

Notes on Thailand's **CANAL-SIDE** community networks:

In Bangkok and other cities . . .

These notes (some of which are quite rough!) were taken or collected by Thomas Kerr at the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) in Bangkok, and cover the period of 1997 - 2004

NOTE: The Thai word "**klong**" means **canal**.

1997 - 98: First ever survey of klong settlements in Bangkok

- The Survey was a joint venture of UCDO, BMA and Rajabhat Panakorn University. The survey involved NGOs and the local housing mafia.
 - According to that survey, at that time, there were **184 canal settlements in Bangkok, with a population of 52,438 people, in 11,653 households**. This survey was undertaken during the administration of Dr. Pichit, one of the more community-friendly governors of Bangkok.
 - BMA wants to evict them, even though they are on land under many different owners. City is very hyper and worried about flooding - big political issue, because Bangkok is at sea-level, built in the Chao Phraya delta and flooding is natural, but here is this huge city in a swamp! Much flooding. Always new Plans to "improve" city's drainage system, mostly evict houses to build concrete retaining walls along klongs, so they have a "hard edge." Also planning more pumping stations and water gates, which inhibit the old systems of water flowing in the klongs and keeping them naturally flushed clean. Now many stagnant water klongs eally foul! But these walls cause "eco waves" when boats go past, don't absorb waves like old "soft" edges (with legs of houses, plants, dirt, etc). Klong federation forming? Let people take care of the canals - they do better than the city can.
- Also, refer to newspaper clipping from Bangkok Post (in Thailand File) "*Reprieve for 4,200 households which encroached on canals*"
 - "**Water Soluble Federating Techniques**" - The principle of coming together around a common problem or landlord or land ownership has been a tried-and-tested federating technique (Railways, Airport, under-bridge, etc) in India, Thailand, etc. Here the common thing is the water, the klong, which flows to connect so many communities. Bonding together in larger numbers for strength, ideas, larger pool of skills, negotiating clout, shared savings, etc. That's called "federating" - the benefits of being part of something BIG rather than isolated. person - family - community - federation. Where there are no social programmes, no safety net, no welfare, like Denmark!
 - **Klong-side Settlements Network update** - new Klong federation, many NGOs and groups work together, city plans to evict them, idea of wave echos causing trouble on concrete-walled klongs, klong-cleaning story, visit by klong settlers from Chiangmai, also to Songkha.

Bangkok canal communities update January 1999 :

- In early Jan 1999, there was a meeting with BMA. People met the BMA governor about 6 or 7 cases along the Bangkok klongs. These cases couldn't be resolved within the district process, so went to BMA. All cases awarded to communities. This is because of the power of federating - bigger numbers have clout. Most of the other cases were negotiated within the district and agreements were reached about what to do with the settlements.
- Most of the cases involve the city's plans to repair the klongs and concrete the walls, (big drainage problems in city in rainy season) etc. Houses come in the way, so agreements to shift a little, reblock, pull ack - each one different. Main priority at this pint is STAYING THERE!! Klong feds make clear they want to stay there, fist - NOT relocate. Willing to shift, reblock, land-share, etc, but not move.
- First city announced wide evictions. People protested and go reprieve (newspaper). Then negotiations began a=on two levels. First within each district (and there are 20 or 30 districts within BKK with Klong Settlements in them - check this number in survey) there was a negotiation where the district's plans and communities discussed and came to resolution. This worked for most cases, but those that couldn't be resolved came to the city level, BMA. All cleared there.

Tom's notes from visits to canal settlements in the historic Ratanakosin area of Bangkok
July 1999

1. Chumchon Klong Ong-ang (also called Pam Mahakan) :

Behind the *Pam Mahakan* (old tower and fort wall built by Rama 1). Rama I built 14 walls around the city to protect it, this is one. 200 years later, 4 Rai of area outside this wall is occupied by a 50-year old settlement of 77 houses (280 people). Now the land ownership is under the BMA. At the front of the settlement is the *Pam Mahakan*, and at the back is the historic Klong Ong-ang. Right in the middle of the historic part of the city. You'd never know it was there, when you pass by the battlements of the crisply white-washed old wall.

Beautiful settlement, with many old banyan and bo trees, a special little enclosed garden for children, large and shady open square at the middle, with a lean-to housing free weights for boys to lift, and meeting space. Tucked cozily between an ancient Klong Ong-ang, and the ancient city wall. At one end of the community are several artisan families who are traditional bird-cage makers, using bamboo to fashion elaborate filigree bird-cages with elaborate hooks, and some sell the birds and seeds to feed them too.

