



# Baan Mankong

## Thailand's national, people-driven, collective housing program

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**This report describes CODI's work supporting different types and different aspects of community-driven and collective housing, in urban and rural areas, across Thailand. The report was prepared to present in a two-day symposium on collective housing in Asia, which was hosted by CODI and jointly organized by CODI, the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) and the Switzerland-based NGO urbaMonde, in October 2019.**

- Citywide collective housing in urban areas
- Collective housing for the rural families in rural areas
- Canal-side housing communities project
- Community-managed housing insurance
- Green community food production projects
- Collective housing for the homeless
- Housing for coastal fishing communities
- Housing for communities facing disasters
- Rural community land management

## CODI's Baan Mankong Program covers many kinds of housing needs . . .

A 2008 survey by CODI and the urban poor community networks around the country found that more than 1.6 million low income families (out of 20 million) were living in about 6,300 urban poor communities throughout the country, and over 720,000 of those families were in need of secure, permanent housing.

CODI initiated its Baan Mankong ("Secure Housing") program for urban poor communities in 2003, beginning with ten pilot projects which provided secure land and houses for 1,500 families. Since then, with continuous support from the government and community networks, the Baan Mankong program has been implemented in 370 cities around the country, and has provided secure land and permanent housing to over 110,000 families, in 2,600 urban poor communities. In 2016, the cabinet approved a 20-year National Housing Development Plan which aims to build on this progress and provide permanent housing for one million urban and rural poor families by 2036.



Initially, CODI's Baan Mankong Program targeted only urban poor communities, but now includes projects to address the housing needs of these five different target groups:

- **urban poor households and communities**
- **landless rural poor**
- **homeless people**
- **disaster-affected and eviction-affected households**
- **poor families needing assistance with house repair**

Each year, more than 20,000 Thai families take part in Baan Mankong housing projects. Despite wide differences in the geographical, ethnic and political circumstances of the places where these projects are set, a few key aspects of the program remain constant and extremely important: all the projects are community-driven, all are part of a citywide approach, and all are collectively managed by the communities themselves.

### Why collective housing?

- CODI's past experiences with both rural and urban housing development suggests that sustainable development cannot be achieved without strong grassroots' organizations and community-driven processes
- To strengthen community organizations, it is quite important that the management of all community processes be collective.
- One of CODI's main activities has been to provide loans for community development. All loans from CODI are given in bulk to community groups - never to individuals. In that way, the loans themselves become a tool which can build the group and strengthen the community organization.
- All development grants provided by CODI are likewise group-based and given only to communities to manage collectively - even if the grants are based on pre-approved per-family amounts.
- The core concepts of CODI's collective housing program are participation and collective ownership. For example, a community savings group is a very local-level collective financial management unit. Each housing project is run by a community's own organization - not by a single project manager - and the management of all aspects of the project is collective. A citywide housing development plan is also overseen by multi-party committee in each city. Community networks, for their part, have been built at different levels - city, provincial, regional and national. The linkages between networks at these different levels create a collective movement which is quite powerful. All the work of preparing for and implementing housing projects (including citywide community surveying and land surveying, negotiating for land for housing, designing housing and developing community layouts) are collective and require a high level of participation, collaboration and mutual ownership.
- A collective approach assures the participation of all stakeholders, especially the poor themselves. The collective approach empowers grassroots people, strengthens community organization and creates space for the poor to help and strengthen each other. Collective is an essential element in making our development sustainable.

## Key elements in the Baan Mankong housing programs

- 1. FLEXIBLE FINANCE:** One of the most important tools in this people-driven housing process is flexible and accessible finance, in the form of housing and land loans and infrastructure subsidies. The Baan Mankong Program's financial mechanism allows communities to manage the housing projects by themselves. When people learn that there are funds which are available to them, they see opportunities for development. Loans from CODI usually carry concessional terms and conditions (such as low and fixed interest rates, long-term maturity and equal monthly installments). The Thai government also allocates funds to CODI to provide a subsidy for site development and common infrastructure (like roads, drains, water and electric supply systems) in the Baan Mankong housing projects. This subsidy helps bring the costs down substantially and make the housing projects affordable to most urban poor families in Thailand.
- 2. SAVINGS GROUPS:** To join the Baan Mankong Program, communities are required to have fairly well-established savings groups. Community managed savings and loan processes are key for collective management within the communities. It is not only about saving money, but also about building trust and expertise in managing their internal resources. From saving together, it could lead to several other activities to solve other problems community members may face, or to improve their living conditions.
- 3. COLLECTIVE EVERYTHING:** The upgrading process calls for all members in the community to find ways to do things together. Even those in the community who are very poor and marginalized have to be included in the projects, and no one is left behind. This collectivity is a tool to pull people together and create strength within their group. By working collectively, the poor are empowered to do many things which they could not do individually. This collectivity also enables them to negotiate from a position of collective strength with outside agencies, such as local authorities or other networks, to get land, access to finance and other things they need.
- 4. HORIZONTAL SUPPORT:** As more and more housing projects have been implemented all over the country, people are increasingly aware of a variety of housing solutions and strategies available to them. They learn from each other and increase their skills and sense of what is possible. The Baan Mankong program also opens up space for poor communities to connect and to support each other.
- 5. TECHNICAL SUPPORT:** The Baan Mankong Program also provides technical support to communities when they begin planning their housing projects. A large circle of community architects around the country, as well as planning and architecture departments at several universities, have shown interest in working with CODI to assist communities in developing housing layouts, house designs, infrastructure and landscaping. They also send students to work with and learn from community people during the housing development process. These professional can help communities expand their sense of what is possible in their housing planning, and also improve the quality of the housing plans, making them suit the people's needs and social ways of living more suitably.

## 1. Citywide urban housing supported by Baan Mankong

### Key Steps in Implementing Baan Mankong Projects

1. Identify stakeholders and explain the program to them.
2. Organize network meetings which may include people from other cities.
3. Organize meetings in each urban poor community, involving municipal staff if possible.
4. Establish a joint committee to oversee implementation in the city. This committee includes urban poor community and network leaders and the municipality, as well as local academics, professionals and NGOs. This committee will help build new relationships of cooperation to integrate urban poor housing into the city's overall development and create a mechanism for resolving future housing problems.
5. The joint committee holds a meeting with representatives from all urban poor communities.
6. Conduct a survey of all communities in the city, to gather information for each community about the number of households and family members, housing security status, land ownership, infrastructure problems, community organizations, savings activities and existing development initiatives. This citywide survey is an opportunity for people to meet with and learn about each other as well.
7. Use information from the survey to develop a citywide housing development plan.
8. At the same time, support community collective savings activities. Group savings is not only about mobilizing people's collective resources, but also about strengthening community groups and building collective financial management skills, which will be needed when they start doing their housing projects.



