

# Communities' Environment Improvement Network: Strategy and Process toward Sustainable Urban Poor Housing Development

เครือข่ายพัฒนาสิ่งแวดล้อมชุมชน: กลยุทธ์และกระบวนการเพื่อการพัฒนาชุมชน  
แออัดอย่างยั่งยืน

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## Abstract

“Baan Mankong” program is presently the government’s major policy in urban poor housing development in Thailand, undertaken by Community Organization Development Institute (CODI). The main strategy of the program is to upgrade living conditions, secure tenure as well as community capacity building through communities’ self-proposed projects and people participation process. This paper is derived from the experience in the development practice of a case study on Bang Bua canal in Bangkok, where on both sides of the waterfront are presently illegally occupied by a group of neighborhoods. These communities have invaded into public land and settled their housing trespassing into the canal. The previous attempts by the local authority to evict the waterfront urban poor communities, for being the cause of water pollutions and other associated environmental problems, had led to a long conflict in urban development.

To achieve the goals of sustainable community development, it is vital that not only the core problems of urban poor housing such as the lack of secure tenure and development funding are systematically solved, but also to evoke residents’ participation and people awareness on environment related issues. The Bang Boa community development scheme under the “Baan ManKong” program is expected to highlight initial guidelines and strategies for urban poor settlements’ redevelopment of other waterfront area of Bangkok. This paper will discuss how the process of community capacity building and empowerment have been undertaken and will be initiated, particularly in establishing various networks as a significant development strategy.

“โครงการบ้านมั่นคง” เป็นโครงการสำคัญของรัฐในการจัดการปัญหาชุมชนแออัดในเมืองทั่วประเทศ โดยมีสถาบันพัฒนาองค์กรชุมชน (พอช.) เป็นหน่วยงานหลัก มียุทธศาสตร์หลักเพื่อปรับปรุงสภาพความเป็นอยู่ ปัญหาสิทธิในที่ดิน รวมถึงการสร้าง ความเข้มแข็งให้กับองค์กรชุมชน โดยผ่านกระบวนการการมีส่วนร่วมของประชาชนและการนำเสนอโครงการของชุมชนเอง บทความนี้เกิดจากประสบการณ์การทำงานร่วมกับชุมชนริมคลองบางบัว กรุงเทพมหานคร ซึ่งปัจจุบันอาศัยอยู่อย่างผิดกฎหมาย บนที่ดินของรัฐและก่อสร้างบ้านพักอาศัยรุกล้ำลำน้ำ แออัดอยู่บริเวณริมสองฝั่งคลอง ความพยายามในอดีตของหน่วยงานท้องถิ่น ในการไล่อพยพชุมชน รวมถึงการมองชุมชนเหล่านี้ว่าเป็นสาเหตุของปัญหาน้ำเน่าเสียในคลอง และปัญหาสิ่งแวดล้อมอื่นได้ก่อให้เกิดความขัดแย้งระหว่างหน่วยงานรัฐกับชาวบ้านในการพัฒนาเมืองมาอย่างต่อเนื่อง

เพื่อให้บรรลุเป้าหมายในการพัฒนาอย่างยั่งยืน นอกจากการแก้ปัญหาพื้นฐานสำคัญ เช่น ความมั่นคงในที่อยู่อาศัย และทุนในการพัฒนาอย่างเป็นระบบแล้ว จำเป็นอย่างยิ่งที่จะต้องกระตุ้นให้เกิดการมีส่วนร่วมจากภาคประชาชน และสำนึกด้าน สิ่งแวดล้อมของชุมชน กรณีศึกษาโครงการบ้านมั่นคง ชุมชนริมคลองบางบัว น่าจะมีส่วนช่วยในการกำหนดแนวทาง และกลยุทธ์ การพัฒนาและปรับปรุงชุมชนแออัดบริเวณริมคลอง ซึ่งมีอยู่ทั่วไปในกรุงเทพมหานครได้ในอนาคต บทความนี้ต้องการศึกษา ถึงวิธีการและแนวทาง เพื่อสร้างความเข้มแข็งให้กับชุมชน โดยการเริ่มต้นและพัฒนาองค์กรชุมชน ผ่านกระบวนการจัดตั้ง เครือข่ายชุมชนต่างๆ

**Keywords (คำสำคัญ)**

Secure tenure (ความมั่นคงในที่อยู่อาศัย)

Community network (เครือข่ายชุมชน)

Institutional cooperation (การร่วมมือระหว่างองค์กร)

Stakeholder participation (ความร่วมมือของผู้มีส่วนร่วม)

## Introduction

Linear housing along canal waterfront is a very common urban poor settlement pattern in Bangkok. Canal rights-of-ways have been illegally the sites of squatter settlements and because of their proximity to place of work, accessibility to the urban center and its services. In the eastern suburbs of Bangkok there are some 68 squatter communities with an approximate total number of 44,000 residents. About 7,390 houses are built on the canal banks or protrude into the canals[1].

