overlaps. The other affiliation responses are listed below.

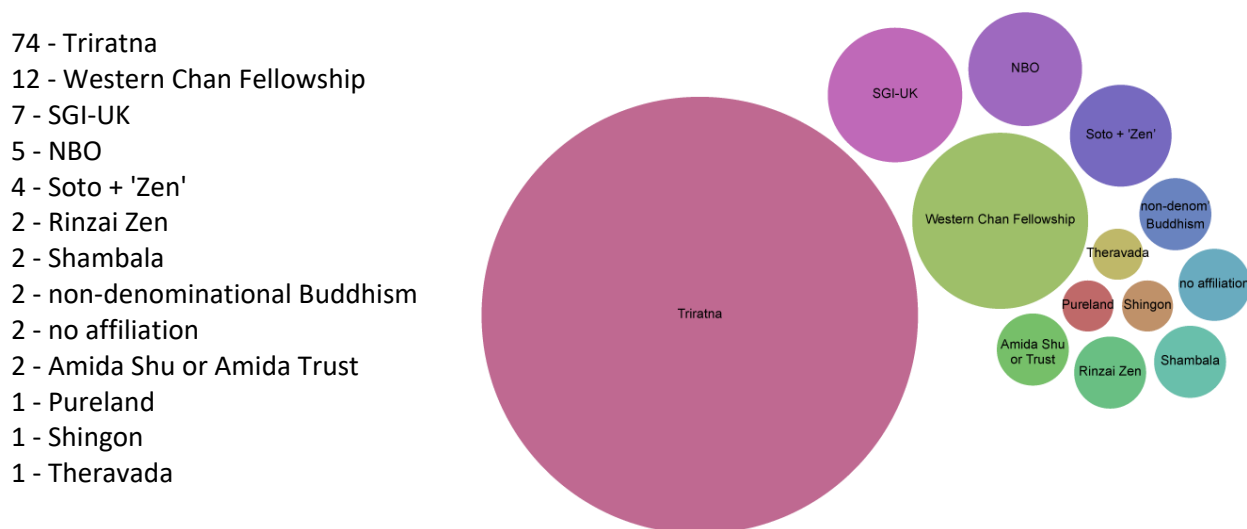


Figure 7. The survey received the most responses from the Triratna Buddhist Community, followed by Western Chan Fellowship and SGI-UK.

This figure shows that the survey received the most responses from the Triratna Buddhist Community. It is generally accepted that Triratna has “championed” BAM unlike other NBO member organisations. For the purposes of this report, this result implies that the survey results are skewed towards responses from that tradition. Similarly, the prevalent use of Facebook by Triratna implies skewed results to those questions.

Q7: Have you heard of Buddhist Action Month (BAM) before?

Yes: 88.2%

No: 11.8%

This interesting result relates to one of the outliers of the survey, namely an individual who completed the survey even though they hadn’t actually been able to participate in BAM due to their remote location. This evokes the crux of the matter. **If we want to encourage people to “connect for change”, then what can the NBO do to support such individuals?**



Q8: How relevant is the BAM invitation to "take part and get involved in actions that express our care and concern for our planet and our environment, and all living beings that exist on it, in a practical way" to your practice?

The majority of respondents replied that the invitation to get involved in BAM is "highly relevant" (61.8%) to their dharma practice, while 22.5% said it was "fairly relevant". Happily, no respondents claimed that it was not relevant, although some claimed neutrality ("neither relevant nor irrelevant", 6.9%) and the smallest respondent group (5.9%) claimed it was "fairly irrelevant".

Highly relevant: 61.8%
Fairly relevant: 22.5%
Neither relevant nor irrelevant: 6.9%
Fairly irrelevant: 5.9%
Irrelevant: 0%
n/a (missing responses): 2.9%

Q9: Would you like to be contacted by the NBO by email about future BAM activity?

Yes: 56.9%
No: 40.2%
n/a (missing responses): 2.9%

3.2 Results on communication tools and methods (Q 4, 5, 6)

Due to the high proportion of Triratna respondents, the results from this analysis may be read in reverse for Triratna, i.e. negative correlations for Triratna may be considered positive correlations for all non-Triratna traditions combined, and vice versa.

In addition to the interpretations, the raw results are included following this key:

- *p* value: determines the statistical confidence;
- anything below .05 (**) is statistically significant to 95% confidence
- anything below .01 (*) is statistically significant to 99% confidence
- + or - values: effect size (Pearson's *r*, two-tailed) and direction of the correlation;
 - 1 is a complete correlation
 - anything above 0.5 is considered a **strong** correlation
 - anything between 0.3 to 0.5 is considered a **moderate** correlation
 - anything between 0.1 to 0.3 is considered a **weak** correlation

For the non-scientific reader, a significant result (* or **) is more interesting than the value, unless the value is near or above 0.5, or near or below -0., in which case that result might be especially worthy of note. No result being reported in either direction means that no significant trend was found within that group

Q4: Correlations with regards to feelings of connectedness with other Buddhists

Over the past month, how often have you felt like you connected:

- with other people in your regular Buddhist centre(s) or group(s) on environmental and/or social justice issues?



- to other centres or groups, within your Buddhist organisation or tradition, on environmental and/or social justice issues?
- with someone from a different Buddhist organisation or tradition, for any purpose at all?