9. Select communities which should be upgraded first. The selection criteria should include a collective assessment of the urgency of need and the community's willingness to try and learn.
10. Develop detailed housing plans for communities in the first group to undertake projects. After plans are finalized and approved and financing from CODI has been approved, then the construction can start right away. These early projects in a city serve as learning centers for other communities in the city, as they prepare their housing projects for later phases.
11. After the first few projects are well underway, the upgrading process can extend to as many other communities in the city as possible, including people who may be living in scattered circumstances of poverty, like room renters, migrant workers and homeless people.
12. Integrate all these housing projects into a citywide thinking and a citywide development. This includes coordinating with public and private landowners to provide secure tenure or alternative land for resettlement and coordinating with utilities to improve access to basic services on a citywide scale.
13. Build layers of overlapping issue-based and area-based networks around issues of mutual interest or mutual benefit, such as a common land ownership, shared construction, cooperative enterprises, community welfare and collective maintenance of public resources (canals for example).

## Types of upgrading

**1. On-site UPGRADING:** Slum upgrading is a way of improving the physical environment and basic services in existing communities, while preserving their location, character and social structures. Usually upgrading means that the houses, lanes, roads and open spaces are improved, without changing or with adjustment in a layout or plot sizes. Besides improving the physical conditions and quality of life in these poor communities, the physical improvements can act as a springboard for other kind of development such as income generation, welfare and community enterprises.



**2. On-site REBLOCKING:** Reblocking is a more systematic way of improving the infrastructure and physical conditions in existing communities by making some adjustments to the layout of houses and roads to install sewers, drains, walkways and roads, and to plan the plot sizes. It is the physical adjustment with more systematic planning in ways which ensure the continuity of the community. Communities can then develop their housing gradually, at their own pace or reconstruct some of them where there is a need to shift. When communities opt for reblocking, some houses usually have to be moved and partially or entirely reconstructed. Some lanes may also have to be re-aligned to enable drainage lines, water supply systems or sewers to be constructed. Reblocking is often undertaken in cases where communities have negotiated to buy or obtained long-term leases for the land they already occupy. In both cases, the process of reblocking is an important step in the progress towards land tenure security and improved housing.

**3. On-site RECONSTRUCTION:** In this upgrading strategy, existing communities are totally demolished and rebuilt on the same land, either under a long-term lease or after the people have negotiated to purchase the land. The new security of land tenure on the already occupied land often provides community people the needs and with a very strong incentive to invest in their housing, through rebuilding or new construction. Although the reconstruction option involves making considerable physical changes within the community and requires some adaptations to a new environment, the strategy allows people to continue living in the same place and to remain close to their places of work and vital support systems with totally new environment.

**4. LAND SHARING:** Land-sharing is a housing and settlement improvement strategy which allows both the land-owner and the community people to share the land and the benefit. The former slum land, after the agreement, always have to be divided into two portions. The community is given, sold or leased one portion (usually the less commercially attractive part of the site) for reconstructing their housing and the rest of the land is returned to the land-owner to sell or to develop. There is no rule about how the land is divided: the amount of land the people get and how much goes back to the owner is settled by negotiations. At the core of a land sharing process is the ability to translate conflicting needs and conflicting demands into a compromise which takes a concrete "win-win" form, and which is acceptable to all parties involved. The people may end up with less area than they had before but with better conditions and to build their secure housing, and the land-owner may get back less-than all of his land, but the trade-off is that the poor will no longer be squatters but the legal no longer or tenants of their land. And the landlord finally gets to develop the land.

**5. RELOCATION:** The greatest advantage of the relocation strategy is that it usually comes with housing security in new environment which community can design and build without too much existing conditions. They can also get their land use rights, outright ownership or some kind of long-term land lease. Relocation sites can be nearby or sometimes be far from existing communities, job opportunities, support structures and school. In these cases, community members who want to keep their old jobs or attend the same school must bear the burden of additional traveling time and expense and must adapt themselves to a new environment. But in many towns and cities around the country, resourceful communities are finding bits of land to buy or rent cheaply for their housing that are not far away at all. In all cases of relocation – whether it is nearby or not-so-nearby relocation - communities face the cost of reconstructing their houses at the new site, and in some cases the additional burden of land purchase payments. But tenure security tends to be a big incentive to invest in housing and environmental development at the new

### **Finance for Baan Mankong housing projects:**

The Baan Mankong Program offers communities two types of financial assistance for the housing projects they develop: soft loans for housing and land, and a variety of subsidies which cover different communal aspects of the projects, which total about 80,000 baht (US\$2,500) per household. Here are some details about how those two financial supports work:

#### **1. SUBSIDIES** *(all given as grants)*

- **Subsidy for infrastructure development**, varies according to type of upgrading. For on-site upgrading, the amount of subsidy is 25,000 baht (US\$715) per family. For reconstruction on the same land or elsewhere, the subsidy is 35,000 baht (US\$1,000) per family. If the cost of landfill or infrastructure on a new site is very high, the subsidy could increase to 45,000 Baht (US\$ 1,285) per family. The amount is calculated according to number of households in the project, but managed as one bulk fund by the community cooperative.
- **Subsidy for landscaping** newly constructed settlements is 20,000 baht (US\$600) per community.
- **Subsidy to liven up the atmosphere** of the new community is 200,000 baht (US\$6,000) per community.
- **Subsidy to construct temporary houses** in case of fire or eviction is 18,000 baht (US\$500) per household.
- **Subsidy to construct a community center** is 150,000 baht (US\$ 5,000) per community.
- **Subsidy for for local coordination and administrative expenses** is set at 5% of the total infrastructure subsidy. This amount is made available to the community itself or to whoever the people select to assist their housing process. Some communities opt to select their community network to assist them, while others chose an NGO, a local university, a group of architects or a local government agency. It's up to the community to decide who their helpers will be.
- **Subsidy for capacity building, learning and coordinating expenses.** Capacity building is very important in a collective housing process in which people are the core actors. During the planning and construction process, it will be necessary to hold lots of meetings, seminars, design workshops and training programs, some with communities alone and some with professionals. Exchange visits between communities in the same or other cities are also helpful, to give people ideas and help them resolve problems using peer-to-peer learning. This subsidy also covers coordinating expenses of the community networks and CODI.