Bang Boa canal, located in the north area of Bangkok, has long been invaded by a group of low-income neighborhoods. The communities are clustered on public land, with an average width of twenty meters and five kilometers length, along both sides of the canal which originally served as maintenance strips. Many of the houses were constructed onto the surface of stagnant water polluted by discharged domestic and industrial waste.

The communities consisting of 2,881 households, with the size of around 100 to 500 households in each community, are situated in three administrative districts. Most people in the neighborhoods are working in the informal economic sector, such as hawkers, construction workers, taxi drivers, self-economic activities, etc. Some of the residents have been living in this area for two generations. The physical characteristics of these settlements are generally one and two-story height, and half wood-mortar construction. Every community has a similar layout with two rows of dwellings on both sides of a narrow street; around two meters wide (figure 1).

Over the past decade the community has been repeatedly threatened by the attempts of Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA) to eradicate squatters along the canal to make way for public infrastructure development projects, such as retaining walls construction along the canal to prevent flood and erosion of canal banks and junction road and fly-over to mitigate traffic congestion. The recently proposed projects also include an irrational idea for the construction of double lanes roads on both sides of the canal. Although this plan has not been responded by



Figure 1 Existing characteristics of Bang Boa community

any authorities concerned, it had a very strong impact on people awareness on the housing security and land tenure.

Similar to other low-income housing upgrading projects in Thailand, communities do not recognize the benefit of housing upgrading unless they face serious threats of eviction. Among the threatening situations and rumors of possible eviction, there were serious debates and discussions in some neighborhoods on what will be the solutions both politically and socially which has lead to the decision by a group of nine neighborhoods to join the “Baan Mankong” program, a nation-wide government program to solve the housing problems of urban poor communities launched in January, 2003. This unconventional five years program implemented by Community Organization Development Institute (CODI) under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, aims at solving the problem of housing insecurity by creating an opportunity for communities to participate actively in development process. The program channels government funds in the form of infrastructure subsidies and soft housing loans directly to poor communities, therefore the communities can control the funding and the management in collaboration with their local governments, professionals and universities in planning and improvement of their housing environment and basic services [2].

The nine neighborhoods in Bang Boa community which initially joined the “Baan Mankong” program consisted of six communities in Bangkok District including Samakee Ruamchai, Bang Boa, Runmai Pattana, Roikrong, Ruam Pattana North, Ruam Pattana South, and two communities in Lak Si District which were Chaiklong Bang Boa, and Kaona as well as Ruammit Raengsattha, a community in Don Muang District (figure 2).

A joint organization was consequently established under the name “Bang Boa Environment Improvement Network” and a committee consisting of members from each neighbourhood was elected. It was the communities’ intention that the words “environment improvement” would signify their goal to achieve not only housing upgrading but environmental improvement.

### **Process and strategies**

The early questions that the network had to bring to conclusion are that ‘Why do they really need to live here?’ and ‘How can they live as a collaborating society?’. Since there are various housing schemes and case studies on slum upgrading that have already adopted, for example relocation; means that they could settle in the legally new plot by renting or buying through community’s housing saving group. The alternative also included the reconstruction and housing upgrading which allowed them to stay in the existing land. Both models consequently required negotiations with the landlord for the rental or purchase of the property [3].

After preliminary discussions, the decision was clear that the communities wanted to continue living in the area by either upgrading or rearrangement of housing pattern and condition. Like many others communities located on canal waterfront, Bang Boa community trespassed in public land, where in the past it would not be possible to lease the land legally to people. However, under the “Baan Mankong” program, CODI has successfully cooperated with the Treasury Department (TRD), the authorities that take care of public properties, to issue a 30-year lease for urban poor settlements formerly invaded

public owned lands at economical rates. This means the communities will be able to still live in the land with secured tenure, which should in turn lead to improvement of their housing and living conditions.

In order to achieve a comprehensive development goal, an urban poor housing project obviously required cooperation of all agencies involved. Thus, CODI had constantly established

memorandums of understanding with various institutions including BMA, TRD, and local university. The main purpose was to incorporate all stakeholders and authorities concerned into the program. Community networks were also integrated into the memoranda to declare publicly the collaboration between government authorities and communities.

