CITY-WIDE UPGRAADING IN RANGSIT:

Rangsit is a municipality in the 300-year-old province of Pathum Thani, which together with Bangkok, Samut Prakan, Samut Sakhorn and Nonthaburi make up the greater Bangkok Metropolitan Region. Rangsit is a busy Bangkok suburb on the Bangkok-Ayutthaya transport artery, crowded with shopping malls, universities, posh housing enclaves and the city's airport. If you look at the aerial photos of Rangsit, you see an astonishing amount of empty land for an area so close to Bangkok, but most of it is being kept idle by speculators for future real estate deals and is way too expensive for the city's poor to access. The 2002 survey by CODI and NHA found 27,175 households living in 77 poor communities in the seven districts of Pathum Thani Province, many of them along canals.

Getting started in Pathum Thani Province:

The community upgrading process in Pathum Thani Province began in 2003 with a big forum (involving the Municipality, the enthusiastic mayor, representatives from all the communities and CODI), the launching of community savings groups (which practice both daily and monthly saving) and the setting up of a joint committee (municipality, community leaders, CODI and other local actors) to develop plans for resolving the problems of housing in Rangsit and Pathum Thani Province.

First "learning by doing" in Rangsit:

Rangsit's first pilot improvement project was at the canal-side settlement of Klong Sawaan, where many informal waste-collectors live. Besides rebuilding most of the houses, the project included reconstruction of the houses, environmental improvements, the installation of a "green" water-treatment system and the setting up of a garbage bank (with housing loans from CODI and an infrastructure subsidy of US$ 34,500).

Rangsit city facts:

- Urban population: 72,000 people
- Total number of poor and informal communities in the city: 17 settlements (2,746 households) (according to the 2001 CODI / NHA Survey)

Baan Mankong upgrading process:

2004 Pilot upgrading at Mit Sampan (138 households)

2005 Upgrade 7 communities (Total 485 households)
- Klong Sawaan (on-site upgrading) (55 households)
- Sapan Gaew (relocation) (90 households)
- Baan Chai
  - + Sapan Koo
  - + Jalern Pattana (relocation) (224 households)
- Yoo Lao Rooay
  - + Samaki Ruam Jai (relocation) (116 households)
Canal settlements in Rangsit:

*How the city's canal-side communities are showing the city they're an asset and not a problem...*

Thailand is a wet part of Asia, and many cities like Rangsit are built on low-lying swampland and are criss-crossed with klongs (canals). These canals not only help control all that water, but have traditionally provided vital conduits of commerce, transport and development. But since the car replaced the boat, roads and expressways have overlaid these older, wetter structures. The klongs, relegated to the status of open drains, have fallen into disrepair and are used for dumping sewage and garbage, or concreted over to make way for buildings.

But as the cities keep growing, and the klongs keep deteriorating, worsening problems of flooding and pollution are putting municipal officials in the hot seat. Too often, the finger is pointed at the poor communities which line many of Thailand's klongs, to mask much deeper problems of urbanization and bad planning. Canal-side communities find themselves accused of spoiling the klongs and threatened with eviction.

In most Thai cities now, beleaguered klong-side communities have used the problems they have in common to form networks, to work together to improve their klongs - and the environment around them. And in the process, they are consolidating their right to stay by demonstrating that they are the best keepers of these much-needed water management systems.

Rangsit: Thailand's first planned agricultural development...

In the nineteenth century, the extremely fertile land in Rangsit inspired His Majesty the King to develop Thailand's first planned agricultural development. An extensive network of canals were planned and dug, the land was surveyed and divided up into long fields of uniform length and width, which farmers could cultivate, for a fee. Lively settlements, floating houses and markets, and a whole culture grew up around these canals. But as Bangkok expanded towards Rangsit in the 60s and 70s, the economic pressure to stop farming and start developing real-estate meant Rangsit's canal-side communities started being evicted.

Mit Sampan Community: Rangsit's first pilot upgrading project...

Mit Sampan is a community of 250 households of private land-renters. In 2004, a devastating fire completely destroyed 84 houses. The land-owner decided to develop the land commercially, and after the fire refused to allow these people to rebuild. The crisis gave people the push they needed to start taking steps to make their lives and settlement more secure. The burned-out families people formed a working team, set up a savings group and started searching for alternative land. Just...
800 meters inside the same lane, they found 1.4 hectares of open land owned by the same land-owner. Rangsit's supportive mayor helped the people to persuade the land-owner to knock down the selling price for the land, which the people eventually bought collectively with a CODI loan.

Once they had the land, the people developed a community layout of 138 house plots and common amenities, which includes 84 units for the original Mit Sampan households, and 54 units for poor households from five other squatter areas of Rangsit (Sapan Kaeo, Wat Sang, You Lao Roay, Krong Nung Pattana, Sapan Koo). They are now developing infrastructure on the new land and planning affordable house designs with young architects. The municipality has contributed to the development of the project's infrastructure, both internal and external.

The pilot upgrading project at Mit Sampan (nearby relocation) was the "breakthrough" in Rangsit - for both the city's active new community network and for its progressive municipal government. Once people have the power of the financial tools Baan Mankong offers in their hands, and once they see it's really possible, things take off. The next batch of upgrading projects are now underway in 8 communities in Rangsit, many of them canal-side squatter settlements.

### Mit Sampan Upgrading Finances:
- Number of households: 138 units
- CODI land loan: US$ 680,000
- Infrastructure subsidy: US$ 165,000
- CODI housing loans: US$ 227,500

- **House Model 1**: 2-story house with floor area of 43.8 square meters, on a 70 s.m. plot. Price US$ 3,750

- **House model 2**: 2-story "Twin" house (semi detached) with 2nd story loft on 70 s.m. plot. Price US$ 5,500