#### **2. LOANS FOR LAND AND HOUSING**

- Soft loans from the CODI fund are made only to communities who have registered themselves as housing cooperatives and saved at least 10% of the loan amount in their community savings groups. The loans are given in bulk to the community cooperative - not to individuals - and the cooperative on lends to their members.
- Loans are used to purchase land, improve existing houses or build new houses.
- The interest rate on all housing and land loans from CODI is fixed at 4% per year, for the entire 20-year repayment term of the loan. When the community cooperative on lends to its members, they add a margin of 2% or 3% over the CODI interest rate, so individual members pay 6 -7% per year. The cooperatives use that margin to cover their management expenses and to serve as cushion in the case of late repayments or defaults.
- The maximum loan amount for housing and/or land is 300,000 baht (US\$9,000) per family.

### **Differences between a collective approach and the conventional approach to housing:**

1. *In the collective approach, urban poor communities are key actors in every step of the process:* project planning, financial management and project implementation. Often times, people also take part in housing construction, instead of using an outside contractor. Full or partial community-building is a way of lowering housing costs, but it also encourages people's participation and contribution to the project.
2. *The collective approach is demand driven.* The housing project is a direct response to the serious needs and requirements of communities, who are ready to be on board. This approach requires high participation of people in the community, and that participation ensures that all aspects of the project (including design, costing, common facilities, etc.) will be tailored to community needs.
3. *Collective housing is much more than physical housing.* It opens opportunities for community members to design their own new social system, new physical environment and human connections. Once their informal settlements have been transformed into legal ones through the housing process, people will feel visible and proud, and can contribute economically and socially to their society.
4. *When collective housing is implemented at citywide scale,* it enhances the concept of inclusive city development, since urban poor communities are integrated in the city's plans, with community people taking part in the planning as equal development partners with other stakeholders in the city.
5. *The collective approach to housing is a bottom-up, community-driven model* with offers a striking alternative to the typical top-down and centralized approach to housing development, where government agencies are responsible for the planning, construction and delivery of housing and people are only passive beneficiaries.
6. Collective housing can be built on land under a variety of land tenure arrangements. There are several options in securing land tenure for the people developing collective housing, according to the situation. There could be, for example, collective land ownership, long-term collective lease, land swaps and granting of collective user rights.

### **Social and economic impact of Baan Mankong:**

After sixteen years of implementing the Baan Mankong collective housing program, many of the more than 100,000 families who have participated in the program have agreed on the following impacts of the program:

#### **Improved human security**

- Permanent and secure housing and land for the poor; no more fear of eviction.
- Welfare for all, from birth to death.
- More stable income and better family savings.
- Better environment and neighborhood.
- Greater safety of life and property.
- No one is left behind.

#### **Greater participation on city development**

- Slums are replaced with healthy, clean, legal communities with good surroundings.
- Wasted, vacant land has been developed and caused land values nearby to increase.
- Basic infrastructure has been improved in neglected areas and standards of living of low income people have been lifted.
- The program has helped solve the many overlapping problems of the poor comprehensively.
- The goal of making city development more inclusive is enhanced.

#### **More empowered community people**

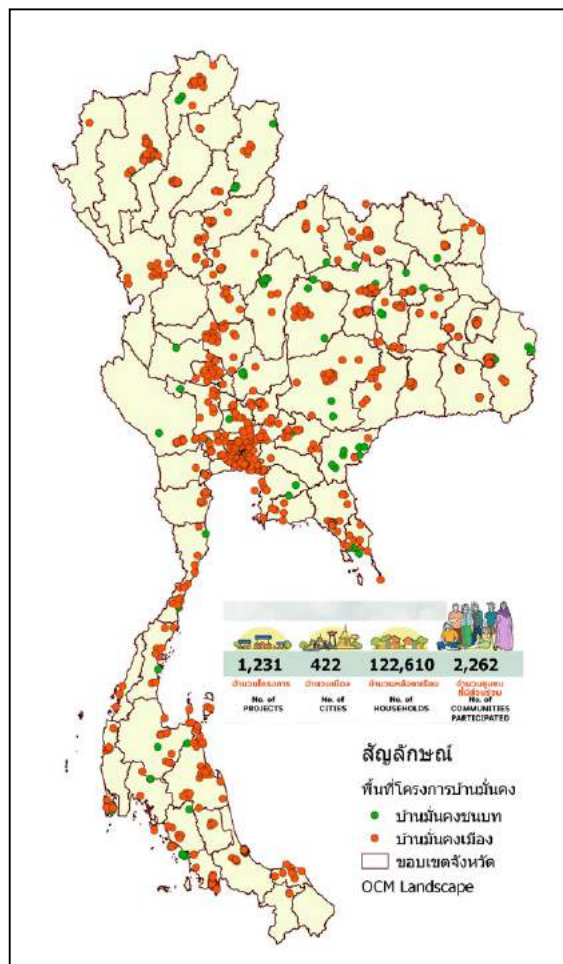
- The process enhances grassroots democracy; all people have their voices heard.
- The projects give the poor opportunities for learning, decision-making, voicing their needs.
- The poor are empowered.
- People's thinking and attitudes towards sustainable development are widened.
- People's skills with finance management, group-process, community survey, coordination and construction are increased.

#### **Better society and relationships**

- People realize their roles as givers not takers.
- Working towards learning community and learning society.
- No more discrimination on development work.
- Create more innovation on community development.
- People become more active in helping others.
- Public recognizes the role of the poor.

In 2019, CODI surveyed the citywide Baan Mankong housing process in 13 cities around Thailand. 3,649 families participated in the survey, and the results reveal some striking facts:

- About 75% of insecure informal settlements in the cities had already taken part in the citywide housing program. That makes clear that CODI's vision of city without slums can actually be achieved soon.
- The average cost of building a two-story rowhouse, with a total living area of 48 m<sup>2</sup>, was about 325,624 baht (US\$10,175), while the present market value of that same house averaged about 1,080,769 baht (US\$ 33,774). That means the market value of the houses has more than tripled. The Thai Appraisal and Estate Agent Foundation has estimated that the cost of building a house of that same size on the market would be about 528,427 baht (US\$ 16,513). Which means that the collective housing approach can save people about 38% of the market price construction cost.
- Before joining in the Baan Mankong housing program, only 22% of the participating families had access to loan sources. After joining, 54% said they now have access to financial sources, through both their community savings groups and their network-managed city development funds. About 35% of the surveyed families are members of their city-level housing insurance funds, and 70% are members of their network-level community welfare funds.
- Assets: 3% to 9% of families in the survey have acquired assets such as televisions, cars, motorcycles, telephones, refrigerators and microwave ovens. Having secure tenure and permanent housing has reduced their daily household expenses. Monthly utility expenses such as electricity and tap water have decreased by between 100% and 200%, because those families have now connected to formal supply systems and no longer have to pay inflated rates charged by intermediaries.
- Expenses: 20% said their expenses had decreased after moving into their own permanent new housing, while 37% said their expenses had increased (mainly due to expenses decorating their new homes and buying furniture).
- Skills: 53% said they had acquired construction skills and 22% had acquired financial management skills.
- Participation: 30% had participated more in community and city planning, 32% got more access to public space, 27% became members of income-generating groups, 28% became members of community or city committees and 32% said they have a greater voice in community and city development.



