

Community upgrading one year later...

A report from the Urban Poor Development Fund (UPDF) about the community driven upgrading projects being undertaken as part of the first year of the government's 100 Communities Upgrading Policy in Phnom Penh, Cambodia May 2004



BEFORE and AFTER :

Phnom Penh's first 100% -people-planned and people-built comprehensive settlement upgrading at Ros Reay, where yearly flooding and swampy, mosquito-infested lanes have been replaced by storm drains, concrete paving, freshly-painted houses and street trees.



Big opportunity for the city's poor : New policy helps 100 communities to upgrade their housing, infrastructure and tenure security ...

According to SUPF's 2003 survey of poor settlements in Phnom Penh, there are 569 poor settlements in the city of Phnom Penh, where nearly 66,000 families make their home. More than a third of these settlements are under some threat of eviction, and nearly all face serious problems of flooding, inadequate sanitation, degraded environments and lack of basic services.

Last year, on May 24, 2003, the Cambodian Prime Minister, Hun Sen announced a policy to provide secure land tenure and to assist in the community driven on-site upgrading of 100 inner-city poor communities each year, for the coming five years, until all of Phnom Penh's urban poor communities have secure land tenure, full basic services and decent housing. The Prime Minister announced this policy in front of a gathering of 5,000 urban poor people from Phnom Penh and 10 provincial cities, national and local government officials, representatives from local and international NGOs and aid agencies, and community leaders from nine other Asian and African countries, as part of the celebrations of the fifth anniversary of the Urban Poor Development Fund (UPDF) in Cambodia.

The event was organized by SUPF, the UPDF and the Municipality of Phnom Penh, who jointly decided to use the occasion to boost the strategy of on-site community improvement, as an alternative to costly and impoverishing practice of eviction and relocation to remote sites. The event provided a venue to showcase the hard work communities had been doing around community upgrading, with full scale house models, exhibitions of community upgrading plans and survey information.

In the past year, the community development process in Phnom Penh has been running in high gear, as individual communities and their district federation units survey, discuss, plan, develop upgrading proposals and start work. So far, comprehensive on-site upgrading projects have been completed in four settlements, with infrastructure grants and housing loans from the UPDF, technical assistance from a team of young architects, labor provided by communities and support from the Municipality. The next round of 19 upgrading projects have now been approved and are getting underway. In this brochure, we present a brief progress report on this city-wide upgrading program.

What does comprehensive community upgrading really mean?

Making environmental improvements in existing slums is not new in Phnom Penh. Several NGOs and aid agencies have worked for years to bring much-needed infrastructural improvements to poor settlements around the city. But few of these scattered projects have touched other vital aspects of poor people's survival needs, such as land tenure security, housing or social and economic security.

Under the new comprehensive upgrading policy, which makes people the main actors, communities around the city are beginning to take advantage of the space this new policy creates for people to plan and implement comprehensive improvements to their housing and living conditions and security in ways that go far beyond a few paved walkways or water supply pipes. So what does "comprehensive upgrading" mean? It means :

- good infrastructure and basic services
- good housing
- secure land tenure
- a healthy and beautiful environment
- a strong and supportive community
- good economic opportunities
- legitimacy as part of the city



Nuts and bolts of the upgrading process ...



How are communities and SUPF preparing?

Once the upgrading policy was made official and the government had pledged land and support, the real hard work began of laying the organizational groundwork and preparing for these upgrading activities. The 100 communities upgrading policy offers a big opportunity to strengthen people, strengthen communities and strengthen the district federations, because the whole process is being driven by people's own energy and includes the following important steps:

- 1 Expanding savings groups :** All poor communities need to start preparing for this opportunity with collective saving, which is a prerequisite for participating in the upgrading policy. SUPF's seven district units have been working over the past year to strengthen and expand existing savings groups and to help start new ones, to get as many communities saving as possible.
- 2 Household Surveying :** For the upgrading program, accurate, detailed information about each family in each poor settlement in the city is needed, to establish clearly who lives where and what problems they face in their settlements. Gathering this information is a big job, but communities are doing it since it is directly tied to an active process of improving their communities.
- 3 Mapping existing settlements :** To prepare for the process of planning their upgrading projects, communities are also mapping their settlements, measuring their land and analyzing the existing infrastructure conditions in their settlement, to begin prioritizing what to improve, and in what order.
- 4 Strengthening SUPF district support systems :** Supporting and coordinating all of this work requires a strong, active, participatory and efficient SUPF leadership. So an important part of the upgrading process has been for the federation teams in each district to review their work, see how to strengthen their capacities and set up coordinating and support teams in their districts.

