



Sangsan Pattana 7-12

CASE STUDIES OF COLLECTIVE HOUSING IN ASIAN CITIES SERIES • MARCH 2021

This project is one of the ten pilot projects which launched the Baan Mankong Program in Thailand. The Block 7-12 community was a sprawling squatter settlement of port-workers, laborers and street vendors who built their houses from scratch on the swampy land that had been expropriated for the new Bangkok Port in 1935. When the Port Authority wanted the land to expand port facilities, the people resisted, and a 25-year long eviction struggle ensued. Finally, a group of the toughest fighters remained and were able to negotiate a historic agreement to relocate to Port Authority land nearby.

- Project Sangsan Pattana 7-12 Housing Cooperative
- Location Klong Toey District, Bangkok, Thailand
- Size 114 households
- Finished 2005
- Type Nearby relocation of an old squatter settlement to public land leased from the Port Authority of Thailand, where they built a new community

CONTEXT, PROCESS AND PARTNERS

Baan Mankong Housing Program

In January 2003, the Thai government announced an important policy to address the housing problems of the country's urban poor citizens, with the aim of providing secure housing to one million poor households within five years. That ambitious target was to be met through two distinct programs. In the first, the *Baan Ua Arthorn Program* ("We care" in Thai), the National Housing Authority designs, constructs and sells ready-to-occupy flats and houses, at subsidized rates, to lower-income applicants who can afford the monthly "rent-to-own" payments of 1,000 - 1,500 baht (US\$ 25 - 37).

The other program - the *Baan Mankong Program* - channels government funds, in the form of infrastructure and housing subsidies and soft housing loans, directly to the housing cooperatives poor communities set up, which then plan and carry out improvements to their housing, environment and basic services and manage the budget themselves. Instead of delivering housing units to individual poor families, the Baan Mankong Program ("*Secure housing*" in Thai) put Thailand's existing slum communities - and their networks - at the center of a process of developing long-term, comprehensive solutions to problems of land and housing in cities across Thailand. As part of this unconventional program, which continues to be implemented by the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI), poor communities work in close collaboration with their local governments, community networks, professionals, universities and NGOs to survey all the communities in their cities and then plan an upgrading process which attempts to improve all the communities in that city eventually.

By January 2021, the Baan Mankong Program had supported the development of 1,087 collective housing projects, in 243 Thai cities, which provide secure, permanent, decent housing to 105,364 low-income families. But when the program was launched in 2003, the country was still in great need of examples of what kinds of community-driven, collective housing are possible. So during the program's first year, a group of ten urban poor communities were carefully chosen to be upgraded as pilot housing projects - six of them in Bangkok and four in other cities. The implementation of those first ten pilots was intended to create a set of tangible models which showcase a variety of strategies for introducing housing security and community improvements in poor communities - through practice. They were like a laboratory, or a university, and those ten pilot project offered an abundance of learning for the whole country. One of the important ideas of the pilots was to show that collective community housing doesn't mean any one particular thing, and can take many different forms - some of which haven't even been invented yet.

The housing project at Sangsan Pattana 7-12 was one of those historic first ten Baan Mankong pilots.

Klong Toey: Bangkok's largest slum:

With a land area of 3.52 hectares, a population of over 20,000 households and some of the most miserable living conditions in the city, Klong Toey is Bangkok's largest slum and its most notorious symbol of urban poverty and squalor. The riverside land it occupies was used for centuries by farmers for growing rice and raising cattle. But after it was expropriated by the government in 1935 to build Bangkok's new port, the area quickly became a magnet: the port needed lots of dock-workers, stevedores and laborers, so people came here from all directions, and built make-shift houses wherever they could find a little piece of land.

The relationship between the Port Authority of Thailand and the thousands of working people who squat on the land in Klong Toey has always been contentious. The Port Authority has the reputation for being one of the most nasty and heavy-handed of all of Thailand's public land-owning agencies, resorting to arson, chemical fires and violence to evict people when it wants land to expand port operations. The people have always fought very hard to stay, because the job opportunities in Klong Toey's inner-city location are just too good - close to the port, markets, offices, factories, construction sites and the river. The eviction struggles with port officials have often divided the community and turned one set of residents against another. But over the years, Klong Toey has also bred and trained some of the toughest and most skillful community leaders in the city.