Coherent with anecdotal evidence, the survey results reveal a contrast between the groupings – Triratna & SGI-UK vs. the other traditions surveyed – whereby SGI-UK members tend to frequently connect with their own, but not significantly with Buddhists from other groups and Triratna did not show a strong tendency in either direction. By contrast, respondents identifying with “non-Triratna & non-SGI-UK” affiliations reported either not often connecting with their own, or if they do then it’s with Buddhists from other affiliations.

The grouping of “non-Triratna & non-SGI-UK” respondents showed a significant positive trend of feeling connected with Buddhists from other organisations and a significant negative correlation regarding feeling connected with Buddhists from their own centre or group. This result may be at least partly explained by the fact that around half of the respondents from this grouping were affiliated with Western Chan Fellowship, Soto Zen and ‘Zen’: firstly, these traditions do not typically have regular or permanent centres at which to gather; secondly, the culture of these traditions does not explicitly include socialising and friendship building in addition to formal practice, as is the case for Triratna and SGI-UK.

Finally, those who are affiliated with the NBO are the group most frequently connecting with Buddhists from other organisations. This indicates that the NBO is serving its purpose, as a network in which practitioners from various Buddhist Organisations connect and meet.

Connectedness with Buddhists from the same centre or regular group?

Positive correlations: The group of survey participants affiliated to SGI-UK were the only ones who frequently connect with members of their own centres or regular groups (+0.199, $p=.045$).

Negative correlations: Two traditions that demonstrated a negative trend toward connecting with Buddhists from the same centres or regular groups included Western Chan Fellowship (-0.264, $p=.007$) and Zen (Soto + ‘Zen’) (-0.341, $p<.001$), as did the single respondent affiliated with Pureland (-0.257, $p=.009$).

Connectedness with Buddhists from other centres or groups within the same tradition?

Positive correlations: The only group who regularly connected with other centres or groups within their organisation or tradition were affiliated with SGI-UK (+0.258, $p=.009$).

Negative correlations: Only the group identifying as Soto Zen or ‘Zen’ (+0.341, $p<.001$) negatively correlated regards connecting with other centres or groups within their organisation or tradition.

Connectedness with Buddhists from other traditions or organisations?

Positive correlations: Survey participants frequently connecting with Buddhists from other organisations included those with affiliations to the NBO (+0.312, $p = .001$), Shambala (+0.283, $p=.004$) and Amida Shu or Amida Trust (+.0248, $p=.015$), as well as the two respondents



identifying as non-denominational Buddhism (+0.228, $p=.021$) and the single Theravadan respondent (+0.216, $p=.035$).

The grouping of non-Triratna & non-SGI-UK respondents combined also showed a significant positive tendency to connect with Buddhists from other organisations (+0.220, $p=.027$)

Negative correlations: By inverse of the non-Triratna & non-SGI-UK grouping result above, it can be said that Triratna and SGI-UK respondents combined showed a significant negative tendency regards feeling as though they had connected with Buddhists from other organisations (-0.220, $p=.027$). No other groups showed a negative correlation with this part of the question.

Raw results (notable in **bold**):

- Triratna: no significant results in either direction.
- NBO: +0.312** from other organisations ($p = .001$)
- Shambala: +0.283** from other organisations ($p = .004$)
- SGI-UK: +0.199* from the same regular centre or group ($p = .045$);
- +0.258** from other centres/groups within same organisation ($p = .009$)
- Western Chan Fellowship: -0.264** from the same regular centre or group ($p = .007$)
- Zen (Soto + 'Zen'): -0.341** from the same regular centre or group ($p < .001$)
- Amida Shu or Amida Trust: +0.248* from other organisations ($p = .015$)
- Pureland: -0.257** from the same regular centre or group, ($p = .009$)
- Theravada: +0.216* from other organisations ($p = .035$)
- Non-denominational Buddhism: +0.228* from other organisations ($p = .021$)
- Non-Triratna + Non-SGI-UK: -0.233* from the same regular centre or group ($p = .019$); +0.220* from other organisations ($p = .027$)

These insights into the communication patterns of individuals within particular organisations provide some perspective on their organisational cultures with respect to connecting with others.

Q5: Correlations with regards to preferred technologies

Respondents were asked to rank the following technologies by how confident they felt using them at the time, including phones, email, printed or written material, smartphones, the internet using a tablet, desktop or laptop computer, and applications like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and Skype. The only notable result was the negative response by SGI-UK members to email as a mode of communication. Otherwise, this question did not produce any useful results.

Raw results (notable in **bold**)

- Accessed the internet via _____ (over the last month):
- SGI-UK: -0.201* Email ($p = .043$)
- Non-denominational Buddhism: -0.404** Printed or written material ($p < .001$)
- Western Chan Fellowship: +0.211* Tablet device ($p = .034$)



Q6: Via which media do you communicate with other Buddhists most frequently?

This question involved a ranking from 1-8, whereby higher values indicate higher frequency of use (i.e., 8 is the maximum value, 1 is the minimum value). The forms of IT or media used to communicate with other Buddhists were predominantly face-to-face and email, followed by texting and Facebook (Fig. 8). Across the traditions surveyed, the preferred technologies varied quite distinctly: while Facebook is widely used by Triratna, SGI-UK participants prefer the telephone, and other traditions reported significant use of Twitter and email.