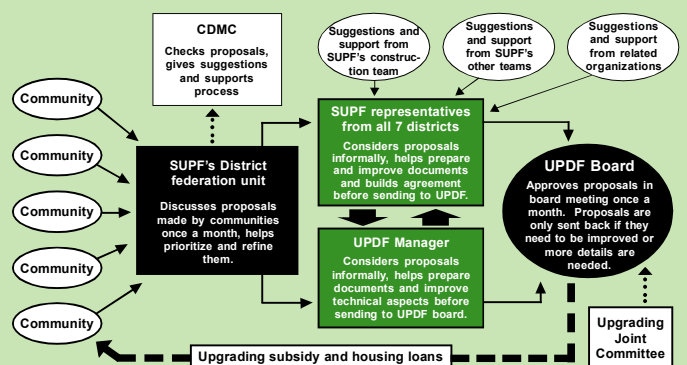
How are the upgrading projects chosen?

For the first round of upgrading projects (chosen by each district and then collectively prioritized) a few criteria were settled upon to select communities that are likely show fruitful results and get the program going: the community should have a good record of collective saving and loan management as well as an active community committee and good participation of members; it should not be too large or too small, and not be in the way of any immediate municipal development plans so it is readily "do-able"; it should be on the city-wide priority list of most-in-need communities drawn up collectively by the federation.

What do communities need to include in their proposals?

- **Basic information about the community** including: community history, location, savings organization, physical problems, experience with various development activities, family survey information, community map.
- **Community improvement plan**, including immediate detailed upgrading plans, and longer term broad development plan.
- **Detailed costs of upgrading**
- **Description of project management**, including people's participation in labor, technical aspects, supervision, finances and materials purchasing.

How are projects proposed and approved?



How are projects being monitored?

Each community upgrading project is assigned an audit team made up of three SUPF leaders (from a different district), one architect and one representative from UPDF. It is the audit team's job to check the original proposal, make sure the work goes according to plan and help support the process when there are problems. This friendly, informal and "horizontal" checking system is not a policing mechanism to find error, but a strategy to open up the planning, implementing and budgeting process, so each project becomes learning for many.

Upgrading projects so far . . .

Communities being upgraded on the same site . . .

The strategy of upgrading poor communities and securing their tenure in the same location where they already live is by far the cheapest, most straightforward and least complicated way of improving the lives and housing conditions of the urban poor. Plus, in situ upgrading enhances the considerable investment people have already made in their housing, keeps people close to their jobs and makes the least impact on the delicate social support structures which are part of their survival. Upgrading communities on-site continues to be the first choice in the upgrading program, so it is fitting that the city's first set of four completed projects are all on-site :

1 Ros Reay Community

The 72 tightly-packed houses in Ros Reay are part of a large neighborhood of over 1,000 households behind the French Embassy, most settled here in 1979, immediately after the Pol Pot period. Ros Reay has had flooding problems during the rainy season, so building a drainage system was the community's first upgrading priority. Because Ros Reay was chosen by SUPF to be the first comprehensive upgrading project, the community became a lively classroom of *training-by-doing*, where every step of the process became learning for the whole federation - and the whole city.

The first step was to survey and map the settlement, which community people did themselves, with groups of "upgrading apprentices" from communities in other districts. They plotted all houses, trees, water points and problem areas, and used this to discuss what needs improving. Once they'd decided what improvements to make, they estimated the costs and drew up a budget. Municipal officials and community members from around the city attended the ground-breaking ceremony, where the first \$500 handed to the community was matched by \$500 in cash from community people.

They set to work the next day, dismantling fences to enable lanes to be straightened a bit and to make room for laying the underground drainage system, which involved enormous labor. Each family was responsible for digging up the ditch in front of their house. Even pregnant women pitched in, and people returning from day jobs dug by lantern-light into the late night, under the energetic guidance of Ros Reay's leader, Keo Yin, whose husband, a construction subcontractor, provided "in-house" technical assistance with slopes, pipe sizes and manhole designs. The lanes were then paved with concrete, trees and flowering shrubs were planted along the lane edges and the houses and fences were freshly painted in shades of white, blue and green. The improvements at Ros Reay cost \$12,000, and covered 339 meters of concrete road and lane paving, sewage and storm drains with 53 manholes, tree-planting, fence repair and house painting, all done with community labor.



2 Thmor Dar Community

Thmor Dar is a crowded settlement of 146 houses built on the rooftop of an inner city block in 7 Makara District, where the people have lived since 1979. The first step in their upgrading was to completely repair and repaint the dilapidated stairway up to their settlement. The next steps are to create a community open space on the roof and then to repair some of the houses. The stairway renovation cost a total of \$1,316, of which \$936 came as a grant, and the rest came from the community, which provided all the labor.