## Baan Mankong Urban Performance figures (as of September 2019)

<b>Basic facts about Baan Mankong (Includes urban + rural + canal housing)</b>	
Year the Baan Mankong Program began	2003
Number of housing projects built so far (urban + rural + canal)	1,231 projects
Number of households in these projects	112,777 households
Number of households in rural Baan Mankong projects only	7,705 households
Number of cities where Baan Mankong is active	422 towns and cities
Average size of housing project	91 households
<b>Type of upgrading</b>	
• On-site upgrading or reconstruction	63% of projects
• Relocation to new land	37% of projects
<b>Budget figures</b>	
Total amount of subsidy (grant) approved	5,768 million baht (US\$ 180 million)
Total amount of loans approved	8,863 million baht (US\$ 276 million)
Number of communities	2,510 communities



Number of households that have taken loans for housing and/or land	45,126 families (40% of total participants)
Average loan per household	196,432 baht (US\$ 6,138)
Term of loan	15 - 20 years
Return of payment/month	500 - 2,500 baht (\$16 - \$60)
Loan repayment rate	97%
Ratio of grant-to-loan in Baan Mankong projects	39 : 61

### Details about **SUBSIDIES** in various CODI housing programs

	<i>Program</i>	<i>Number of households</i>	<i>Target group</i>	<i>Subsidy per family</i>
1	Baan Mankong Collective Housing (2003 - 2019)	112,777	Urban and rural poor without secure land or housing	80,000 baht (US\$ 2,580)
2	Rural housing and settlement upgrading (2017 - 2019)	7,705	Rural poor without secure land for housing or cultivation	80,000 baht (US\$ 2,580)
3	Rural house repair for the poorest (2017 - 2019)	39,194	Rural poor with secure land but without adequate housing	22,500 baht (US\$ 725)
4	Housing for the homeless (2016 - 2019)	700 people	Providing shelter for homeless in large cities	
5	Housing for eviction and disaster-affected people (2016 - 2019)	3,005	Eviction and disaster-affected families	18,000 baht (US\$ 580)
6	Bangkok Canal Housing (2016 - 2019)	13,000	Residents of 88 communities alongside 2 canals in Bangkok	147,000 baht (US\$ 4,741)

## Collective housing in Bangkok

CODI's 2009 survey found that in Bangkok and surrounding areas, there were 1,948 urban poor communities, with 296,291 families in need of secure housing. CODI began its support for collective housing in Bangkok and the vicinity in 2003. Since then, 113 collective housing projects, with 13,060 families, have been implemented. CODI is now working with the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) to carry out housing projects in another 194 communities, in ten districts, with 36,815 families. All of which are bringing us closer to making Bangkok a capital city without slums.

## 2. Bangkok Canal Housing Project

Bangkok is built on low-lying, swampy land. The city is crisscrossed with canals (“klongs” in the Thai language), which have not only helped drain and control all the water, but have traditionally provided conduits for commerce, transportation, irrigation and development. But as cars have replaced boats, the klongs have fallen into disrepair: used for dumping sewage and solid waste, or concreted over to make way for buildings and roads. At the same time worsening problems of flooding and pollution are blamed on the informal communities which line many of Bangkok’s klongs, when the real culprit is unchecked urbanization and poor planning.

**There are 1,161 canals in Bangkok, and 23,500 households live in informal settlements on the narrow strips of public land along those canals.**

**Canal-side communities show a new way:** For decades, the government's only idea was to evict these settlements, but beleaguered klong-side communities in many Thai cities began using their common predicament to form networks, improve their klongs and their settlements and negotiate to stay put, by demonstrating that they can be the city’s best partner in taking care of these crucial water management systems. Canal-side communities in many cities have initiated regular canal-cleaning events, developed simple technologies (like EM and grease traps) to lesson pollution in the canals. A growing number of canal settlements have also negotiated long-term leases to the public land they occupy and used the Baan



Mankong Program to finance projects to rebuild their houses and redevelop their settlements with canal-side walkways, gardens and public spaces.

**The pioneering project on Klong Bang Bua:** One of the most visited of all the Baan Mankong housing projects in Bangkok is the one along the Bang Bua Canal, where a network of 13 canal-side squatter settlements have been implementing a large project to pull back from the canal edge and redevelop their houses in the narrow strip of public land along the canal, with canal-side walkways and easy access to the canal for the city's flood-control and dredging equipment. It is a win-win solution in which the canal-side squatters get secure housing in-situ, on long term collective land lease, and the city gets improved flood control and improved canals.

**A canal community policy breakthrough: upgrade them instead of evicting them.** In 2015, faced with increasing flooding problems, and inspired by the success of the housing upgrading project along Klong Bang Bua, the national government announced an important policy to upgrade the informal settlements along Bangkok's canals and at the same time to build concrete embankments to improve flood management in the city. To do this, they asked CODI for help. For the government, this was a chance to upgrade the city's drainage network, and for CODI, it was a chance to boost the community-driven upgrading of more canal-side communities. But the project's four-year time frame (2016-2019) meant everything had to happen much faster than usual, with other Baan Mankong projects.



**Now upgrading 51 communities along Klong Ladprao:** In 2016, the government asked CODI to work with the 7,000 poor families who live in 51 canal-side squatter communities along the 31-km length of the Klong Ladprao, another of the city's principal canals. Besides improving drainage, the community-driven housing project on Klong Ladprao is providing people with secure housing, better environment and infrastructure, and stronger social and economic opportunities, and involves an extraordinary collaboration between various municipal and national government agencies, the canal-side communities, CODI, universities, architects and other local stakeholders.



**Mostly on-site upgrading, with very little displacement:** Most of the communities are maintaining their economic and social support systems and reconstructing their housing on the same site, with housing loans from CODI's Baan Mankong Program, which are made in bulk to the housing cooperatives the communities must all set up to access CODI finance. Only seven of the Ladprao canal communities (with 1,080 households) have opted to relocate to other land nearby - mostly in cases where there wasn't space for all or some of the families to rebuild legally along the canal. Since all the land along the canal is public land, the government grants long-term collective land leases (30 years) to the community cooperatives, at rental rates of US\$ 1 - 4 per m2 per year. In cases where there is not enough land for on-site reconstruction, some households have to relocate to other areas nearby. Some of the Klong Ladprao communities have included partial on-site reconstruction and partial relocation. Seven housing projects (1,080 families) out of total 36 projects (3,741 families) have involved some relocation to other areas.