Klong Toey is also the source of some of the most innovative and pragmatic answers to how the "illegal" poor and the "official" city can find terms which allow both to benefit. After years of eviction, arson and violence, the Klong Toey community (which is actually a conglomeration of 22 distinct communities) began organizing itself in the 1970s. With help from several voluntary agencies, the people learned to counter eviction threats made by the Port Authority. Once they had mastered the tricks of eviction resistance, the Klong Toey communities began negotiations with the Port which led over the years to a variety of pragmatic options for their own rehabilitation in several on-site upgrading and resettlement schemes:

- NHA-built rental flats on one edge of Klong Toey for resettling 1,440 families (1981).
- Serviced plots on long-term lease for 1,300 families in a "land-sharing" agreement in the "70 Rai" area at the center of Klong Toey (1983).
- In-situ reblocking projects for 950 families who adjusted their houses a little to make way for drains, sewers, water supply and footpaths in the same place (1986-2003).
- Free serviced plots with land title for 400 families in resettlement sites 20-30 kms away.

The Block 7-12 community:

One of the many distinct communities within the sprawling Klong Toey slum was Block 7-12 - an informal community of poor families who had begun squatting on a 0.72 hectare piece of land (marked in the survey map as "Block 7-12") since the 1940s. The people were mostly port workers, daily laborers and small traders who sold things in the nearby markets. Housing conditions in the community were extremely crowded and dilapidated. One family that played a prominent role in the story of Block 7-12 is the family of Nitiya and Gaew Prompochenboon, who moved to the area in 1966, raised two sons there and became important leaders in the community. On a visit to the community in 2003, Nitiya, who is a skilled organizer and a great story-teller, told the story like this:

"The first occupants of the Block 7-12 community were laborers who worked for the port. They built their houses up on stilts, using cardboard and wood planks from the shipping pallets the port threw away. The land was flooded for most of the year. When I moved here with my husband in 1966, there were already a lot of people living here. We all had to share only one water tap, and I had to carry water home in buckets hung from a shoulder yoke. By the 1970s, we had three taps. That was when the development in the area really started. Prateep Ungsogtham started her "one baht" school for kids in the shack where she lived, not far from here. Thammasat University's Social Development Faculty began using Klong Toey as the site for workshops and study. They wrote lots of papers about us. At that time, we also got temporary house numbers, painted in green paint."

"I like the word slum! It means freedom, it means community, it means you can build according to your needs, not according to any official rules. Whatever suits you! Your house becomes organic, it grows with your family, it is lively. Our houses here in Klong Toey may look bad from the outside, but inside they are filled with life!" (Nitiya Prompochenboon, Block 7-12 community leader)

Eviction struggle began in the 1970s

By the 1970s, the Port Authority was determined to take possession of the land occupied by the Block 7-12 community, where they planned to build a warehouse and shipping container storage facility. They began trying to evict the people, using a variety of means - some more dirty than others. A long, bitter eviction struggle ensued, which was to continue for the next twenty-five years. During that time, the community experienced fires caused by arsonists, chemical explosions, legal notices, threats and actual violence by thugs hired by the port or by its subcontractors. Some families took the cash compensation offered by the Port Authority and moved away, some just disappeared, but most held on.

In the early 1980s, the National Housing Authority (NHA) hatched a wild scheme to make a relocation scheme for Klong Toey people at Prachinburi, on the Cambodia border, some 200 kms away. That scheme was a flop, but the eviction efforts continued. In 1983, a land sharing agreement was negotiated, in which Block 7-12 was supposed to join others in relocating to the "70 Rai" area in another part of Klong Toey. But when the people learned that the house plots there would be smaller than in earlier batches of 70 rai relocatees, many refused to move.

In the 1990s, some families agreed to move into the rental flats built by the NHA nearby, and some agreed to move to resettlement colonies 20 or 30 kms away, on the Eastern edge of Bangkok, where the trade-off of going so far away was getting a 64 square meter serviced plot with land title. But hundreds of families who opted for those relocation sites found they couldn't survive out there, sold off their rights and moved right back to Klong Toey. As a key community leader at the center of the movement to resist eviction, Nitiya was offered cash and extra plots to persuade her fellow Block 7-12 residents to move, and when she refused, she was branded as a rebel and boycotted by both the Port Authority and the NHA.