3 Mittapheap Community

This community of 137 households is built on a small rectangle of land, which the people themselves own, squeezed between big buildings in Toul Kork District. During the rainy season, the settlement turns into a mucky and mosquito-infested bog, so the people's first priority items for upgrading were paved lanes and underground drains. The 352-meter concrete road and drainage line the people built is now complete, and 56 families have been approved for housing improvement loans of \$440 each. The roads and drainage system cost a total of \$6,586, of which \$766 was contributed by the community.



4 Svay Chek Community

This quiet community of 116 households on semi-rural land at the edge of the city, in Dangkor District, has a strong savings group including almost all the families. The place feels more like a village than an urban slum, but its poverty and remoteness from the city made Svay Chek a good example for developing a self-sustaining community with local sources of income. Svay Chek faces serious problems of flooding, so their first upgrading task was to lay 1,635 meters of paved roads and drains throughout the community. To get landfill for these roads, they dug two deep holes, which are now fish-breeding ponds. Next stage improvements will include fences, wells, a community center, house reconstruction, toilets and community agriculture. The cost of laying the roads and drainage only came to \$9,138, of which the community contributed \$2,138.



Communities being upgraded using the land sharing strategy . . .

Land sharing is a compromise strategy for resolving urban land conflicts between poor communities (who need the land for housing) and private or government land owners (who want the land back to develop). After a period of planning and negotiating, an agreement is reached to "share" the land, in which part is given, sold or leased to the community for their housing, and the rest is returned to the land-owner to develop. People end up with less area, but the trade-off is that they are no longer squatters but legal occupants of their land. The government has approved the first four land-sharing projects, but because they are so large and complex, they are taking much longer in the preparation and planning stages than the more simple on-site upgrading projects.

1 Santhi Pheap

Santhi Pheap ("Railway A") is a settlement of 70 households on 1.3 hectares of public land along the railway tracks in Daun Penh District. After years of eviction threats, the community began negotiating for a land sharing plan, in which the people keep 30% of the land for developing small 2-story row-houses, and return the rest to the government. Finally, the government agreed to give the community 25% of the land for their housing.



2 Dey Krahom

Dey Krahom is a large settlement of 1,465 households near the river in Chamkarmon District, occupying 4.7 hectares of public land. The government initially agreed to a land-sharing proposal from the community in which 78.6% of the land (3.7 hectares) is kept by the community to rebuild their houses and one hectare is returned to the government. The government has since brought in another private sector contractor to build flats for the people on the site, which will then develop high-income shops and housing on the site to cross-subsidize the people's housing, which will be given free to community members.



3 Borei Keila

This extremely crowded and complex settlement of 1,776 households sprawls around some 4-story apartment blocks built in the 1960s for athletes in 7 Makara District. For years, the Sports Ministry has tried to evict the people to build a new stadium. But this strong community, which settled here in 1979, is determined to stay. After surveying and mapping their settlement, they first worked with UPDF architects to explore land-sharing plans to rebuild their community with very small row-houses, for which the government agreed to give 4.6 hectares (31.5% of the existing land). Later on, the plan changed, and now the government is working with a private developer to build blocks of flats for the people on this land. Borei Keila is an important test-case for land sharing, which makes room for poor people's housing while allowing the government to proceed with its plans.



4 Roteh Pleong

Roteh Pleong ("Railway B") is another railway settlement of 255 households which were going to be evicted from the 10 hectares of land they have occupied since 1979 in Toul Kork District. The government had leased the land to the Usman Hasan Company to build a high-rise hotel, but most people didn't want to go to the re-settlement plots offered by the developer. So the people drafted their own land sharing plans, which they presented to the government and the developer in a public meeting in April 2003. The government has now approved the people's plan, in which 25% of the land will be kept for housing, and the rest will go back to the government, which can then lease it to the developer. When the man from the Usma Hasan Company agreed to attend a public meeting to discuss the development plans for Railway B, he never expected to find a poor community with a fully-worked out plan of their own!



Communities being upgraded after relocating to nearby land . . .

1 Prek Toul

Prek Toul is a settlement of 106 very poor families who survive by collecting recyclable waste on the garbage dump in Mean Cheay District, where they also used to live in miserable conditions. The Municipality chose and purchased a 0.73 hectare site (for

\$150,000) three kilometers away, which has been given to the families to build their new community on. Construction of the new community is now under way. Prek Toul is the first example of the "nearby relocation" strategy, which is the last resort when there is no possibility of a community staying in the same place.