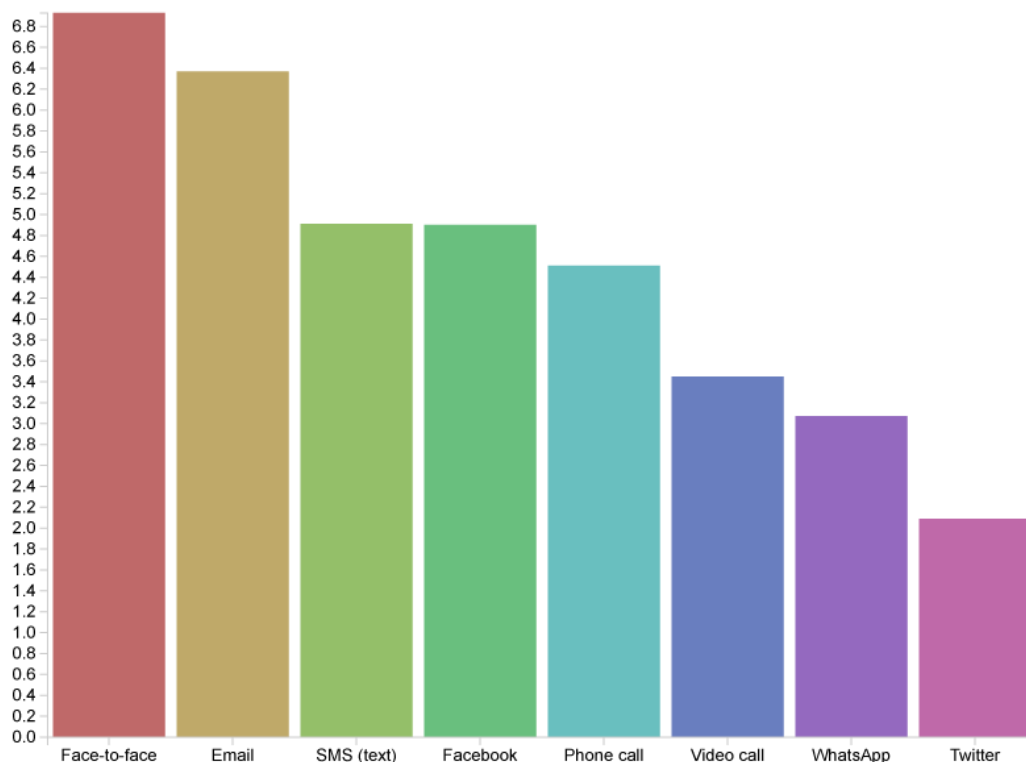


Figure 8: Face-to-face was the preferred mode of communication amongst Buddhists, followed closely by email. Text messaging and Facebook were preferred in equal measure, followed by phone calls and increasingly less favour of other applications (video calls, WhatsApp, Twitter).

Raw results (notable in bold)

Media most used to communicate with other Buddhists (over the last month):

- Triratna: +0.287** Facebook ($p = .003$); -0.217* Phone call ($p = .031$); -0.288** Email ($p = .004$)
- NBO: +0.219* Email ($p = .029$)
- SGI-UK: -0.237* Facebook ($p = .016$); +0.218* Phone call ($p = .031$)
- Non-denominational Buddhism + no affiliation entered: **+0.393** Twitter ($p < .001$)**
- Non-Triratna & Non-SGI-UK: **+0.262** Email ($p = .009$)**; -0.226* WhatsApp ($p = .023$)



Conclusion on preferred technologies and communication tools (Q5, Q6)

Overall, the results demonstrate that a broad spread of communication methods are already being used by those involved with BAM, ranging from the direct and personal (face-to-face, phone call) to the centralised/networked (Facebook, Twitter).

An interesting mirror split was shown between Triratna and SGI-UK members – the 1st and 3rd largest groups in the survey – in respect of the media via which they communicate with other Buddhists: whereby Triratna members make significant use of Facebook and tend not to speak on the phone, the reverse is true of SGI-UK members.

First, this suggests that Facebook could be a poor means for communicating BAM related activity with SGI-UK members. While it is tempting to imply that Facebook is only effective for reaching Triratna members, it is important to that the survey responses came largely through the Facebook appeal and that Triratna were the biggest group of responders (selection bias, in other words). Still, Triratna members do seem to 'like' Facebook.

Secondly, email may not be the best choice for promoting BAM activity with Triratna members or with SGI-UK members, but the counterpart grouping (non-Triratna & non-SGI-UK) had a positive correlation for email communication. These results suggest that email is a good choice for getting in touch with Buddhists beyond SGI-UK and Triratna. (Again, the Facebook-centric nature of the survey should be remembered here. In other words, if the survey had reached more people via email it may have found more Triratna and SGI-UK people who use it, and with confidence).

Third, while Triratna members do not report using phone calls as a means to communicate with other Buddhists, the opposite was true all non-Triratna respondents surveyed, who use phone calls to a significant degree to reach other Buddhists. However, anecdotal evidence proposes that this preference gap is not as large as the results would suggest. For one thing, Triratna Buddhist Centres are very sociable places with a diversity and range of activities occurring on a daily basis. In other words, the response from Triratna Buddhists to this question may simply reflect that they receive sufficient contact at their centres, face-to-face, and over Facebook, such that phone calls do not rank as highly as they would for other traditions that do not have regular gatherings integrated into their spiritual practices.