**Tight layouts with row-houses:** Two standard house types have been adopted in the Ladprao canal housing projects, to make new housing affordable to everyone: a one-story house (24 m2) for poorer or

smaller families, and a two-story row-house (56 m<sup>2</sup>). The houses cost between 200,000-500,000 baht (\$6,250 - \$15,625) per unit, which is about 25% of existing market prices.

**Financing:** Housing loans from CODI are made in bulk to the community cooperatives, at 4% annual interest, repayable over 20 years. Monthly loan repayments will be 1,500 - 3,000 baht (\$46 - \$93), which is affordable to most urban poor households. The government also provides four kinds of subsidies to the projects (and to all Baan Mankong projects also), through CODI:

- Housing construction subsidy: 25,000 baht (\$760) per household
- Infrastructure subsidy: 50,000 baht (\$1,520) per household (combined and managed collectively in one fund)
- Temp. shelter subsidy: 18,000 baht (\$545) per household
- Moving subsidy: 54,000 baht (\$1,635) per household
- TOTAL subsidy: 147,000 baht (\$4,455) per household

**Over ten government agencies cooperate in the project:** The Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA) is responsible for maintaining the city's waterways, while the Treasury Department owns the land and gives it on long-term lease to the communities. The Departments of Cooperative Promotion and Cooperative Audit help the canal-side communities to set up housing cooperatives, and the Metropolitan Electricity and Water Authorities provide infrastructure in the newly-upgraded communities. Several universities provide technical support in house and community design. The Office of the Attorney General also assists in legal aspects in some cases, and local military and police officers have chipped in to make sure participating members are safe. CODI brings to the process its expertise on community organizing, helps convince communities and other stakeholders to work together and provides the finance, through the CODI fund.

#### **Klong Ladprao Details:**

- Households: 7,000 (in 51 communities)
- Land-owner: Government land
- Tenure terms: Cooperative land lease (30 years)
- Type of project: On-site reconstruction
- Completed so far: 3,000 houses (mostly in-situ)
- In process: 1,000 houses

**Project set to expand to another major Bangkok canal:** In 2019, the government asked CODI to expand the canal-side community housing project to another 6,300 families living in 32 informal communities along the Premprachakorn Canal.

### **3. Chum Phae: From collective housing to collective farming**

Chum Phae is small town with a population of 31,000 people, in Khon Kaen Province, in Northeastern Thailand. This region is one of the poorest areas of the country, where rice growing and other cash crops like sugar cane and tapioca are the main source of income. Four decades of promoting these cash crops has driven most farmers into bankruptcy, so many have had to migrate to Bangkok and other big cities for job opportunities. Most of migrant workers in Bangkok come from this northeastern region.

A citywide survey in 2003 found that Chum Phae has 13 slum communities, with a total population of more than 1,000 families squatting on public land throughout the city. CODI supported the community network in Chum Phae to start the Baan Mankong collective housing program, using the community driven approach. This included setting up saving groups in all the communities, setting up a city-level committee to oversee the program. The community network in Chum Phae developed a citywide slum upgrading plan which aimed to make Chum Phae a city without slums.

- **Secure housing for all:** Today, all of the slum communities in the city, with 1,052 families, have been upgraded, with permanent housing and secure land. CODI has supported this





citywide slum upgrading process with 68.2 million baht for infrastructure improvement and 153.9 million baht in housing loans, at 4% interest per year. The urban poor have been responsible for 63% of the total cost of the projects.

- **City-level development fund + welfare fund:** In 2010, the community network also set up a city-level revolving community development fund, to finance housing development of urban poor and as an umbrella for their community welfare fund, which supports member families in cases of sickness, death, births and other situations of need. The welfare fund has 1,984 members throughout the city, with 2.2 million baht in the fund, of which about half has been contributed by the members at the rate of 30 baht (US\$ 1) per member per month.
- **Housing insurance fund:** To prevent members of these housing projects from losing their land and housing in a crisis (which often occurs in urban poor housing projects), the community set up housing insurance fund, which helps member families to make their loan repayments in times of trouble. The housing insurance fund was set up in 2012 and now has 726 members (70% of the total housing program participants) and 333,418 baht in the fund.
- **Community network collective rice farm:** In 2013, the community network in Chum Phae raised funds from various sources (including a loan from CODI), to buy a 38 Rai (6.0 Hectare) rice farm on the outskirts of town, where they now grow organic rice and vegetables for sale and for members to consume. This collective farm produces 15 tons of rice each year, using shared labor of the members. The price of farmland, which was 2.5 million baht in 2013, has increased to 38 million baht this year. In the future, if land prices continue to rise and other communities need land for housing, the rice farm land can be used - so it works also as a kind of land bank.
- **Community network collective drinking water plant:** The Chum Phae network's latest activity, which began in 2015, is a community-managed drinking water factory, which provides community members and the public with clean water. The water factory had 759,000 baht in sales and made 150,000 baht in profits during the 2018 year.
- **Other network activities:** The community network in Chum Phae brings together 13 communities and runs many other development programs like elderly health promotion, waste management, youth development, disabled persons development and income generation.



Many aspects of the development in Chum Phae contradicts conventional understanding about the limitations of the poor. In this city, the urban poor have designed, constructed and managed multi-million baht housing projects by themselves and shown that the goal of making a city without slums is possible. The city has also shown that with a more collective and more community-driven approach, the communities can run projects which address any need and lead to stronger and resilient communities. Since 2003, CODI has supported citywide and community-driven programs like the one in Chum Phae in more than 300 cities around Thailand, with 2,600 slums.

#### 4. Housing insurance fund

One of the problems of urban poor housing projects is when community members lose their house and land because of economic problems (such as loss of income, some health crisis, etc.) in the family. When a poor family finally gets secure land and a house, but finds itself without sufficient money to make its loan repayment, they may have no choice but to sell their house (or the rights to that house) to an outsider and move to another slum.

The Baan Mankong Collective Housing Program encourages the participants to take action on this important issue. All housing cooperatives have an agreement that if a member wants to leave the cooperative, they must sell their house back to the cooperative, which will select another qualified members to replace them. But before a member is forced to move out because they can't repay their loan, they can get help from the Housing Insurance Fund. Since 2013, CODI has been encouraging all city-level community networks to set up these insurance funds.