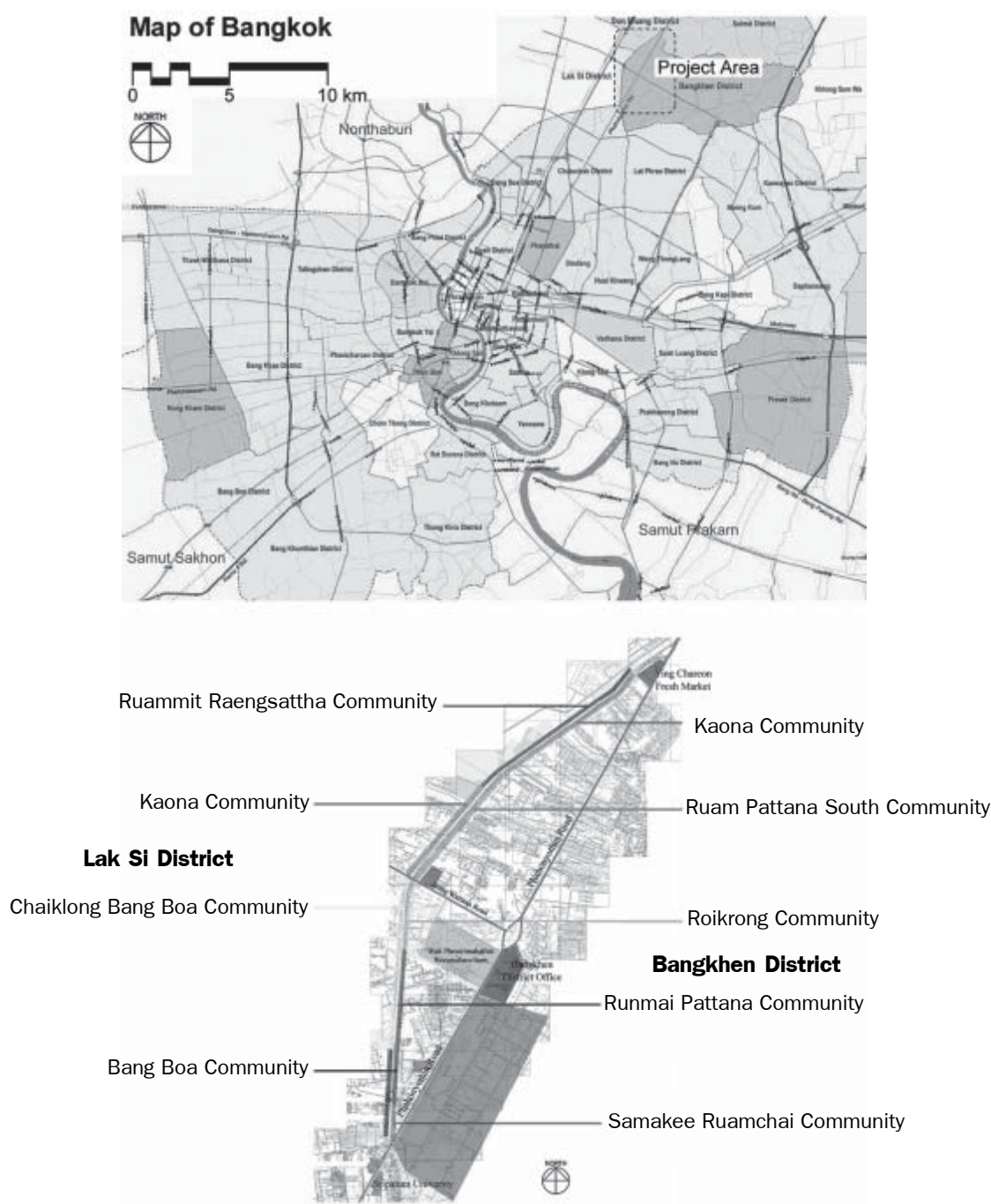


Figure 2 Bang Boa community location map

The main actors involved in the collaboration may be classified into two different levels: *Policy and decision making level*; the upper formal institutions which are

- Community Organization Development Institute (CODI),
- The Treasury Department (TRD),
- Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA)'s district office,
- Bang Boa Environment Improvement Network,
- Local university;

*Operating level*; the field working groups which are

- Individual community committee,
- Community's housing saving group,
- The Working Group for Housing Development (WGHD).

The development strategy of the project, as conceptualized in figure 3, suggests that two different levels of mechanism work simultaneously.

While at the institutional, or policy and decision making level the task is mainly to enhance cooperation with related institutes and authorities, the community, or operating, level focuses on field activities and peoples' participation.

On the institutional level, CODI, as the program facilitator, is in charge of an overall development funding and supervision. BMA's district offices, as local administrative agencies, play an active role in cooperation among related authorities, while the Treasury Department (TRD), acting as the land owner, is responsible for the approval of land lease to the communities. As a local university, Sripatum University is brought into the program not only because it would be a source of technical assistants and expertise, especially in housing design and planning, but to create the atmosphere which the community working together with a third party instead of a development lead or planned by the authority.