Finally, Twitter was given high ranking by those describing themselves as non-denominational Buddhists or having no affiliation, whereas the other traditions did not list Twitter at all. In fact, this was the strongest correlation of any group for the various modes of communication, which suggests that using this form of social media in promoting BAM and building connections might help to involve a wider range of Buddhists, at least those that were under-represented within the survey.

More narrowly, the combined grouping of non-Triratna & non-SGI members do not appear to use WhatsApp to communicate with other Buddhists.

3.3 Survey responses: type of involvement with BAM

According to respondents, the majority of BAM activities occurred within a Centre or group, and smaller, equal representation on social media, in public, at work and outside (**Fig. 9**). This result is likely an effect of the Triratna bias, as Triratna Buddhists comprised the bulk of respondents and this particular tradition locates most activities within its Buddhist Centres.



Still, it is encouraging to see that BAM activities occur in other sectors of life, including public spaces.

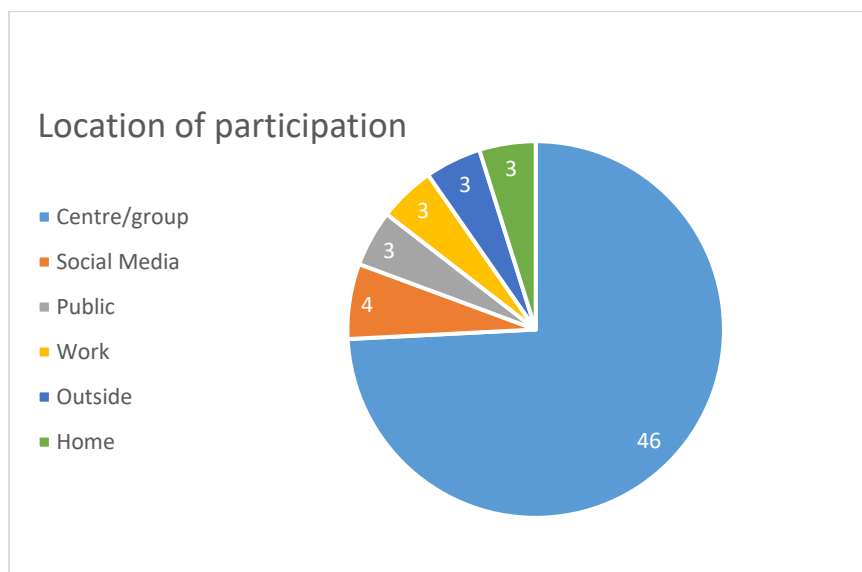


Figure 9. Most BAM activities occurred within Centres or groups but a range of other locations, too.

A closing question invited respondents to share ‘anything else?’ with respect to BAM. These responses were split into three clear camps: i) those who wanted to share their experience; ii) those who wished to express thanks and appreciation for BAM and associated efforts; and iii) those wanting to provide feedback (**Fig 10**).

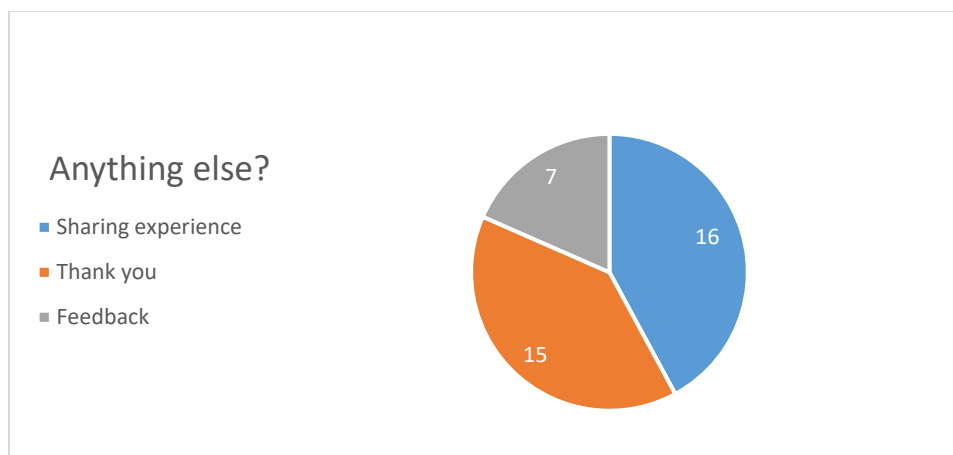


Figure 10. Responses were equally divided between the desire to share experiences and gratitude for the BAM campaign, and half of those wished to share feedback.

Some of the comments from the feedback included:

- Requests for more marketing materials to facilitate the promotion of events (2/7);
- Requested change to Facebook page setting so that posts from the group page would appear on their timeline, i.e., posts be changed to public (1/7). This comment added that it was difficult to find the FB page.
- Request that the report be made public (1/7):



- “Within Buddhist charities, there is hardly any good governance, accountability, and openness in management. Corruption, nepotism and racism are rampant. This is not the Dhamma. The survey results need to be published and distributed widely. We need to initiate ways to bring good governance into our Buddhist charities. “

Taken together, these results advocate that BAM will be a greater success if the campaign is accompanied by a clear agenda that is designed to be accessible, especially for promoters and organisers. Promotional materials should all reflect the same central theme, but allow for local customisation. BAM would likely be more widely promoted if it were easier for individuals to promote it, or consider themselves to be promoters.