The relocation housing project:

All these removals and evictions gradually broke up and diminished the community, despite the heroic efforts of the community leaders and their allies. By 2003, only 49 of the original 500+ families were still staying in Block 7-12. These were the real fighters - the ones who refused to budge, the ones who didn't want to move into any government project, but wanted to make their own housing project. These 49 fighters finally succeeded in negotiating an agreement with the Port Authority which allowed them to redevelop their

community on port-owned land in the same area, which they would collectively rent on a long-term lease contract. CODI would support the project with housing loans and infrastructure subsidies, as one of the ten pilot projects under its new Baan Mankong housing program.

The residents combed the area and identified seven possible sites for their new housing project - all on Port Authority land within Klong Toey. The Port finally agreed to the least valuable of the sites, in the Rong Moo area, which was being used then as storage space for shipping containers, just one kilometer away from Block 7-12. When news spread that the remaining Block 7-12 residents were going to build a new housing project nearby, former community members began appearing by the hundreds, to claim rights in a project they had abandoned earlier. The new site was only 8,700 square meters, and after making some quick schematic layout plans with the architects at CODI, they found that the site could accommodate an additional 65 of the old Block 7-12 households. So they decided to invite those who had been renters or evictees in the old community to join the project, bringing the total to 114 households in the new site. They decided to name the housing cooperative they then formed the Sangsan Pattana 7-12 Housing Cooperative (which means "*Creative redevelopment of 7-12*" in Thai).

Layout planning, houses and construction:

After the relocation project was agreed upon, the Port Authority built high walls around the old Block 7-12 community and started aggressively to construct the new project. The people forced them to stop, though, and refused to sign the relocation agreement until they had actually moved to the new site.

The resettlement site was rectangular, measuring 150 x 58 meters (8,700 m²). Two energetic young CODI community architects named Nantapong Yindeekhun ("Ter") and Chawanad Luansang ("Nad") worked with the community members in Block 7-12 to help them develop a layout plan and house designs for the new site. The plan they finally settled on is laid out in a simple grid of small lanes, with 114 house plots (of two sizes: 30 and 60 square meters, depending on family size and history), a community center, a playground and a wider central road which doubles as public open space for meetings and markets. As Nitiya proudly boasted during one of the many design workshops, "*Everybody has a xerox copy of this plan!*"

They developed four different house models for people to choose from, according to their family size and budget, and the size of their plot:

- **Large detached house** (fits on the 60m² plot), with 91 square meters of living space. Loan repayment was 1,600 baht (US\$ 53) per month. (*total 46 units*)
- **Small detached house** (fits on the 30 m² plot), with 45.5 square meters of living space. Loan repayment was 1,455 baht (US\$ 49) per month. (*total 32 units*)
- **Larger semi-detached house** (fits on the 30m² plot), with 52 square meters of living space. Loan repayment was 1,414 baht (US\$ 47) per month. (*total 24 units*)
- **Smaller semi-detached house** (fits on the 30m² plot), with 47.25 square meters of living space. Loan repayment was 1,375 baht (US\$ 45) per month. (*total 12 units*)

All of the houses are two stories (some three), and most of them fill the small plots, with half-meter margins around edges. The houses are grouped by house-type in the layout. The people built the houses themselves, in small groups of 4 - 6 houses. The work took just about a year.

The new land used to be a container storage area, and every bit of it was paved over with a thick layer of reinforced concrete. Normally, communities have to face the trouble and expense of filling low-lying land to avoid future flooding problems, but here the problem was quite different. First the concrete had to be covered over with 80cm of soil, to raise the ground level to above flooding levels, since the whole area experiences frequent flooding by highly polluted water. Then that thick concrete had to be pierced with jackhammers, in 800 places, to sink deep concrete piles for the houses. This heavy and expensive infrastructure work, which the community people could not handle themselves, was carried out by two local contractors the community cooperative chose themselves (one to fill the land and another to dig the piles and lay the drains and roads), and paid for by the Baan Mankong infrastructure subsidy, which was a bit higher for this special pilot project.

On May 24, 2005, the new housing project was inaugurated in a big celebration, by the Minister for Social Development and Human Security, Mr. Pracha Maleenont. He was a media tycoon and new to the position at that time. After being led on a tour around the project, he confessed that he expected a housing project built by poor community people would be more shabby. He was impressed by the project and surprised to see how big, how well-constructed and how inexpensive these houses were, compared to the houses being built by the National Housing Authority under its Baan Eua Arthorn scheme.