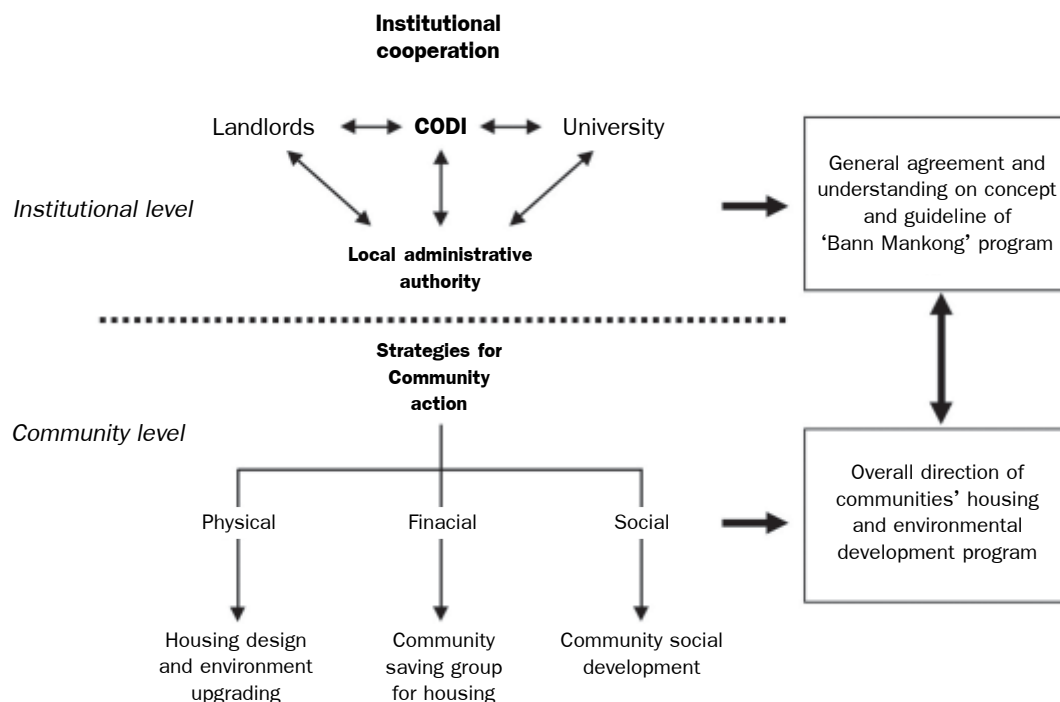


Figure 3 Strategy in Bang Boa community upgrading project



## Project Initiation and people participation

On the community level the characteristic of the mechanisms is less formal. Although different committees were set up, it may not be surprising that some people belong to more than one working group. This means close collaboration between working groups and networks, however, it could sometime result in conflict of interest over the development agenda.

While Bang Boa Environment Improvement Network is the key coordinator between institutional level and community level, the Working Group for Housing Development (WGHD), is formulated as a field operating team with cooperation from three parties: CODI, community organization and the local university. This set up team is responsible for data collection, survey, planning and management of the project, which could be divided accordingly into three categories as follows;

- physical aspect: housing design and environment upgrading, the surveying of existing housing conditions, the exploration of housing alternatives and development schemes as well as the development of environmental improvement programs;
- financial aspect: community saving group for housing to identify existing financial status of the communities, establish saving groups for housing and encourage saving activities;
- social aspect: community social development primarily to ease social conflicts in each community, and to classify existing social characteristics of the communities, strengths and weaknesses, and also to suggest required social structural changes.

In order to initiate the Bang Boa Community Development Project, one important part of process was to encourage all communities involved to work together as a network on housing program. Since the community organizations and their networks were considered the key actors and control funding and management of the project, they also undertook most of the buildings which made funding go much further and brought in their own contributions [4].

The aim of this framework was to represent all nine communities as one operating unit and to mechanize every community to the same direction. Obviously each community had a different degree of willingness and readiness to establish “Baan Mankong” program, thus it was necessary to prepare the communities for project implementation through community networking and people participation process as follows.

### Informing the project

In order to encourage people to support the housing project, the first important step was to organize network meetings and discussions with people who have experiences in environment upgrading from other communities, to provide basic knowledge of the project, as well as its benefit and necessity, for community leaders and committees. Under the supervision of CODI and cooperation from the BMA’s district offices, public meetings in each community were then arranged for open discussions and opinions. Since CODI has previously worked with Bang Boa community leaders for many years, the public meetings have successfully drawn the majority of people to join the project. The meeting was also an opportunity for the leaders to experience essential techniques to deal with public participation and network management (figure 4).



Figure 4 Public hearing and peoples' participation in the community

### Community surveying and data collection

Implementation of the projects required information on the involved communities in order to develop the housing scheme to meet the community needs. Therefore, it was necessary to direct all communities to conduct a survey to collect information about all households, housing security, land ownership, infrastructure problems, community organizations, savings activities and existing development initiatives. These data were collected basically by assigning a task to each household to report their information to the community committee. Other critical information that should be clarified is the right in land tenure and number of households to be included in the development. It is always the cases that there are some people, who claim their rights, were not actually living in communities. Someone may rent their house to others and already move out from the community.