These particular issues can be evaluated by reviewing the promotional materials for BAM 2016. **Figure 11** presents BAM’s online presentation for 2016, which can be described as a network of printed and digital media that link to each other in distinct clusters. The right cluster contains all the NBO content, include pages from the website providing resources, links, an event planning guide, etc. (top of cluster) and the Facebook page (bottom of cluster). Clustered at the left are materials from Triratna (including the BAM handbook, promotional postcard and web page) and the DANCE website (pages referring to BAM). It is evident that the links between NBO, Triratna and DANCE are not well integrated; if not for the BAM logo there would be little commonality amongst these resources.

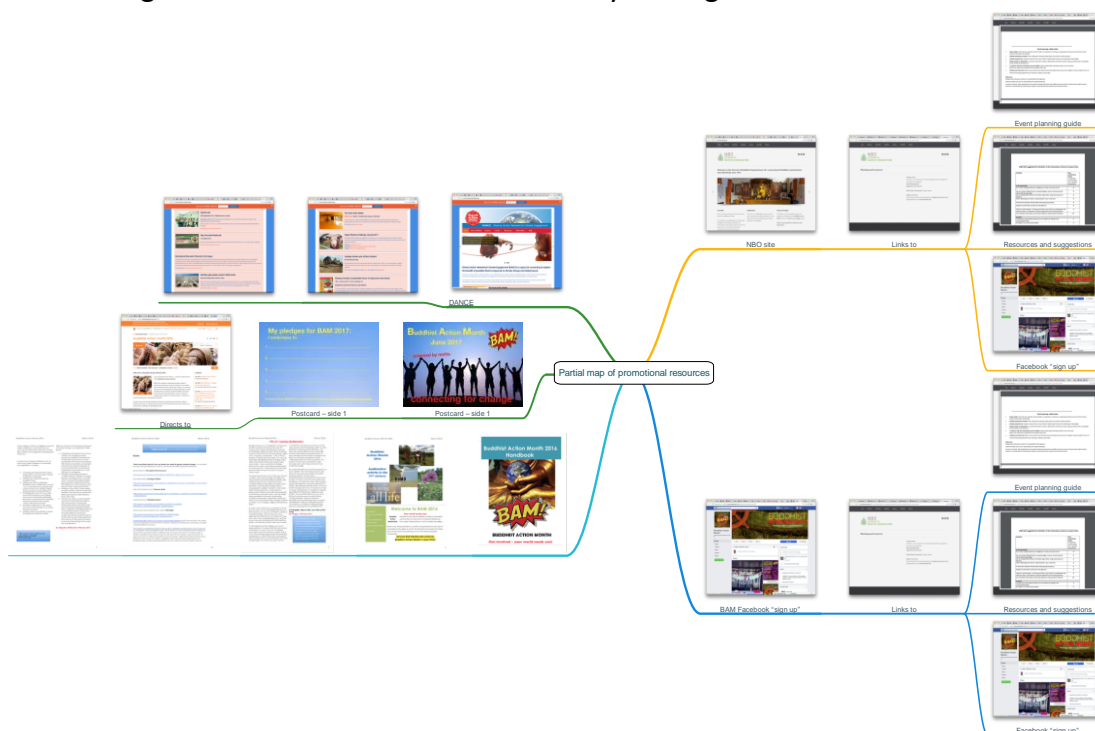


Figure 11. BAM resources online are spread across the NBO, Triratna and DANCE websites.

The problem with inconsistencies in message and aesthetics is the difficulty this causes users/ participants to understand how these resources are connected. A struggle to navigate these materials will limit the ability to fully engage with the campaign, or to feel confident. In addition, a disjointed network of resources challenges ease of access and does not invite new participants to get involved.



4 Discussion

The results from these surveys reveal how Buddhists from different traditions in the UK relate to other Buddhists and what forms of communication or media they use. The future growth and potential of BAM can be guided and informed these results, with the proviso that the sample was skewed towards Triratna and to Facebook preference.

With regards to the original question, the results here suggest that there is no need to create a new platform: sufficient applications already exist and it would probably not be effective to introduce something new. However, **the NBO could become more effective in helping to connect individuals and actions.** Some ideas are presented below.

4.1 NBO Website and Resources

According to feedback from respondents, the NBO website and the information it offers on BAM is not currently as helpful as it could be. The webpage could be more useful by:

- ensuring it is linked with all BAM actions as a central point of reference;
- ensuring it provides the most up-to-date materials available to inspire and mobilise;
 - o e.g., logo, graphics that can be easily amended for local events
- consider providing a checklist method by which individuals can find and promote BAM actions, perhaps has an illustrated cartoon with tick boxes (recall Fig. 8)
- provide pragmatic timeframes and deadlines as useful points of guidance.

4.2 Facebook

In addition to conducting this project, Robin and Chris offered the tremendous gift of helping to set up a new FB Group for BAM 2017, and instructing the BAM committee on how to negotiate and manage this Group with past and future BAM years. Following is some technical advice with regards the FB group:

- 1) The title of a group cannot be changed once membership hits over 5000 members. So once the year's activities are over, they strongly suggest removing the year from the end of the title. This assisted the transition from page to group in 2016-2017.
- 2) It was great to see that participants engaged with new FB group. In addition to the advice already given, remember that the rate of member signup to the group will be somewhat dependent on those members of the committee who have a Facebook account logging in and inviting their friends to the group. Obviously the same goes for distributing the link via email in whichever way suits.
- 3) The group would also benefit, in terms of visibility, to have some information entered into the 'group type' and 'tags' fields. Go to '...' then 'Edit group settings' to edit these.