**How it works:** Members of the insurance fund (all of whom are members of housing cooperatives that have taken loans from CODI) contribute 240 baht (US\$ 7.50) per year to the fund. The fund will then help the members pay all or part of their housing loans when they are affected by disasters or if the family's main earner dies or is disabled before paying off the housing loan.

**Housing insurance at work:** City-level housing insurance funds have been set up in 252 cities so far, with 38,437 members (about 35% of total number of Baan Mankong housing program members nationwide) and 9,792,343 baht (US\$ 306,010) in the funds. So far, the housing insurance funds have helped 1,176 families repay 13.0 million baht (US\$ 406,937) in cases of the main earner dying or being disabled, or in cases of disasters.

## 5. Collective projects to make urban communities greener and healthier

In 2013, the Government's Thai Health Promotion Foundation entered into an unconventional partnership with the national network of urban poor communities, to develop community-managed projects in which community members grow safe, healthy, organic vegetables and fruits in pots, planter boxes and on common land and around their houses in low-income communities, under its "Green & Healthy Community Program". The foundation provided budget and training for community members (and especially school children) in how to grow organic food in pots and small spaces, and the community network coordinated the project and spread around the learning.



Hunger and poor nutrition are problems that can be invisible in low-income communities, where family incomes go up and down, and they are getting worse as health problems from pesticide-laced produce and corporate junk food become more common. The Green & Healthy Community Program gave communities a means of addressing these problems and creating awareness through action which allows them to start right away producing their own healthy food, even in very limited spaces. In the process, the program has built new channels for sharing ideas on safe food production and expertise about gardening techniques between households within communities, between communities within the city, and between cities and regions, through the existing urban networks.



In the first year, 100 urban poor communities in 40 cities took part in the program, and most of them were veterans of Baan Mankong housing projects. But as the process has continued and expanded, a program of individual community projects has become a more strategic and more citywide program of healthy food co-production, in which poor communities in 70 cities (and a few rural areas also) are now working with their community networks, with CODI and with their local governments to survey local food security problems and needs, and work together to develop citywide strategies to incorporate the growing of healthy fruits and vegetables in low-income communities, as well as promoting greater self-sufficiency in food production.

In 2019, CODI supplemented this green community movement by supporting networks in 27 more cities with grants of 40,000 baht (US\$ 1,300) per city, and will support another 43 cities in the second phase of the program. As a result of this program, which is being enthusiastically taken up by more and more communities all the time, some 40% of Thailand's low-income urban communities have now become green: growing their own organic vegetables, improving their community environments with vegetable gardens and



fruit trees, reducing their expenditure on food and empowering community members (and especially children and youth) to learn how to garden, to nourish themselves and to take greater control over the food they eat.

## 6. Collective housing for the homeless

A 2013 survey by the Human Settlements Foundation showed that there were about 1,395 homeless people in Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Khon Kaen - the three largest cities of Thailand. The homeless network has petitioned the government to grant financial support to help house these homeless people. In 2016, the government approved a budget of 118.6 million baht (US\$ 3.7 million) to support the construction of homeless network-run shelters for 698 people, in the three cities.

The first shelter to be built with this new government support was opened in Chiang Mai in 2018. The second one will open in Khon Kaen later this year, and the last one will open in Bangkok's Pathum Thani District in 2020. The government has several "halfway homes" for homeless people scattered around the country, which provide shelter for poor or marginalized people. But these new shelters will be managed by homeless network members themselves, and will prepare homeless residents for more permanent housing, which has already begun in Bangkok, by group of formerly homeless people.



The latest nationwide survey of homeless people was carried out in early 2019, by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, in collaboration with CODI, the Human Settlements Foundation and the Homeless Network. In that survey, they counted 2,669 homeless people in Thailand.

## 7. Collective housing for coastal fishing communities

Thailand has more than 3,100 kilometers of coastline in the southern and eastern parts of the country. Thousands of poor communities exist in these coastal areas - some with legal land tenure and some without formal tenure. The coastal land where most of these communities live (some under mangrove forest reserves) is under the control of the two national government departments:

- the Waterways Department
- the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources.

New rules and regulations on the management of coastal areas have a great impact on the communities and their land use. In 2018, CODI conducted a survey of these coastal communities and found that at least 78 communities, with 11,600 families, live in the land under these two departments. CODI has worked with the two departments to settle disputes between the communities (which need permanent, secure housing and good living environments) and the government (which needs to control encroachment land considered to be public land). As a result, more than ten collective housing projects have been developed in coastal communities on government land so far.

In Hadlek City, in Trat province, in the eastern part of the country, along the Gulf of Siam coast, 738 fisherfolk families live in old communities on Waterways Department



land. In 2018, CODI helped to develop a pilot project with housing improvements for 60 families. The improvements will continue in other parts of the communities, using reblocking or reconstruction techniques, if necessary. CODI, the community networks and the Waterways Department will work together in other 26 subdistricts and cities in Trat Province, and will extend the project to other coastal areas in the country as well.

In addition, many collective housing projects have been implemented in coastal communities in the southern part of Thailand, with the support of the Department of Marine and Coastal resources. Most of these communities are urban poor Muslim fisherfolk. All of these communities have developed projects to protect their environment and have agreed with the Department on mangrove forest protection, waste management and prohibiting further encroachment.

## 8. Rural housing and settlement upgrading

The government's program to register the country's poor was launched in 2004. At that time, nearly four million people used the registration process to tell the government that they did not have secure land and housing.

Between 2005 and 2008, CODI launched 20 rural housing and settlement upgrading projects. Most of the public land available in the rural areas is under control of many government organizations and becomes quite complicated. Most cases involving the overlapping of actual community land use and forest reserve area, especially the areas around Thailand's 140 national parks. Government data in 2018 revealed that about 2,700 communities live in these disputed forest reserve areas, covering an area of 5.9 million rai (2.33 million acres.). Most communities say they have lived on that land for generations, since long before the reserve area laws came into effect. Since 2017, the government has tried to address these forest reserve land conflicts by allowing the communities to continue to live on and use the land for agriculture. At the same time, the government has undertaken to reclaim public lands in rural areas that have been illegally encroached upon by rich and influential people around the country. One government organization responsible for reclaiming stolen public land is the Agricultural Land Reform Office (ALRO).

CODI has worked with ALRO to use several tracts of reclaimed public land for projects to house the rural landless poor and provide them with small agricultural land also. Typical land distribution in these rural projects is one rai (1,600 m<sup>2</sup>) for housing and another 5 rai (8,000 m<sup>2</sup>) for cultivation. Since 2017, 77,000 landless rural poor families, in 92 projects, have participated in this Rural Baan Mankong Program. ALRO provides land for the program, with the list of landless families carefully scrutinized by the related government agencies.