There was also the need for physical surveys of existing housing conditions and infrastructure. This technical task was performed with assistants from university's architecture

students and staff, while community members could participate by forming up small working groups to help carry out the survey. It was through this collaboration, that the exchange of knowledge between community and institutes was practiced. Strategically, the community survey could be viewed as a tool to make dwellers aware and participate in the project. Doing the survey also provides opportunities for people to meet, learn about each others problems and establish links.

### Encouraging communities to establish saving groups

While the survey process was going on, another crucial step for community committee and CODI was to support community collective savings as these not only mobilize local resources but also strengthen local groups and build collective management skills. Moreover, this process would be a chance to examine the willingness, abilities and responses of each community to a specific task.



One very reasonable and practical approach to initiate a saving group for housing was to start with the existing saving group in the communities. Since each community has unequal readiness for saving group organization depending on peoples' income and community's level of awareness, there might be needs for stimulation and comparison with each other. Progress reports on saving status among the network should help in exchange of information and knowledge required for the development of saving capacity. After three months of promotion, it appeared that five individual communities in Bang Boa were able to establish regular saving groups for housing under the "Baan Mankong" program.

#### **Bringing to consensus**

To further implement the project, it is necessary that the development schemes are accepted by majority of people in each community. In addition, general guidelines and agreement should be made, among all communities, over that how the overall development model of Bang Boa should be done. Thus, a development workshop was organized to reach the consensus. The workshop included all parties concerned, the community networks committee, representatives and leaders from each community, representatives from BMA's district office, local university, and allies from other communities.

It was CODI intention that the workshop was held outside Bangkok, so that participants could concentrate on the discussion without any interference from their everyday routine. The preliminary development alternatives, carried out based on the previous surveyed result, were discussed and brainstormed in order to reach a conclusion. The results from the workshop were later brought to each community for opinion and

approval. A series of public meetings may be organized to discuss, in more detail, how these development issues affect community, what are people problems and concerns.

#### **Development models and pilot project**

As required by the "Baan Mankong" program the Bang Boa community network had to present the housing development plan to set up committees to get approval for infrastructure subsidy fund. This is a mechanism through which CODI could strategically control the development direction of the project. The proposed plan was reviewed and discussed, initially by peer group from other community networks and subsequently by CODI's committee.

During this process WGHD, with assistance from university experts, worked with communities to prepare development plan, housing schemes and overall physical and environment development guidelines for the nine communities. Discussion with community leaders and focused groups were undertaken to explore possible alternatives and development constraints.

#### **Discussing housing scheme**

From the process of workshop and consensus, the development pattern agreed by all communities was to remove all houses that exceeded into the water and provide three meters set-back line along the canal banks. Along the waterfront corridor, a street used mainly for pedestrian will be built to link all communities and allow public access to the canal. In addition, sewage system and certain level of water treatment before draining into the canal will be constructed.

It is also an outcome from consensus that most dwellers preferred low-rise development with one or two stories houses on separated plots to multi-units high-rise housing scheme such as apartment, which, in most of their opinion, does not fit their ways of living. The only two housing schemes, chosen by each community in accordance with their own conditions and limitations, resulting from the consensus, were listed as follows;

- reconstruction model; means all existing buildings will be removed. Land plots will be rearranged with the same equal size with newly constructed housing. Materials from old houses may be reused for construction.
- partly reconstruction and re-blocking; means the buildings, exceeded into waterway will be relocated. Housing plots with comparative large size and empty land will be partly adjusted for the relocation and public uses.

The overall development direction decided by community illustrates that, while people agree to improve their housing conditions and environment, they still want to maintain their lifestyle and social context. The choice on physical development schemes may be changeable, however, because there might be internal conflicts in each community, which were not publicly clarified and needed to be reconciled.

In response to the TRD land tenure which will be issued to the communities as a whole instead of individual household, in order to reinforce people cooperation among the community. The community reached an agreement to establish a housing cooperative to handle the lease with TRD and collect rent from individual household for all communities. Instead of separate measure by each community, the cooperative, with its relatively rigid legal structure, was expected to play a permanent role in strengthening community networks and peoples' collaboration.

### **Selecting and designing a pilot project**

Following the approval of an infrastructure subsidy fund, a community with highest potential was selected as a pilot project to step forward to design and construction stages. Samakee Ruamchai, a community of 112 households, located in Bangkhen District, was chosen not only because of its sufficient amount of saving but because of the reduced conflict inside community and their clear development direction. In terms of local authority, Bangkhen District was also a good choice, since the district office had very clear understanding of the "Baan Mankong" program and strongly supported the project.

In the design process, rather than playing a leading role as designers, architects cooperated and exchange idea with community in preparing development plans for the pilot community. All households in the community, with their free will, were divided into small groups according to their relations, such as neighbors, relatives and friends. Round table discussions and workshops with small groups were conducted until the details of housing design, such as area requirements, number of stories, space arrangement, appropriated materials, plot size, building set back and architectural characteristic have been drawn up. It is necessary that the limitations and solution on the housing design was explained to every group of community members, in order to prepare themselves for upcoming construction and to avoid future conflict with each other (figure 5).