4.3 DANCE (Dharma Action Network for Climate Engagement)

The DANCE network already offers an easy and responsive audience with whom to build BAMs potential, since it is a friendly network of spiritual practitioners who are personally engaged in worldly issues such as social and ecological justice. As well, the network model exemplified by DANCE is worth noting; rather than a centralised system, BAM should continue to develop as a grassroots process. **Connections with DANCE could be advanced and made more explicit, at little expense, which would be beneficial to both.** The DANCE



website is apparently at its maximum capacity, but the strategic use of links between organisations would facilitate collaboration and synchronicity.

4.4 Different modes of advancing BAM

Suggestions following the results from **Question 6** could be taken on board, as required for the different traditions in the NBO. For example, individuals within “non-Triratna & non-SGI” organisations might be most effective using something like a 'call-a-Buddhist' campaign (i.e., non-email/non-Facebook means) might chime with SGI-UK members. The primary value of such an approach is that it is a method by which to create new BAM networks amongst a hitherto unengaged audience and to broaden activities within those traditions that have not yet fully adopted BAM into their practice. These preferred modes of communication will likely change with time, however.

Taking this idea further, a database of email addresses and phone numbers would be an invaluable tool that could be utilised by the NBO and BAM community for connecting Buddhists and promoting engaged Buddhism in the month of June and throughout the year. A number of practicable applications both digital and analogue could be designed with such a tool in hand.

The tendency or preference for Buddhists to communicate face-to-face is also an important point of consideration. This suggests that an 'old-school' approach to promoting BAM should be included whenever possible. Solutions of this sort could involve printing posters and flyers to distribute at centres as well as encouraging those involved in BAM to bring it into conversation with other Buddhists when they meet. Ideal locations for posters include notice boards at Buddhist Centres (recall **Figure 3**) or cafes that are known to attract Buddhists and other spiritual groups.

For the largest group of respondents to this survey, Triratna, Facebook appears to be the key for communication with other Buddhists. Therefore, in terms of existing energies around BAM, Facebook holds significant weight.

A rather immediate solution to connecting the dots revealed in the survey in terms of technology usage could be to set up a Twitter account and then using a tool such as Hootsuite (specifically [the Social Profile Picker function](#)) in order to send messages to both Twitter and the existing Facebook group at the same time. The logical hashtag is #BuddhistActionMonth.

The combination of more direct modes of communication such as face-to-face, phone, SMS and email along with more centralised/ networked modes of communication such as Twitter and Facebook may help to counteract the differences between different organisations and traditions in terms of how they connect with Buddhists from their own vs. other groups. This seems to define the NBO, and it might be worth considering the role that the NBO plays in connecting Buddhists from various traditions over this particular cause.

Furthermore, the result that a broad spread of different modes of connecting are already being well used – and differently according to affiliation – could imply that employing new modes of connecting, e.g. interactive map or new website/ forum, is unnecessary at this stage in the evolution of BAM. Rather, an approach that considers how to make best use of existing modes of communication may be the best strategy for furthering BAM and getting Buddhists more connected for positive change in the world.



Not everyone is fluent with the various applications of social media (e.g., FB, Twitter), yet some of these are very effective in sharing information and events. So, rather than creating a new platform, which is not likely viable anyway, the NBO could serve to facilitate confidence in using these applications with the benefit of helping individuals who wish to connect with others. A simple sketch could be provided (Fig. 12) to educate those willing to improve their use of social media while also spreading the word of actions more efficiently.

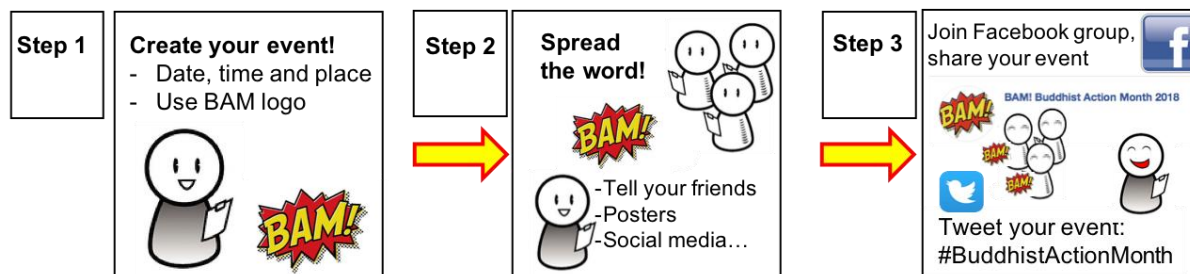


Figure 12. Example of guide to help individuals develop and promote their event ideas for BAM

4.5 BAM over the long-term

With respect to the data gathered about the NBO itself, two things may be worthy of further investigation. Firstly, those identifying as affiliated with the NBO showed a stronger tendency than any other group to connect with Buddhists from other organisations. Secondly, anecdotal evidence from Robin and Chris’s site visits suggests that individuals who were not aware of BAM were also not aware of the NBO. Thus, to a certain degree, one may deduce that getting more Buddhists involved in BAM would also involve informing them about the NBO.