CODI manages the community process like other Baan Mankong collective housing programs: setting up of savings groups, supporting the communities to do participatory community and house design planning, infrastructure planning, income generation and house construction. One of the most important components of the rural housing program is the farming and income-generation planning, because all activities begin on land that is not yet productive, and it is important that these families can not only get secure land and housing, but a means of sustaining themselves and thriving in the long term.

**Rural Baan Mankong subsidies:** The per-household subsidy CODI provides in these rural Baan Mankong projects is similar to the amount granted in urban community housing projects (about 72,000 baht per



household) but differs in the details of how the subsidy is broken down into components. The rural program subsidy includes 40,000 baht for house construction, 12,000 baht for infrastructure development, 5,000 baht for social and economic planning processes and 5,000 baht for study tours or training in farming and income-generation activities.

## 9. Collective housing for disaster-affected communities

CODI began working on disaster rehabilitation after the 2004 tsunami, which affected hundreds of communities along the Andaman coast of Thailand. Most of the post-tsunami activities focused on housing the people who had lost their dwellings in the waves - both temporary shelter and permanent housing. After the tsunami, CODI responded to other disasters, such as flooding and landslides in the south and north in 2006 and 2007, big floods in Bangkok and the central plains in 2010-2011, the earthquake in the northern province of Chiang Rai in 2014, a forest fire which destroyed an entire hilltribe community in 2016, and landslides in the northern province of Nan in 2018, which involved the relocation of 60 hilltribe families to land nearby.



Each kind of disaster has its own context, but CODI's common response is to support a relief and rehabilitation process that is community-driven and collective. In each case, CODI works with the community networks to set up a community committee to survey the damage, develop an initial response, raise funds, set up community disaster relief fund and carry out rehabilitation plans. In some cases, the affected communities may need to relocate to safer land and rebuild their houses and community, and in those cases, the communities can then access financial and technical support from CODI's Baan Mankong collective housing program. Between 2004-2019, CODI supported the community-driven construction of more than 11,000 temporary shelters and house repairs and more than 150 permanent houses in disaster-hit communities.

## 10. Nan Sandbox: Secure land and forests for the poor

Nan Province is one of most important watershed areas in northern Thailand, feeding water to the north and central parts of the country. Most of the rural families in Nan Province are mountain people who live on land that is under dispute. The government claims they are encroachers on public forests, but the people insist they have lived in the area for generations, since long before the declaration of areas as government forest reserves. The forest reserve declaration in 1964 turned 84% of the province's land into national reserve forest, and century-old forest communities become illegal squatters overnight. According to the law, no human activities are allowed in these forest reserve areas. But in fact most communities residing in those areas use their land for agriculture, mostly to grow cash crops like corn. Government statistics showed that in the decade between 2003 and 2013, 838,798 Rai (1,342 ha) of forest reserve land has been used for cultivation.

Since 2010, CODI has supported communities in 26 subdistricts in Nan Province to carry out surveys of the disputed land and use their survey data to analyze the problems and develop solutions. In 2018, the government, community organizations and private sector partners launched the Nan Sandbox Model, to solve the land problems. The model is a province-wide movement aiming to solve the problems of disputed land in all 99 subdistricts in the province. The government wants to stop further forest encroachment on the reserve forest land, the communities want no more evictions and want to be able to manage their community forests for sustainable agriculture and resource utilization. The goal of the Sandbox program is "the government recognizes



people's right to a robust livelihood in Nan Province, sustained by environmentally and economically supportive farming." Nan Sandbox aims to "reclaim more than 550 thousand acres of degraded forest - that's 18% of all forest reserves in Nan, allow villagers to legally cultivate 28% of the deforested areas, with the understanding that 18% of it will be grown back into national forest, requires private funding from donors to temporarily support the farmers as they make the difficult change to new and sustainable agricultural practices in Nan and to ensure locals don't revert to deforestation, we need to spread new agricultural knowledge and practices, and focus on crops that generate real and sustainable income for farmers." ([nansandbox.com](http://nansandbox.com))

It will take several decades of implementation to reach this goal. The collaboration model here began with the detailed survey in 2018 of all families and their land use, securing funding for agriculture practice transition, stopping encroachment, reforestation, promoting alternative crops and compensating farmers for lost income during the transition period. With secure land provided by this program, constructing housing can then become possible in needy communities.

## 11. Community land and housing management

One of the major problems of Thai rural families around the country is unsecure land and housing due to the overlapping of public land ownership and community land use of public land. Many communities - especially communities living in or around national parks or forest reserves - are locked in long-term land disputes with related government organizations. Some communities have faced eviction, while most of them insist that they have lived in the area for generations and that the reserve forest laws, which came only recently, have made them illegal inhabitants. Between 2011 and 2013, CODI has supported communities in more than 1,700 subdistricts (out of a total 7,500 in the whole country) to carry out land use surveys to bolster their negotiations with government agencies and to inform their planning for further development.

Farming communities in Klonghinpoon Subdistrict, in Sakaew Province, began the process in 2004. Like most rural communities in Thailand, farmers in these communities have a huge amount of informal debt (at high interest rates of 10 - 20% per month) but low income from their farming. They first set up savings groups to provide low-interest loans (at 12% per year) to farmer members and to begin tackling the more serious problem of landless farmers.

The community survey in 16 villages showed that out of a total 3,000 families, 720 were either landless or had insufficient land for agriculture, while 212 families had insecure housing. The community network set up a Land and Housing Fund in 2009 and began buying plots of land for 17 landless families, so they could have land for both housing and a little farming. The landless families repay the fund at least 500 baht (US\$ 16) per month. They can get housing loans from the fund too, up to ten times the amount of their saving.

The community network also set up a community welfare fund in 2008, which provides members with welfare benefits in cases of sickness, deaths, births and other needs. 5,900 community welfare funds have been set up nationwide with CODI support since 2005. But the fund here in Klonghinpoon Subdistrict uses 25% of their welfare fund as loans for landless farmers and another 30% to refinance high-interest informal loans, with only 6% annual interest. This welfare fund, with more than 4,200 members who contribute US\$1 to the fund every month, has more than 5 million baht in the fund now.





The community network surveyed all the families' land use and researched the ownership of all the public land in the subdistrict, to begin building a subdistrict-wide solution to landlessness and to develop a community land use master plan. At present, 45 landless families have gotten land, and 60 families have repaired their houses with loans from their fund. Between 2010 and 2012, 4 plots of land were purchased, for 2.6 million baht (US\$ 81,472), using loans from the community welfare fund and the fund's own money contributed by members. The fund, which has 50 members and 4 million baht capital, plans to buy another large plot of land in 2020, for another 20 landless families.