Once people have agreed with the housing principal design, the master plan is further developed to configure the arrangement of public area, infrastructure, such as streets, electricity, water supply and other public services, as well as open space and landscape design (figure 6).

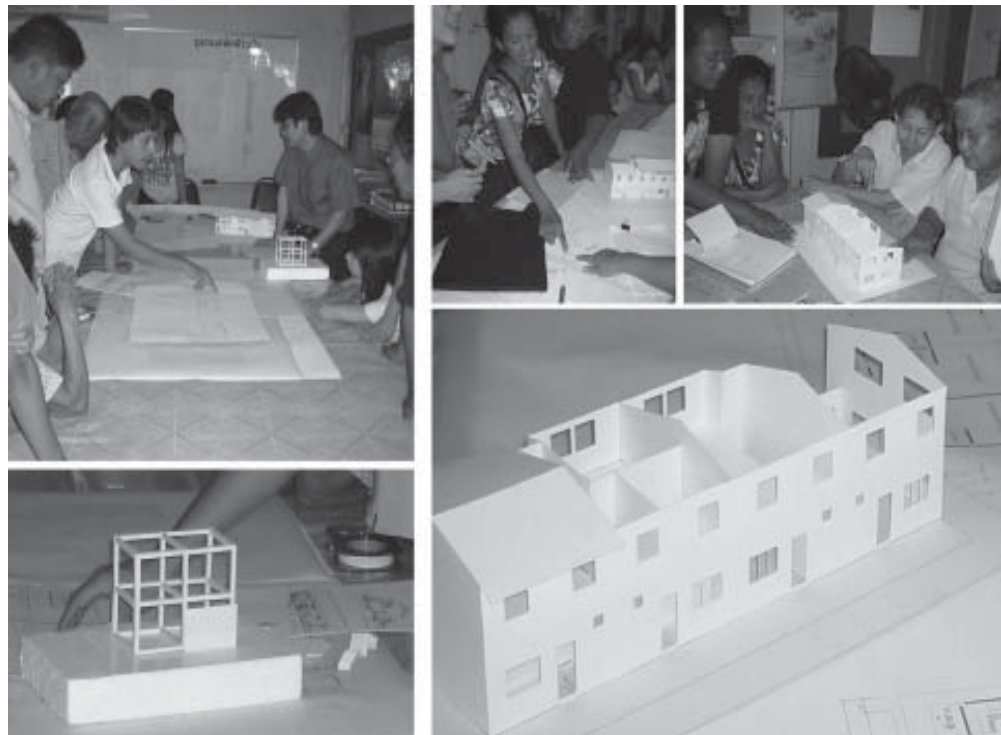


Figure 5 Design process with community participation

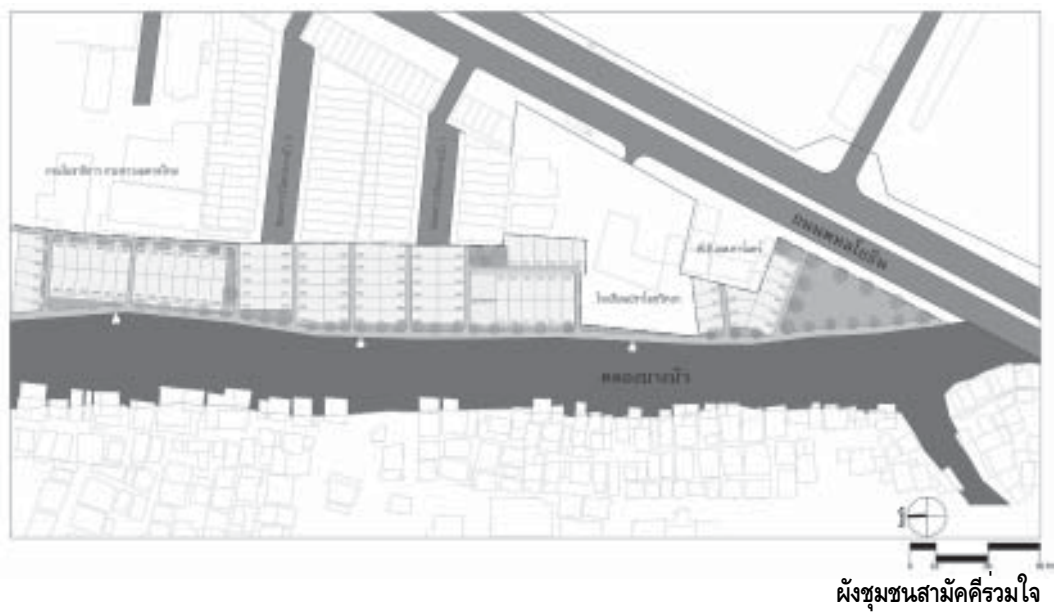


Figure 6 Initial housing development scheme after working with community

## Starting the construction

After the design process was carried out, the community was required to arrange a public meeting of all householders in order to officially clarify the right to be incorporated in the program. With authoritative assistance from the district office and CODI, each family was located into the proposed land plots based on previously set up groups. To assure the integrity and transparency of this process, the outcome of the meeting is required to be reported to both CODI and TRD for the approval of housing loans and land tenure. Like the approval of infrastructure subsidy, in order to get approval for a housing loan, the community is also required to present the information on construction drawing, construction cost estimation, amount of saving and other related data to both the peer groups from other community networks and to CODI's committee.

Before starting the construction, the first pillar-placing ceremony commenced not only to follow Thai construction tradition but also to celebrate the success of the long effort of the network. CODI took this opportunity to publicly promote the implementation of the program in Bangkok. Over 500 people including all agencies concerned were invited to the ceremony and a panel discussion on urban poor housing and environmental upgrading was arranged in the event.

To integrate Bang Boa community housing project into BMA's development agenda, the district office officially appointed a joint committee consisting of representative from all parties concerned. The committee meetings were arranged monthly to oversee the project implementation and solve any obstacles to the project. The issues brought into the discussion were listed as follows;

- the schedule of retaining walls construction along the canal by BMA's Department of sewerage and drainage in accordance with the project plan;
- cooperation with authorities responsible for public infrastructure, such as Metropolitan Electricity Authority (MEA), Metropolitan Waterworks Authority (MWA), Telecom Organization of Thailand (TOT), to support the community in construction and relocation of the systems;
- collaboration with other agencies such as adjacent military base for the site of temporary shelter during construction etc.

One obstacle faced during the construction stage, similar to many previous urban poor housing projects, was the violation of building codes and regulations, basically due to lack of space and minimal budget. This, in many respects, could not be solved by local authority. The construction, however, was unofficially allowed to continue, while CODI is responsible for cooperation with concerning authorities at the national level to find out a solution to legally get building permission.

## Building the first house

Since the Baan Mankong program allows communities to choose their own construction method and management, Samakee Ruamchai community decided to build their houses by community's construction team. With a little lower payment than outside the community, a group of dwellers with experience in construction jobs voluntarily worked to construct the first house.