If BAM comes to a point at which it basically runs itself, then perhaps the NBO could consider hosting cross-traditional BAM actions of its own, e.g., events, celebrations, debates? For example, NBO members and BAM coordinators in a particular city could be brought for cross-traditional day of action every June. If calendars were marked right from the start of the BAM planning season, participation would be better ensured. Such a goal would obviously require sufficient interest from the NBO membership. That being said, if BAM were an attractive and interesting campaign, particularly to younger people, it is possible that a tailored campaign could also draw more active members to the NBO. Given that the BAM committee will inevitably shift and change in members over time, sufficient energy and resources must be ensured for the future of BAM. Fundraising to support web-based work might be of value. NBO could become more strategically positioned in order to help connect individuals and actions.

It is also useful to reflect on the ways by which the Triratna Buddhist Community has come to “champion” BAM, soon after the campaign’s inception. Certainly, the social culture of this tradition with its emphasis on spiritual friendship facilitate the sorts of actions that BAM promotes, and the self-governing Triratna Buddhist Centres which support grassroots and decentralised, yet connected, projects. Crucially, however, Triratna directly supports BAM, to the degree that a member of the modest Triratna Development Team, Mokshini, is allocated time each year towards planning and promoting BAM within the Triratna community. This means that Buddhist Action Month receives resources and support from the Order, which translates into time dedicated to its preparation, promotion, and materials. The effect of this commitment cannot be understated.



4.6 Concluding thoughts

From a spiritual perspective, the complexity of the environmental crisis and myriad social emergencies is the result not only of economic, political, and social factors, but also of moral and spiritual difficulties¹. Addressing such crises requires broader philosophical and religious understandings of ourselves as creatures of nature, embedded in cycles and dependent on ecosystems.² Perhaps more than ever before, there is a genuine urgency to break through our self-imposed barriers and acknowledge our inter-connectivity and kinship with all beings. A society that is more ethically-attuned and aware can make the world more inhabitable to future generations, while supporting happier individuals, a healthier society, better functioning social structures, and a more joyful, generous and communicative culture. This begs the question: what are we waiting for?

Being contained to the month of June, BAM serves as a creative setting in which lifestyle experiments have a decent likelihood of success. As such, it is a vehicle by which to encourage individuals to try something different, with respect to the countless ethical conundrums and challenges of modern life. On its own, Buddhist Action Month is an opportunity to create a friendly space in which higher ideals can be expressed, aspirations shared, ideas and experiences exchanged, and small results celebrated. As part of the greater human project, BAM is a toolbox of methods and approaches to further build upon and generate positivity in our individual and shared worlds, while undermining the unhealthy, destructive aspects and systems of conventional society.

Whatever joy there is in the world
All comes from desiring others to be happy
And whatever suffering there is in the world
All comes from desiring myself alone to be happy.
But what need is there to say much more?
The childish work for their own benefit,
The Buddhas work for the benefit of others.
Just look at the difference between them!
Santideva, *Bodhicaryavatara*, ch8: 129-130

¹ Tucker and Grim (1997). *THE CHALLENGE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS*. Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School. Religions of the World and Ecology Series. Series Foreword

² Thomas Berry (1988) *The Dream of the Earth*. Sierra Club Books. San Francisco.



Appendix

Q11 What is your involvement with Buddhist Action Month?
1 I led activities at my local Triratna Centre this year
2 This year, co-organiser of local activities. Previous years, participant only.
3 I pledged metta-bhavana practice which was done at a certain time all across the city I'm in
4 Attended local Buddhist centre
6 We're kind of far away to participate
7 I sorted out my personal end of life planning for my family
8 Run Amida Mandala temple with my husband and so engage our group in BAM
9 Local group activity
10 key to classes at Leeds Buddhist Centre
11 Involved in weekly events at 2 centres, and daily activities, personally and socially
12 Took part in street meditation in Shrewsbury and had at home sangha event for Karuna
13 Auckland Buddhist centre Dharma night team promoting BAM
14 Took part this year as part of the Wellington Buddhist Centre
15 I like it
16 Non at present
17 attending centres, community led metta meditations, gentle activism, sharing social media info, attending talks
18 Teaching and Participating at Leeds Buddhist Centre events
19 I championed BAM at Triratna Leeds
20 Participant and organiser
21 Organiser of events at Cambridge Buddhist Centre
22 Organiser of local group
23 Hosted Facebook platform meditation for my local sangha. Took part in Facebook group posting pledges. Doing online reflection from Valencia.
24 Hosted a movie night for our sangha, was a vegan movie with vegan snacks. Made vegan soup for workmates. Made a sharing table at work for people to give away things.
25 Triratna group projects
26 Organising events
27 'Champion' in Ipswich
28 I work on the centre team at the North London Buddhist Centre and was co ordinating our BAM program.
29 Organiser for it in the Dublin Buddhist Centre, and I ran many of the events
30 The Great Get Together NHS March
31 I made 5 pledges. We all did this at the community Taraloka I live in.
32 Keen participant in sangha-wide activities, use it as an inspiration for my personal practice and activities.
33 I am part of the BAM team in the Dublin Buddhist Centre - coordinating and organising BAM events
34 I work for a Buddhist charity where we tried to celebrate BAM
35 Very involved with SGI activities.
36 Organising and manning an SGI stall at the Diversity Festival in Barnstaple