Ms. Wanna Sookkasem, 60 year-old landless farmer, is one of the fund members. She has gotten both land and a house from the fund. Before getting these, she had to pay 1,000 baht per month to rent a very small house. But with loans from the fund, she bought 400 m2 of land for 19,500 baht and repays 600 baht per month for the land loan. She borrowed another 40,000 baht to build a new house, and repays 800 baht per month for that. Her family now has both land and house, and has nearly repaid both the loans back. (Note: the minimum daily wage in this area is 300 baht).

The government's Land Reform Department has just reclaimed a large tract of public land in Klonghinpoon Subdistrict, that had been illegally taken over by a local capitalist. The community network has negotiated to use that land to provide land to another 150 landless families. In these ways, this poor rural subdistrict is using its own savings and contributions to solve problems of debt, landlessness and housing.

## About CODI

The Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI) is a Thai Government institution whose 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. These initiatives include housing, land purchase, livelihood, community enterprise and many others. CODI's status as a public organization gives it a degree of freedom to more flexibly channel government funds to a development process which is driven by communities themselves.

As such, CODI is an institution which facilitates change by people, at scale. CODI's focus is not only on alleviating poverty, but on finding ways by which communities can be the key actors in whatever development they determine is needed. Instead of making most of the decisions within the institution, CODI works to create space for communities to work together as managers and implementers of various development initiatives, so that CODI can be a public institution that is jointly-managed with people, as much as possible. As an autonomous entity with a special status as an independent public organization, under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, CODI has greater freedom and flexibility than conventional government agencies, and can directly access public funds from annual fiscal budgets and partner with a greater variety of public and civil organizations. CODI is governed by a board which brings together representatives from all the different sectors: government agencies, civil society, NGOs, academic institutions and communities in rural and urban areas. All CODI's activities and its staff of some 300 people around the country are overseen by CODI's director, and CODI's performance is appraised and audited by the government every year. CODI's director is its chief executive officer, and all of CODI's 300 or so staff members are hired on a contract basis, and their work is appraised annually.

**Fund magic:** Since it was first set up, the Thai Government has granted CODI a total sum of 2,800 million baht (US\$ 84 million) for the CODI revolving loan fund, and interest earned on the various kinds of loans from the fund largely finance CODI's overall operations, so the organization has not required additional support from the government since then, except for special programs. In the 27 years since CODI was set up, in 1992, 2,000 community savings groups have been set up in towns and cities in all 77 of Thailand's provinces, with savings which now surpass 3.2 billion baht (US\$ 102 million), and hundreds of area-based and issue-based community networks have been set up. 10.7 billion baht (US\$ 333 million) has been given in various kinds of loans, more than half of which has been repaid. And these loans - from both the fund and from the savings groups - have created assets and additional income worth billions of baht - all in the hands of Thailand's poorest citizens. And every baht of the CODI Fund is still there, still available, still revolving and helping more people, generating more assets, solving more problems.

In the past all communities in the whole country is self reliance ones. All food produced and distributed locally, fertile natural resource in the mountain, forest and seashore provide food, medicine and shelter for all. But more than a century of centralization and six decades of industrialization weaken the capability of both local administration and communities. Industrialization and cash crop promotion depleted all natural resources and threatened food security. CODI vision in 2036 is strong, resilient and self reliance communities throughout the country. The grand strategies to achieve this goal is area-based and inclusive development by community organizations and network. The mission of CODI is strengthening community organizations to reach this goal.  
Programs and activities.

As the government organization, CODI has to follow all the laws, regulations and policies of the government. But at the same time, as an institution that exists to support a national demand-driven community development process, CODI needs to address the needs of the the poor, in all their variety, around the country. CODI's programs are designed to serve both requirements, from the formal side and the informal side. On the formal side, the Thai government has recently approved a 20-year (2017-2036) National Strategy which aims to create a "developed nation with stability, prosperity and sustainability. CODI will be the key institutional actor in one part of this 20-year National Strategy, the strategy for "broadening opportunities to improve social equality and equity." CODI's Baan Mankong Housing programs that have been described above are important tools for CODI's work to achieve those goals. Besides the Baan Mankong housing programs described above, CODI also implements several other programs, including:

**Community Welfare Fund:** This program began in 2005 with pilot welfare funds in 99 rural sub-districts, and later expanded to cover 5,938 sub-district and cities (out of a total 7,852), with 5.3 million members and 13,950 million baht in combined funds. Each member of the welfare funds contributes 1 baht per day day (US\$ 11 per year) to the fund, which provides members with at least 13 types of welfare, including support for illness and funerals, support for newborn babies, and interest-free grants for starting small businesses, education, pension for elderly and disaster funds. Some 1.7 million members had been assisted by the welfare funds so far. While government expenditure on social welfare has become a major challenge around the globe, community-managed welfare funds, in which 65% of the funds come from members in the communities and which are run by the community organization themselves will probably be a viable alternative for many governments. Thailand's grassroots community movement has set a goal of having 15 million welfare fund members nationwide (out of a total population of 70 million people) by 2023.

**Community Councils:** Very often, local people have little control over the effects of market-driven globalization and various government development projects that come to their communities, and no say in how those forces and projects affect their lives, livelihoods and localities. This disconnect between the larger economic and political forces that determine development and the reality of people's lives on the ground creates a form of development without roots. Community councils are a tool for balancing the two. Community councils are platforms which strengthen the horizontal network of communities within a rural or urban sub-district (ward), giving people who live in that ward a legitimate, collective platform to discuss development issues, work together and initiate development projects of their own.

Community councils were initially organized on an informal basis, but the 2008 Community Councils Act gave a legal status to these important citizen bodies, which include representatives from as many communities within the ward as possible. A ward will typically include several rural villages and small towns, as well as all kinds of community groups. Besides meeting regularly to discuss local issues and develop policy recommendations to present to local government, community councils develop community master plans and implement a variety of development projects of their own, including welfare programs, livelihood projects, and programs to support sustainable agricultural production. Through CODI, which has been supporting the national community council process since 2008, community councils have access to the national government and cabinet. Today, community councils are registered and active in more than 7,406 rural and urban wards around Thailand. As of May 2019, community councils had been established in 7,406 wards, out of a total 7,825 wards in the country. That means that 95% of all Thai wards now have community councils. There are a total number of 151,749 organizations taking part in these community councils, with an average number of 20 organizations per council.

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