The construction of the first house was strategically successful in many respects. With their experience in building the first house, the

construction team has greatly improved their skill and knowledge. With technical support from engineering students provided by a local university, WGHD could learn basic management of time, cost and labor in construction. This improvement of both construction and management teams could be distinctly observed in construction of the next phase.

As the site location is exposed to public roads, the construction drew attention to many people. The construction of the house, to the nearby community, was a solid confirmation of the progress of the project, and a means to build up confidence among communities to join the program. In addition, the construction could also provide lessons for all stakeholders and concerned authorities in cooperating with the community (figure 7).

### **Network building and lesson learning**

In order to achieve an overall sustainable development goal, network building is a very important factor. Through networking the nine targeted communities as well as the authorities could participate, observe and share experience in success and failure from each other. This development is an initial step for communities to represent their readiness and earnestness in the project, which will in turn make the concerned authorities understand, accept and be confident in their capability to efficiently manage community without environmental degradation, and contain the sense of community and sustainability [5].



Figure 7 First house construction in Samakee Ruamchai Community



Bang Boa Environment Improvement network, to a great extent, has developed the ability and confidence to collectively manage its own needs not limited only to housing problems, Various activities which the network has currently carried out include collecting garbage in community, improving canal water quality with self-produced organic substance, promoting the use of household grease-trap and recovering community's long abandoned ceremony related to canal. Ambitiously the network believes that in distant future they could clean the water and bring livelihood back to the canal waterfront (figure 8).

The network also involves the formation and strengthening of networks and linkages of poor communities to deal with housing problems at a larger scale. The leaders of Bang Boa community presently join CODI's nation-wide networks and BMA's working committees to support other communities to carry out housing development under the Baan Mankong program in Bangkok and other provinces.

### **Networks and collaboration**

As previously mentioned, the mechanism of Bang Boa community development project was running parallel in two interchanging and synchronized levels. On both institutional and community levels, the participation and practices of all parties concerned had clearly verified the advantages of community networks in development practice as follows;

#### *Institutional level;*

- With community network urban poor communities have more strength and bargaining power to deal with other institutions and authorities.
- Community network is an effective channel, through which concerned institutions could establish and control the direction of urban poor housing development strategies.



Figure 8 Perspective rendering of proposed waterfront development



- Collaboration and partnerships bring more comprehensive development solutions and generate alternatives for sustainable development.

