CITY-WIDE UPGRADING IN BANGKOK:

Both CODI and the myriad community networks which operate in Bangkok, Thailand's mega city of 11 million people, are having to adjust the Baan Mankong upgrading process for Bangkok, which is very, very big - and keeps growing! The city's 1,604 settlements, which are home to almost a third of Thailand's urban poor, are spread across 50 khets (districts). Many of these districts are like an entire city, with many communities within their boundaries. The first task was to figure out how to divide up this vast city into manageable parts.

Dividing one mega-city into 50 smaller parts:

For the Baan Mankong Program, it's been decided that each district will be regarded as a separate city. So each district is doing its own survey of poor settlements, forming its joint committee with all the key actors (community networks, BMA, universities, NGOs, land-owning agencies, District government agencies, etc.) and developing its 3-year upgrading plan, just like all the other cities. Each Bangkok district is also selecting two pilot projects within the its boundaries (total 100 for the whole city), and CODI has an MOU with the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA) to facilitate this. The next step will be to use the momentum of the upgrading process to "break the wall" of the savings groups now working in each district, which are still very limited and not touching many poor communities.

On April 3, 2004, a big seminar was organized to discuss the Bangkok Metropolitan area's plan for Baan Mankong. Around 1,500 people were invited to the meeting, to share their experiences, learn together, express their problems and plan together how to solve Bangkok's serious housing problems. During the seminar, a target of solving the housing problems in 67 communities was set for 2004, under Baan Mankong.

The busy tenure security market:

As part of this city-wide upgrading process, many communities in Bangkok under various land-owners are now in the process of negotiating long-term lease contracts or land purchases. Secure tenure is one of the most important parts of the new housing program, and communities have to work this out before they can access the housing loans and infrastructure subsidies under the program. All this bargaining for land is being done by people, by themselves, with only a little support from CODI, when necessary.

Bangkok city facts:
- Urban population: 11 million people (officially 6.5 million)
- Total number of poor and informal communities in the city: 1,604 settlements (283,566 households) (according to the 2001 CODI / NHA Survey)

Baan Mankong projects in Bangkok so far:
- 2003: 5 pilot upgrading projects (578 households)
- 2004 – 2005: TARGET: 100 pilot projects (2 projects per district)
  APPROVED: 61 projects in 71 communities (13,110 households)
Different ways of GROUPING, and different ways of HELPING . . .

Besides dividing this mega-metropolis according to its 50 administrative districts, the Baan Mankong process is also making room for other groupings of communities to work together and other ways for communities to support each other's upgrading plans:

1. CANAL NETWORKS: Bangkok is a city of canals ("klongs" in Thai), and many of them are lined with poor settlements. Many of these settlements are linked together into networks of communities along certain canals, or within certain districts. There are at least ten major canal community networks in Bangkok, and many of them have been busy for years doing canal cleaning, environmental improvements and savings and welfare activities. As part of the Baan Mankong program, many of the major canals (such as Klong Hualamphong, Klong Ong-An and Klong Bam Bua) will begin with their own pilot upgrading projects, in collaboration with NGOs, district officials, local universities. The next step will be to jointly develop plans to upgrade all the settlements along each canal.

2. HOUSING COOPERATIVE NETWORK: Years before the Baan Mankong program was launched, CODI was promoting the formation of housing cooperatives by evicted communities, to enable them to purchase alternative land and develop their own new housing projects. These communities are linked together into a growing network of housing cooperatives, which is busy with many of the after-housing activities like income generation, community welfare, environmental improvements, and daily savings and loan repayment. These are experienced people, and are already becoming an important resource for assisting communities in some stage of the upgrading process: forming cooperatives, starting savings groups, searching for land, negotiating land purchase or lease terms, designing layouts and housing, etc.

"Bangkok is going to be very difficult! If it wasn't so difficult, the NHA would have been able to solve the city's housing problems years ago! But we believe that the situation is ripe now, the other factors are favorable, so it's a good time to start upgrading in Bangkok."

Lek Sompop, a senior community organizer with CODI

Four of the Bangkok pilot upgrading projects:

1. Chalermchai Nimitmai: This 50-year-old community of land-renters negotiated to buy the privately-owned land they occupied in central Bangkok at far below the market rate, and redevelop their infrastructure and housing.

- Number of households: 89
- Tenure terms: Cooperative ownership
- Upgrading type: on-site reblocking
- Infrastructure costs: US$ 44,500
- Housing loans: US$ 100,250 (av. $1,250/unit)
- Land loan: US$ 450,000
- Land Area: 7,840sm (plot sizes vary)

2. **Bonkai**: This 566-house squatter community in central Bangkok is on Crown Property Bureau land. After a fire destroyed 200 houses in one area of the settlement in 2001, they used the crisis to negotiate a more secure future and started rebuilding.

- Number of households: 202
- Tenure terms: Collective lease (15 yr)
- Land rent: $4 / household / month
- Upgrading type: on-site reconstruction
- Infrastructure costs: (NHA provided)
- Housing loans: US$ 749,750 ($4,125/unit)

3. **Klong Toey Block 7-12**: This old community in Klong Toey, Bangkok's largest slum area, struggled against eviction by the Port Authority for decades, and finally negotiated to rent a piece of nearby land and rebuild there.

- Number of households: 115
- Tenure terms: Long-term (30yr) lease
- Land-owner: Port Authority of Thailand
- Upgrading type: Nearby relocation
- Infrastructure costs: US$ 287,500
- Housing loans: US$ 559,000 (av. $5,400/unit)
- Land rent: $1/ house/ month (average)

4. **Klong Lumnoon**: After a long, bitter eviction struggle, this 20-year old canal-side squatter community in suburban Bangkok negotiated to buy a portion of the land they used to occupy, and build a new community.

- Number of households: 49
- Tenure terms: Collective ownership
- Upgrading type: Land-sharing
- Infrastructure costs: US$ 12,500
- Housing loans: US$ 189,750 (av. $4,000/unit)
- Land loan: US$ 75,000
- Land Area: 4,000sm (56 sm per family)