A board was put up telling the whole history of the settlement, with facts about population, area, etc. Ealier, the BMA tried to evict people, used police aggressive tactics and offered compensation and free plots far away at Chalong Krung. (When was this?) At that time, people didn't have any alternatives, had no Klong federation, community wasn't organized, didn't know they could bargain collectively, and people were worried, so 15 families were intimidated into taking the compensation and moving out there. Some of these people have not been able to survive out there, and want to move back, and have asked the BMA if they can repay the compensation in installments. Lek says now the community has much more confidence, and many "friends" in the same situation. Before, they were lonely! Now they will not allow the police or the BMA to enter the settlement to evict them. Now they are doing two things :

- bargaining with the BMA about their own settlement
- strengthening the klong network.

Garbage Cleaning Day : When we visited, they were doing their monthly cleaning and garbage removal, bit party atmosphere, Thai Rock and roll music was blaring, crows were shrieking, people (women, kids and men) sweeping garbage everywhere and carrying it out to the BMA truck, which is arranged to come on the fixed day, women cooking lunch for everyone (they take turns, 10 families cook together each month, rotating this task). This activity uses no money - everybody chips in, and nobody gets paid.

Leaders here are Pi Lek and Pi Wiman. Our guide is Pui and Duang from UCDO.

Part of New Klong Network : Now they are part of the all-Bangkok Klong federation, and are developing their own plans to stay where they are. Community members all contribute 20 baht per month to a special fund to support sending the community committee members to Klong federation meetings and activities elsewhere. Several people from other settlements in the Klong Federation had come to help out, and after the work is over and everyone had eaten lunch, they would all have a klong fed meeting. People came from Ladprao, Chatuchak, Bang Bua, others. Many helpers! So far, there are 35 communities in the Klong Federation.

Land-sharing plans: They have developed a detailed proposal (from a series of options) in which they all move onto 1 rai of the land and build tightly packed rows of small 2-story shop-houses (total 65 houses) like at Manangasila (4 x 6 metre plots = 24 sq.mt. plots x 2 stories = 48 sq. mt of living space per family) (the idea is to keep the houses lower than the old wall, so you won't see them from the street) and then turn over the other 3 rai to the BMA to develop a public garden. In addition to giving back 75% of the land, they are proposing to become the official caretakers of the park and the old wall. There is a young architect with a pony tail living in the settlement - he is out of work and helped draft up several land-sharing options, of which the people picked one to send to the BMA negotiations. The proposed plans include generous space for parking their carts, since many people living here make their living selling food, souvenirs and other goods from carts in the Sanam Luang nearby. Community members have visited all the other land-sharing projects in BKK, and other housing projects in Udon, Khonkaen and Chiang Mai. Now the proposal is with the BMA, and is being negotiated for at two levels, - within the district in the Klong Committee, and at the BMA with the central Klong committee. (check this?)

Tuang (UCDO) says the only other Land sharing project that has been done in BKK on BMA land is at Pawet - not finished yet, and took a long time. In that project, BMA does all the development, design, etc, as a kind of pilot project.

Other preparations : Every household in the community is part of the 6-months old savings group. People have three saving options - daily, weekly or monthly, depending on how they earn their money. They save mostly for housing, but also for revolving fund to give loans to each other. But the overwhelming focus is on saving for house building. Their rule : If you want to borrow from the revolving fund, you can only borrow

75% of what you have saved, maximum. They learned the ropes of savings from other groups that which they visited and hosted, via exchanges.

Coming Back : We meet one severely handicapped guy (maybe later stages of Multiple Sclerosis?) who makes beautiful little terra cotta figurines in the shape of buddhas and traditional Thai musicians. He gets the clay from the bed of the Klong Ong-ang out back. His father was one of the families which took the compensation and moved to Chalong Krung. But this man, his son, could not survive out there, couldn't sell his figurines and support he and his wife. Here, he makes 10 figurines a day, which he sells for 60 Baht each to a middle man (who then sells them for several hundred). So he asked the community if he could come back, and they agreed, but only as a special case, on humanitarian grounds, since anyone who took compensation and moved away cannot return. They have given him a space where one of the abandoned houses was, and he (or his wife) has built a very poor shack with odds and ends.