37 Attending my local Buddhist centre, constructing a paper-mache Buddha from newspapers that promulgate hatred
38 Undertake challenges and talk about it with friends and family
39 Maybe go along to vegan meal at Buddhist centre.
40 Through Shrewsbury Buddhist Centre Compassion in Action group
41 Food bank
42 Offering to organise activity for Manchester Buddhist Centre.
43 We take part every year in our area, as SGI Buddhists.
44 Environmental issues - litter picking
45 Don't have any plans yet
46 None yet
47 I am helping to organise activities at my centre
48 Getting people at my Buddhist Centre involved
49 Hope.
50 Am Interfaith Officer for NBOUK
51 Through Triratna - Oslo
52 the biggest thing is leading a free 7 week meditation & buddhism course called 'saving the earth'
53 Part of BAM-team in Sweden. There has never been any BAM-activity in Sweden before!
54 Still planning this year's input.
56 partiipate
57 I help the NBO to organise it
58 I read some of the posts to see what people are up to!
59 Just now looked at website in order to get some ideas for our small centre
60 I wrote a guide to fossil fuel divestment for Triratna
61 NBO Committee, WCF Rep for NBO
62 I'll let you know!

Q13 Would you like to say anything else? (Answered: 32; skipped: 51)
The BAM activities were inspiring and informative and made us aware of the good things that are going on around the world as well as in our local area e.g. our local Asylum and Refugee Community.
This is still quite new to me, and I would like to get more involved next year :-)
I already feel very engaged in such action in my paid and volunteer work , but great idea for people looking for an opportunity to do something like this
I try to do Buddhist action every day
The BAM booklet was great and helped a lot.
Thank you for your work!
I managed 3 pledges: a daily meditation practice in Insight timer Changed banks to the Co-op Practised 4 speech precepts (and regular confession when I breached them). The bonus response was after a Vegan evening at Nottingham Buddhist Centre, I'm committed to being vegan, for July at least. Thank you everyone. We are connected for change ??????



<p>Not sure if the reasons but BAM has been very low key this year. No major events.... lots of small gatherings and individual projects</p>
<p>I love what we're doing to make the world a more lovely, safer, happy place :) x</p>
<p>I'd like to say a huge thank you for all the support and inspiration. I'd never organised events for BAM before and found the BAM groups listed in my previous answer really helpful. Also as a centre we have connected with other non-buddhist groups through the activities we provided in the ways we responded to the theme connecting for change. This is a really positive thing that we haven't done before and look to continue and develop so a huge thank you for the theme as well.</p>
<p>Encouraging Buddhists to get engaged in current world problems with wisdom and compassion is vital to the future well-being of our planet!</p>
<p>I like the urban retreat aspects that encourage practice whatever your circumstances</p>
<p>I have enjoyed BAM for the past 3 years, and think this has been the best so far. Outdoor meditations, food collection for homelessness centre, pledges etc</p>
<p>Thanks for organising, it's a great thing to have happen each year.</p>
<p>Hopefully doing a climate coalition action next month.</p>
<p>I just appreciate this event being a focal point for making the link between Buddhism and social action and having a sense of being part of a bigger movement of others doing the same thing</p>
<p>Please create more easy to use marketing material such as an accessible and easily shareable logo</p>
<p>It's a great idea. Bravo! Bring it on!</p>
<p>Seems little interest in engaged buddhism in the Manchester sangha as far as i can tell, surprising.</p>
<p>I don't use Facebook, twitter, skype etc so they should all have ranked as 8 but it wouldn't accept that. We really enjoy the opportunity and challenge of BAM each year, it's a wonderful idea. Thank you!</p>
<p>I LOVE BAM! I am really interested in bringing my practice off the cushion year-round, but I really look forward to June as it marks an extra-special time in my calendar. This year I tried to reduce my plastics consumption by switching to bamboo toothbrushes, metal drinking straws and a mooncup; I gave away a load of possessions in the interests of stillness, simplicity and contentment; I overhauled my approach to dana and set up 15 new standing orders to charities I value; I participated in a few different events to foster community (interfaith, Great Get Together); I did some litter picking; I got my old bike out of the shed and started riding it for the first time since having my baby; I got a veg box, I undertook a personal pledge to reach out to the homeless community in my town more; I travelled over to another sangha for an evening on Joanna Macy and I watched a number of films on Buddhist/ecological themes; I closed up my old business and took my first step towards a new form of right livelihood. I'm sure there's more. Some of this was my personal initiative, much of it was done in sangha. I think BAM is absolutely inspirational and I love thinking of new ways to participate in it. Thank you!!!!</p>
<p>I don't see posts about it on my main Facebook timeline. I had to search on NBOs own page. Can you make posts and ask people to set to "public", and share widely? Thanks for doing what you do ????</p>



Sharing promotional images would be helpful, so that we can design our own posters without having to search the web too much.

Thanks for coordinating. We have tried to start Network of Engaged Buddhists in Norway. Now someone has motivation to initiate something connected to the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. I hope we can find a unified platform in Norway.

Been discussing BAM during planning meetings for Manchester Convention.

I spend my life doing the sort of social work that you advertise in BAM, so I do not feel I have the capacity to do more. I think it would be good if you highlighted great stuff that people are doing all year, and signposted people to it, rather than it being one off stuff in one month. Also, I get really fed up of these things being dominated by climate change. I know it is important, but I do not work on that arena, so I get turned off by the environment overload of your posts. If you could include more humaniatrian work then this would be more balanced and I may feel more inclined to participate.

I really appreciate BAM