

# Community upgrading in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

## UPDF

**A complete face lift for ROS REAY :**  
Phnom Penh's first experiment in 100% people-planned and people-constructed comprehensive settlement upgrading is inaugurated in May 2003 :

Ros Reay was one of the first community upgrading projects under the government's "100 Communities Each Year Upgrading Policy" launched in May 2003, as a collaboration between the Urban Poor Development Fund (UPDF), the Municipality of Phnom Penh, the Royal Government of Cambodia and the community federations.

The 72 tightly-packed houses in Ros Reay are part of a larger neighborhood of over 1,000 households behind the French Embassy, most of whom settled here in 1979, immediately after the Pol Pot period. Even though it's right next to the city's largest natural drain, Boeung Kak Lake, Ros Reay experienced serious flooding during the rainy season, so building a drainage system was the community's first upgrading priority. Because they own the land they occupy and are already well organized through their savings group, Ros Reay became the first comprehensive upgrading *training-by-doing* for the whole federation and the whole city.

The first step was to survey and map the settlement, which community people did themselves, with some help from UPDF. On the map, they plotted all the houses, trees, water points and problem areas, and used this to discuss what needs improving, in what order. Once they'd decided what to improve, they estimated costs and drew up a budget for their upgrading plan, which was approved in January 2003. Municipal officials and community members from around the city were invited to the groundbreaking ceremony, where the first \$500 handed over to the community was immediately matched by \$500 in cash contributions from community members.

They set to work the following day moving back fences to straighten the lanes and make room for laying the underground sewage and storm drain system, which involved enormous labor. A system was worked out by which each family was responsible for digging up the ditch in front of their house. Even pregnant women pitched in, and men returning from their day jobs dug by lantern-light into the late night, under the unflagging guidance of Ros Reay's energetic leader, Keo Yi. The finished drains were given their first test during a torrential rainstorm in early April. Everyone was out under their umbrellas, all eyes on the manholes, through which the water was reported to flow *beautifully!* The lanes are now being paved, after which trees and flowers will be planted in the half-meter planting strips along the lane-edges, and all the houses will be freshly painted in matching colors.

### Upgrading costs :

- US\$ 3,600 - Laying the sewage and storm-drainage network and constructing 53 manholes
- \$ 7,100 - Concrete paving of lanes (339 m) with half-meter planting strips at sides
- \$100 - Planting 122 trees
- \$ 1,200 - Repairing fences, painting 57 houses, 39 fences

US\$ 12,000 - Total cost of upgrading project. (US\$ 167 per household)

### Who paid?

- **LABOR :** approximately 2,200 person-hours of labor, all provided by community members
- **TECHNICAL HELP :** A community member with contracting experience designed the system, set levels and supervised construction
- **BUDGET :** \$ 500 cash contribution from community members and \$ 11,500 grant from ACHR.



### Good ideas spread out . . .

This ambitious community is already discussing the possibility of "reblocking" the house plots in part of the settlement to make room for a small playground, while neighboring communities are also starting savings groups and discussing upgrading in their areas. Several households have also taken house-improvement loans from UPDF.



"This city doesn't only belong to the rich and high-ranking. It belongs to all of us, so we should all be involved in improving it. . . . Now we have a lot of work to do, we have to sit down and set a concrete plan for this upgrading program together."

(Mr. Chev Kim Heng, Vice Governor of Phnom Penh Municipality)



### So much cheaper than relocation!

It's interesting to compare the cost of upgrading Ros Reay *in-situ* to the REAL cost of relocating 129 families to Alkphivat Mean Cheay (including the cost of buying the new land, filling it, developing basic infrastructure on it, and including UNCHS staff costs, overheads and consultancy fees) it comes to about US\$ 330,000, or \$2,500 per household. And when you add to that figure the costs shouldered by families themselves, including moving costs, new house construction, lost income, lost investment in their old housing and increased transport costs, it comes to about US\$ 4,000 per household!

# Ros Reay BEFORE and AFTER



**BEFORE :** Here is the main road in Ros Reay in a photo taken in November 1999, during the dry season. Imagine the difficulties walking down this same lane in ankle-deep muck and overflowing sewage during the rainy season.



**BEFORE :** Another shot from November 1999, looking the other direction along Ros Reay's main lane. Most of the wooden and masonry houses here in the community are fine; it's only the roads and infrastructure that are really bad.



**BEFORE :** This photo was taken in one of the back lanes of Ros Reay in 1999. Even during the dry season, the run-off from people's kitchens, bathrooms and toilets turned several of these small back lanes into stinking and unhealthy swamps.



**AFTER :** Almost the same shot taken four years later, after the underground drains have been laid, the road completely paved in concrete and the houses have been repainted and decorated with planting strips in front for flowers and shrubs.



**AFTER :** The community is already discussing the possibility of "reblocking" the house plots in part of the settlement on the left side of the lane pictured here, to make room for a small playground.



**AFTER :** The new system of underground drains collects all the "grey" water from kitchens and bathrooms, as well as storm water and the partially treated sewage from household septic tanks, and channels it into the city's drainage mains.