Impacts of the project:

The Block 7-12 relocation project has been a big inspiration for other informal communities in the Klong Toey area, where problems of housing conflicts and tenure insecurity continue. After the success of this project, many neighboring communities on Port Authority land began applying for similar long-term lease contracts to develop their housing in the same place, with support from CODI's Baan Mankong program. But the Port Authority has been very reluctant to agree to tenure terms, so many of those communities have been unable to redevelop their housing. But for communities on public land under more reasonable land-owning agencies, the story has been quite different. Nitiya and her husband Gaew helped many other communities around Bangkok - and around the country - to organize their own Baan Mankong project. Nitiya continues to be an active leader in her own community and in the Klong Toey District community network. Sadly, her husband and partner in battle, Gaew, died of cancer in May 2006, after being able to enjoy a full year of living in the beautiful new community he struggled so long for.

Support groups and partners in the project:

- **CODI (Community Organizations Development Institute)** is an independent public organization under the Thai Government's Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. CODI's mission is to support the strengthening of communities and their organizations - in both urban and rural areas - as key agents of change and as central actors in development which affects their lives and communities. Besides budget from the government which supports many of its ongoing programs, CODI's chief financial tool is the CODI revolving fund, which provides soft loans to community cooperatives and community networks to undertake a variety of development initiatives they plan and implement themselves.
- **Baan Mankong Program** is one of CODI's main development programs, and was launched in 2003 to address the housing problems of the country's poorest citizens. The program channels government funds, in the form of infrastructure subsidies and soft housing loans, directly to poor communities, which plan and carry out improvements to their housing, environment, basic services and tenure security and manage the budget themselves. Instead of delivering housing units to individual poor families, the Baan Mankong Program (which means "*Secure housing*" in Thai) puts Thailand's informal communities (and their networks) at the center of a people-driven and citywide process of developing long-term, comprehensive solutions to problems of land and housing in Thai cities. By January 2021, the Baan Mankong program had spread to 405 cities, in 76 out of the country's 77 provinces, where community housing cooperatives had designed and built 1,087 housing projects which provide decent, secure, permanent housing to 105,739 urban poor families.
- **The Duang Prateep Foundation** is a local NGO (run by a woman who grew up in poverty in Klong Toey), that runs schools, childhood development and other programs in the Klong Toey area. Ms. Prateep supported the construction of the playground at the center of the new community, as well as the community center. Ms. Prateep was one of the dignitaries who assisted at the inauguration event.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT

Land tenure:

The 8,700 m² land is owned by the Port Authority of Thailand. The Port Authority of Thailand has leased the land to the Sangsan Pattana 7-12 Housing Cooperative on a 15-year lease, with a nominal rent. That lease contract expired in 2020, and the community is now embroiled in negotiations to extend it. As usual, the Port Authority is playing hardball, but this very strong community - full of experienced fighters - is not going anywhere. Everyone expects that the lease will be renewed.

PROJECT FINANCING

Project costs and who paid for what?

Land costs: The Sangsan Pattana 7-12 Housing Cooperative rents the 8,700 m² of public land from the Port Authority of Thailand, on a collective 15-year lease contract, which was set in 2005 at a nominal rate of about 3 baht per square meter per year, which works out to about 26,100 baht (US\$ 870) per year, for the whole land, including house plots, roads and shared open spaces. The 114 cooperative members divide the land rent equally, which means each cooperative member has to pay just 230 baht (US\$ 8) per year. The land lease contract expired in 2020 and the community is still negotiating to extend it.

Housing costs: The two-story houses range in cost from 106,000 baht (US\$ 3,500) to 300,000 baht (US\$ 10,000). The houses were financed partly by people's own savings and partly by a collective loan of 22.36 million Baht (US\$ 745,350), which worked out to an average loan size of 216,000 Baht (US\$ 7,200) per unit. The loan was given to the cooperative, at 4% annual interest, on a 15-year repayment term. The community was careful to make sure the housing loan repayment burden was not more than 1,600 baht (US\$ 53) per family per month, which was considered to be the upper limit of most residents' affordability. The cooperative on-lent to the members at 6%, with the margin being used to cover late payments and finance cooperative activities. By 2017, the cooperative had repaid the housing loan in full.

