

CITY-WIDE UPGRADING IN CHANTABURI :

Chantaburi is a bustling provincial capital of about 100,000 people, located in the eastern part of Thailand, 245 kms from Bangkok. Chantaburi is also the name of the province surrounding this town. There are 16 municipalities in Chantaburi province. So far, upgrading has begun only in Chantaburi town itself, but the other towns have started surveying.

In a food-loving country like Thailand, the town of Chantaburi (which means City of the Moon in Thai) is especially famous for its tropical fruits, which grow in orchards in the surrounding province and are exported all over Thailand: durian (the national fruit), mangosteens, langsat and rambutan. The city is also famous for its rice noodles, which are manufactured in hundreds of workshops around town and exported all over the world. Chantaburi is also an important gem trading center, particularly known for its sapphires and rubies from all over southeast Asia, which are bought and sold in shops along the city's Trok Kachang Road.

A big proportion of Chantaburi's population are Vietnamese Christians, who fled religious or political persecution in Vietnam in the 19th century and later in the 1920s and 40s. From 1893 to 190, while negotiating with the Siamese over where to draw the borders between Laos and Cambodia, the French occupied the town. The Vietnamese-French influence on the city persists, in some beautiful architecture - particularly the French cathedral, and some Vietnamese-style shop-house neighborhoods.

Chantaburi city facts :

- Urban population : 500,000 people
- Total number of poor and informal communities in the city : 16 settlements (1,223 households)
- What people do : Most are general laborers, food vendors and garbage collectors. Many also work as laborers in jewelry-making and gem-cutting businesses, or as seasonal workers in the fruit orchards.

Chantaburi's upgrading plan :

The first step was to survey all the settlements in the city and understand the problems together. To tackle the housing problems comprehensively, a committee was set up included the Municipality, the Provincial Administration, civil society groups (lawyers, professors, technical school people), the long-established Chantaburi community network, the provincial unit of the National Social Development Ministry and CODI.

The committee set a target of improving seven communities (493 households) in the first year, starting with the pilot project at Naa Technique. Some of these seven communities have gotten delayed, while they wait for their land (under Treasury Department ownership) to be officially leased to the Municipality. But four projects are now being implemented:

- **Naa Technique : (70 households)** This is the city's first finished pilot project, was inaugurated by the Prime Minister in August 2005.
- **Soi Amon : (300 households)** This community is relocating to nearby land, which the people are buying collectively.
- **Baan Lang : (122 households)** This is another relocation project to nearby land: a kind of land-sharing process, where lots of squatters in one are of the city are moving to one new community.
- **Soi 3-4 : (87 households)** This community is upgrading in the same place, with a little reblocking of the houses.

The moment when things start to CLICK . . .

A week before Thailand Prime Minister was to inaugurate the Naa Technique pilot project in Chantaburi, a lot of the landscaping and house painting still wasn't finished. Everybody was in a panic, so about 200 community people from other Chantaburi settlements, and from cities all over Thailand, came for a week to help. A Baan Mankong pilot like this is an important breakthrough for community people all over the country, and everyone ends up feeling it's "their baby" too!

The problem of land outside the city :

When people threatened with eviction have to find alternative land which they can afford, it often means looking at peripheral land outside the city. The new land which the people found in Naa Technique, for example, lies just outside the municipal boundaries. Developing housing in such places is not just a simple matter of building houses! The problem is that land like Naa Technique's is beyond the reach of municipal services and infrastructure (schools, water mains, roads, etc.) Many of the cities in the Baan Mankong process are exploring new and unconventional ways in which municipal authorities - and provincial authorities - can help facilitate the development of these newly-relocated communities with vital infrastructure facilities, even when they're "off the map."

We usually hear about municipal officials wanting to get poor settlements out of the city. But in the case of Chantaburi, the municipality was not at all happy when the Naa Technique community moved to land outside the city boundaries. Why? Because the city lost a considerable vote bank and source of government revenues (which are based on population)! The upshot of this is that now, the Municipality has become a key supporter of other communities planning to relocate, and their efforts to find land inside the city! And this turnaround, in which the city helps to find land for housing inside the city, has given a strategic hint to other cities.

Naa Technique Community : Chantaburi's first pilot upgrading project . . .

The first community in Chantaburi to be upgraded under the Baan Mankong program was inaugurated by the Prime Minister on 2 August, 2005. The Naa Technique community takes its name from the Chantaburi Technical College, which it

used to be near. The 42 households (about 200 people) in the community had been living for the past 30 years in houses they built themselves, on privately-owned land. Only 23 of these households had land rental contracts with the land owner. Most of the community people earn their living as construction laborers and vendors. In June 2004, the land owner decided to sell the land to a business and tried to evict the people.

Two of the young architects from Bangkok, Tuh and Baan, went down to Chantaburi to help organize the community to set up a housing saving group and search for alternative land nearby. They found a piece of good, empty private land 2.5 kms away. The people began negotiating with the owner of this new land, who finally agreed to sell the people 2 adjacent pieces of land (total 8,240 sq. meters) for US\$ 29,500 (which works out to a very low price of US\$ 3.60 per square meter). The people formed a cooperative and took a loan from CODI to buy the land, which will be owned collectively.

Once the people had the land, they began working with the architects to plan their new layout, infrastructure and houses. They decided to put 28 units on one of the plots, and 42 units on the other - total 70 units (which included houses for extended families and renters from that old community). The new layout includes different plot sizes, according to people's affordability, and they designed 6 different house types (4 types of single, detached houses, and 2 types of cheaper "twin" attached duplex houses). The layout plan includes some lovely, innovative "cluster planning" in which the houses are organized around shared green spaces, rather than along long, straight streets.

NAA TECHNIQUE UPGRADING FINANCES :

- Number of households : 70 units
- CODI land loan : US\$ 21,250 (the rest comes from people's savings)
- CODI housing loans : \$ 245,000
- Infrastructure subsidy : \$ 97,500