*Community level;*

- Peoples' participation is an important key in development planning, which delicately requires understanding of each community structure.
- Network and participation could encourage dwellers to be involved in their community development not only leaders or institutions.
- Network helps individual community in sharing resources and manpower as well as knowledge and experience in human development.
- Community network is a successful mechanism for social learning and interaction among dwellers, which steers up people potential and ability.

The strengths of community network at both levels would obviously help to improve the acceptance of low-income communities in the urban development process as legitimate parts of the city and partners. It also works to develop urban poor communities as an integrated part of city, where people plan their upgrading within the bigger city development framework.

### **Management and conflicts**

Experience in urban poor development project does not have only success stories. Naturally, working with a large number of people, one can hardly avoid conflicts and problems. There were oppositions with different degree and number of people in every community. Even in a readiest community such as Samakee Ruamchai, there still are twelve households which do not

want to join the program. The main reasons for the conflicts were loss of occupied land due to plot readjustment, refusal to reconstruct the house and concern for the debt from housing loan or personal conflict with a community leader.

In many cases, however, the conflicts arise from misunderstanding and could simply reconcile by direct and responsive communication. Sometimes negative information about the project was widely spread without any concrete facts and had caused controversial reactions. Mostly people do not like to argue publicly in opened panel although they may disagree or have some doubts about the project and would be better off discussing the issues in smaller groups.

The opposition to the project, although could not cease the implementation of the project, has caused difficulties and delay. Instead of acting individually, the oppositions in various communities have formed an ally to protest the project. Strategies and tactic employed by this ally of opposition includes protesting in every occasion, complaining to every agencies concerned including NGOs, falsely accusing community leaders and spreading rumor negatively about the project.

Due to unequal readiness in each community, there were also problems on the development of people understanding on the project. It appears that the housing schemes chosen during the early stages had to be revised in some communities. For the reconstruction model, a certain degree of commitment among dwellers must be achieved, since it requires higher construction cost. Partly reconstruction model, on the other hand, needs to deal with people who occupy large houses for cooperation and devotion. Thus, the negotiation for least negative impact must be conducted to reach an appropriate and justifiable development solution.

To solve the development conflicts efficiently, WGHD may need to work deeply through the detail of each community's power structure. For example, there might be a situation in which one group can dominate others, which could make working process more complicated, thus demanding a longer schedule. In addition, some regulations for dwellers to join the program may need to be reconsidered. For instance, in some communities the conditions to participate in community saving group for housing are too rigid and could not be complied by some people.

### **Constraints and Shortcoming**

In the process of Bang Boa community development project, there have been some constraints and shortcoming that could be observed and further discussed. The limitations, experienced from practice, involve not only physical and management aspects but also social factors.

One major concern on the implementation of the project was the construction schedule. Physically the construction of the project is relatively difficult and requires long period of time. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the community is located along the canal with very little access from main roads creating difficulties in the transportation of construction materials through narrow walkways. Secondly, construction in the existing community, with crowded housing, crucially requires detail consideration on construction phasing, temporary shelter, transfer of people and possible uses of old material.

The opposition is partly a reason for the delay of construction. In reconstruction model, for instance, if one householder refused to pull down his or her house the construction of a whole block

could be halted. This eventually would require long negotiations and measures in order to resolve the problems. Although the project has successfully developed cooperation among government agencies, some problems with organization of development schedule still exist. There were budget constraints as well as organizational limitations in each institution, which eventually cause delay of the project schedule. For example, the construction of the proposed main streets along the canal was set back by the delayed schedule of retaining walls constructions created by BMA's budget constraints.

In terms of the development direction, the community may emphasizes much on physical and financial aspects and probably pays less attention on community's capacity building, which is CODI's very core concept of sustainable urban poor development. Consequently, there should be measures from agencies concerned to reinforce awareness on the essence of this software part of human development.

### **Conclusion**

The direction of urban poor housing development should be oriented on knowledge-based societal network. There are several differences in geographical and socio-economic conditions of low income communities, which cannot be adopted universally and effectively by one model. Living conditions, population densities, housing patterns, infrastructure arrangements, income levels, community organization structures and land ownership situations will vary widely from community to community, thus the way communities are improved and the way their tenure is secured will differ from place to place.

The case study on Bang Boa community development project could at least serve to clarify conceptual strategies for other waterfront cases on a network-based approach. Although presently the project is only in the early stage of construction, it has well achieved the primary goal in strengthening people organizations and networks to be the core actors in urban poor housing development process.

The main focus is surely the secure tenure and consequently the sustainable housing environment, which should not again become slums or squatters. In this regard, working on

urban poor community involves both upper structure and lower structure. By upper structure, the key strategy is to enhance collaboration with related institutes to formulate their discourse of power and human rights. While by lower level, planners require to effectively coordinate, communicate, and compromise among community dwellers and their role inevitably could not be outsiders, but as a part of community. Alternatives for social space must be addressed in order that every group of people is capable to participate in the process without others' domination and exclusion.

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