Infrastructure costs: The cost of filling the land to above-flood levels, laying paved roads and storm drains, drilling for the piles, installing electricity, street lighting and water supply came to 11.5 million Baht (US\$ 383,400). This was financed entirely by the infrastructure subsidy from CODI's Baan Mankong program, which was given to cooperatives in a lump sum, but was calculated at the rate of 100,000 baht (US\$ 3,360) per household x 1149 = total 11.5 million baht (US\$ 287,500).

- **Community center and playground:** These amenities were financed and built by the Duang Prateep Foundation (no cost figures available).

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

This case study was written by Thomas Kerr at ACHR, in March 2021, drawing on materials from historic CODI and Baan Mankong reports.

For more about housing projects supported by CODI's Baan Mankong Program, visit the CODI website:
<https://en.codi.or.th/baan-mankong-housing/baan-mankong-rural/>

For more information about the Sangsan Pattana 7-12 project, please contact:

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PHOTOS



After the area was expropriated for the new port in 1935, the swampy land quickly grew into Bangkok's largest and most notorious slum.



A historic photo of what conditions were like in Klong Toey in the 1950s, when palm thatch, bamboo and bits of packing crate were the most readily available house building materials.



There is a thriving market for the 1.2 meter wooden planks that come from the shipping pallets that are everywhere in Klong Toey.



There are many houses in Klong Toey built with thrift and resourcefulness using the 1.2 meter boards recycled from shipping pallets, like this house in the old Block 7-12 community.



These photos give you an idea what conditions were like in the old Block 7-12 settlement, before the resettlement project began. The swampy land used to be rice paddy, and so houses and walkways had to be built up on stilts - using more of those handy 1.2 meter boards from the shipping pallets.





A family in the old Block 7-12 community sharing a meal in the Thai style, with everyone on the floor and all the dishes shared by all.



Everyone works in the community, including these girls, who are stringing jasmine garlands for their mother to sell at traffic intersections.



Prateep Ungsogtham grew up in Klong Toey and started her "one baht" school for slum kids in the 1970s, near the Block 7-12 community.



In the 1970s, 500 families in Block 7-12 had to share just three taps. By the 1990s, more families had negotiated to get their own piped water.



It's no surprise that in a community made of flammable materials like bamboo and packing crates, fire is the greatest fear. And arson is one of the most common ways of evicting people.



In the 1990s, some families in Block 7-12 agreed to move into the NHA rental flats nearby, but most didn't like the idea of squeezing their lives and families into two small rooms.



▲ When the time came to negotiate the resettlement process in Block 7-12, most of the community members were gone, and only 49 of the toughest and most determined families were still there.



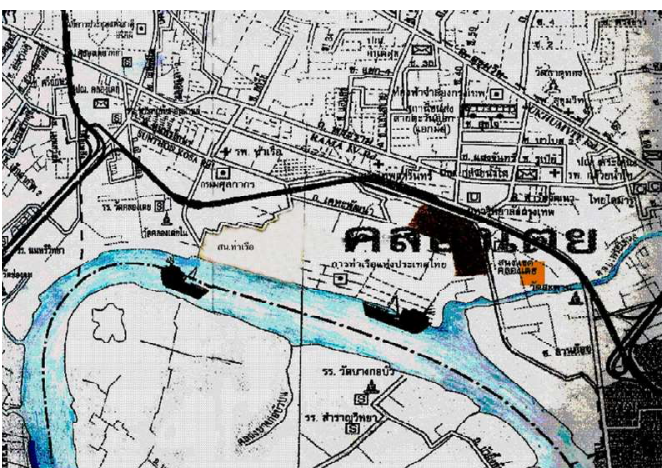
▲ In this community meeting in the old community center, you can see fire-fighting gear hung on the wall, ready for arson attempts at any time.



▲ Despite the years of upheaval, the Block 7-12 community used community savings and credit as a vital means of organizing themselves, building their own financial resource and developing the collective management skills they would later need in their housing project.



▲ That's Nitiya, who was one of the key leaders in the struggle to negotiate the resettlement project, along with her husband Gaew.



▲ This map of the Klong Toey area shows the location of the resettlement site for Block 7-12 (in orange), within the Port Authority complex.



▲ That's what the 8,700 square meter resettlement site looked like before the project started. It was a parking and container storage lot.



Community members, Klong Toey leaders and staff from CODI and ACHR make a visit to the Block 7-12 resettlement site in October 2003.



That's Nitiya (in the dark blue shirt) and Gaew (with white hair) during the visit to the new site in October 2003, before the project began.



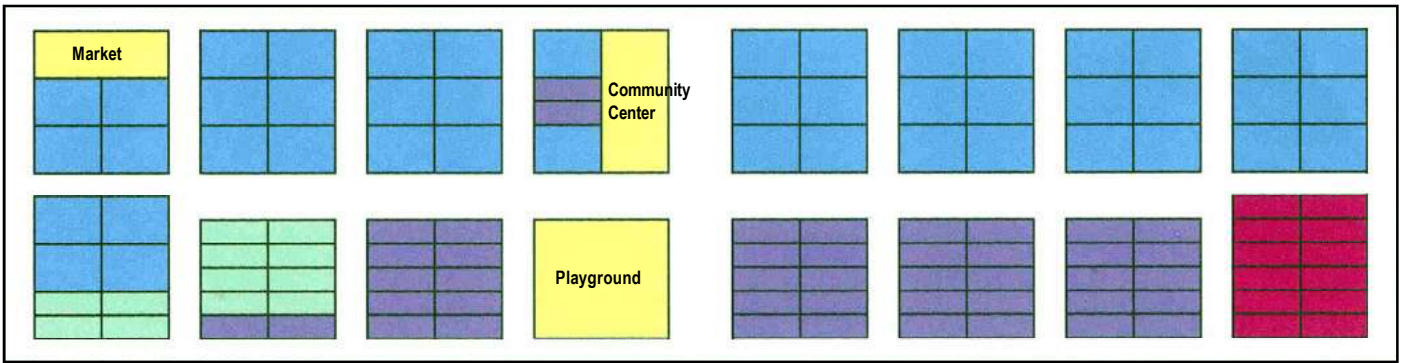
That's Nitiya (left) and Somsook (right) talking about how the new plan will fit on the site with one of the senior Klong Toey community leaders (center). This October 2003 visit was made after the community people had developed their preliminary housing layout plan.



The resettlement site was covered with a thick layer of reinforced concrete, but still needed 80 cm of soil on top to bring it above flood level.



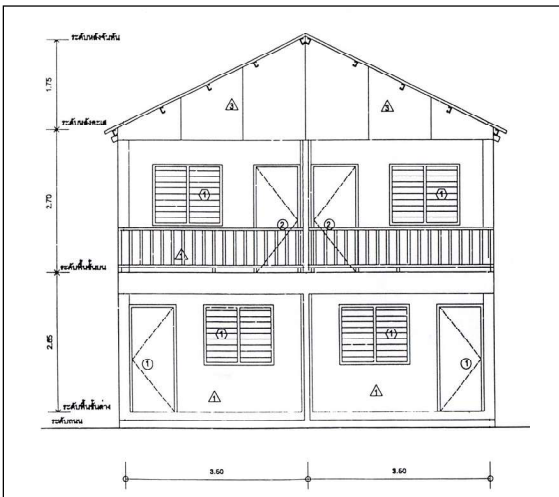
Making the storm drains and pile foundations was very difficult and expensive, because of the thick concrete that had to be drilled through.



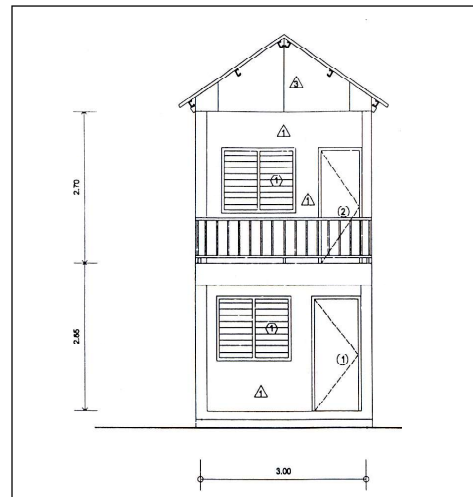
After lots of community meetings and design workshops, the Block 7-12 community people agreed on this final layout plan, with 114 house plots (in two sizes), a playground, a community center and a market - with a wide central lane that can be used for celebrations and community events.



Two young community architects working with CODI - Nad and Ter - conducted a series of community design workshops to help members of the new community to dream about what kind of houses they'd like to live in, and then to translate those dreams into actual house plans with realistic budgets.



This is the architect's drawing of one of the semi-detached "Twin" houses that were built on the smaller plots.

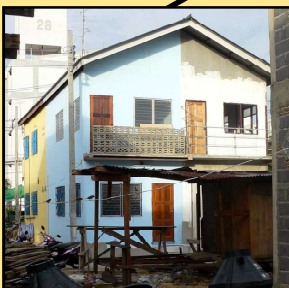
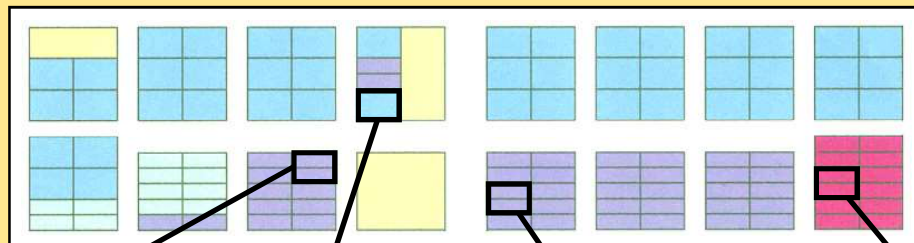


And this is a working drawing of the detached two-story house, which could also be built on the smaller plots.



▲ The architects and community members both made lots of cardboard models and used those models to help visualize the kind of proper, decent houses that all of the Block 7-12 residents had only dreamed of - but never lived in.

▼ Finally, after many workshops and a lot of dreaming, the community settled on this set of four house models, for different needs and budgets.



MODEL 1:
Larger semi-detached house (fits on the 30m² plot), with 52 square meters of living space. Loan repayment was 1,414 baht (US\$ 47) per month. (total 24 units)



MODEL 2:
Large detached house (fits on the 60m² plot), with 91 square meters of living space. Loan repayment was 1,600 baht (US\$ 53) per month. (total 46 units)



MODEL 3:
Small detached house (fits on the 30 m² plot), with 45.5 square meters of living space. Loan repayment was 1,455 baht (US\$ 49) per month. (total 32 units)



MODEL 4:
Smaller semi-detached house (fits on the 30m² plot), with 47.25 square meters of living space. Loan repayment was 1,375 baht (US\$ 45) per month. (total 12 units)



▲ As soon as the relocation deal was struck, the Port put up this sign announcing the construction of a container storage facility on the Block 7-12 site.



▲ The Port Authority commandeered the Royal Thai Army to build the 3-meter high wall around the community, topped with barbed wire.



▲ But the Port's intimidating wall around the old community didn't stop the people from halting any work until they had moved to the new site.



▲ The community members did all the construction themselves, working in teams to construct the houses together, in batches.



▲ The construction process was tightly organized, with committees in charge of various aspects of the project, and the building work went quickly.



▲ The children of Block 7-12 were frequently called upon to help maintain discipline among the adult community builders.



Everyone who visits the new community passes under this proud signboard for the "Sangsan Pattana 7-12 Housing Cooperative."



That's what the neatly laid-out new community looks like from the main road, where many families have opened up ground floor shops.



These photos are from the big inauguration celebration in May 2005, with hundreds of visitors, speeches by dignitaries, entertainment programs, community tours, kids galore - and of course lots of delicious things to eat.



The minister at that time was a media tycoon, and he was shocked and delighted to see that housing built by the poor could be so nice.



▲ *The much-used playground equipment in the middle of the community was a gift from the Duang Prateep Foundation.*



▲ *Inside one of the semi-detached houses. In Thai houses, a lot of the life of the family - eating, socializing, sleeping - happens on the floor, so no need for a lot of furniture.*



▲ *In their new community layout plan, the residents made room for this spirit house and shrine to the Hindu god Brahma.*

▶ *Those 1.2 meter boards from shipping pallets have not completely disappeared. Here they are used to make a cheerful picket fence in front of one of the houses in the new community.*



▲ *This is the community's own market, just after the construction was wrapping up in 2005.*