2. Siri Amat Community (another klong-side community near Sanam Luang)

This 80-year old community falls in the way of a planned BMA road, which will cause the eviction of over half the 48 houses. Some of the people here are garbage collectors, Sa-Leng, and many are vendors who sell drinks, snacks and souvenirs from carts around the Sanam Luang nearby, or near the Sapan Put. They mostly work evenings, and start preparing their carts in the afternoon, work late.

Siri Amat is part of the new Klong Network, and has just recently started savings, but not everyone is a member yet. They show us the yellow and pink savings ledgers and the passbooks that are standard with UCDO-connected savings (?) In Dao Kanong underbridge community, Patrick (South Africa) came and pushed for daily savings.

3. Pracha Ruam Jai (1) Community

(*pracha* = people, *Ruam* = working together, *Jai* = heart)

This is one of the settlements in the Federation of settlements along the Klong Perm. This settlement is right behind Wat Sumean Nalee, Bang Khaen area in BKK. 255 houses here, on one side of Klong Prem. 28 families have gotten together and are leading the way in showing how people can make their own plans to develop the klong and settlement - a pilot group.

They unroll a LONG map of all the settlements along the Klong Prem. Ruam Jai - 1 (255 houses), Ruam Jai-2 (173 houses) and one other settlement (94 houses) - total 522 houses. Each community does its own mapping. Intense work going on now to organise all these settlements and bring them into the fed. Starting savings, doing mapping, visiting other settlements, forming committees, doing detailed surveys of pollution sources along the klong.

The long map they show is extraordinary - very detailed, showing all basic services, houses, and they have located sources of pollution along the klong - a pepsi factory, a paint factory, a middle-class housing colony, a district office newspaper printing house, car factory, a hotel. *"We are not the people who are making the canal dirty. We don't throw our garbage in any more. We have clean ups now."* They show newspaper stories of BMA Governor Bichit coming to see the cleaned klong in a boat.

Principle : *"Our struggle is not to confront the government, but to show the way, with ideas and creative solutions of our own."*

Earlier the BMA tried to evict this settlement in order to build concrete walkways and dikes to improve the Klong, but the people want to stay and are making their own plans for redeveloping their settlement. Yps are helping with Patama-style workshops. People say no concrete dikes (walls?) but plant trees instead to shore up the klong edges and make beautiful. A "soft" dike system instead of concrete.

Objective : *if we work together, we can stay. Otherwise, we'll be kicked out - if not by this administration, by a later one.* Need to start savings scheme.

Problems: bad smell in Klong, no money to improve houses, need fire protection, toilets too close to the water, walkway through settlement is too narrow, access to main road is not good, houses too old, need waste-water treatment before going into klong. They are thinking about all these problems : "we need to start cleaning up our own settlement before pointing fingers at other polluters."

Pulling back from the Klong: When we visit with the Napalis, there is a little workshop with the 28 families in the pilot group, and the Yps, to look at the canalege, and reblocking to pull the houses back from the Klong. On the map, the yellow line = 20 metre wide klong (minimum) and the red line = 24 metre klong (better for BMA). Either will mean cutting off of the houses that overhang the klong. Utipan trying to get concensus on doing this. Reluctance. Some tension between UCOD community workers (Uttipan and Tuang) and the YP's who say the UCDO interferences in their workshops, interrupt and don't let us do our professional thing. Same kind of thing as at Songkhla - pulling back houses to make a consistent width of Klong, and pullin bakc toilets from Klong.

New Bangkok Klong-community Network :

Activities : cleaning klongs, campaign for right to stay, Environmental awareness, improve houses, monthly meetings, romote youth groups, promote welfare for health and funerals.

The klong network is structured like this : each klong has its own network made up of settlements along that klong. So far, 36 communities living along 8 klongs in BKK are in the network. Many still not part of work. (total figures in newsletter).

Born in a crisis! The network began in 1998, with the big eviction scare after BMA announced plans to evict thousands of canal-side squatters in order to improve the klongs to prevent flooding. Didn't happen - get this story - then big klong community survey. Subsequent negotiations led to a city-wide policy in which all the klongs can stay and ... (tell story, district and central mechanisms), but the district bureaucracies and old regulations keep this new good policy from working well. It's a clash between the new and old thinking. Also, Bichit, the current governor of BMA (or mayor?) is a good klong network supporter, and helped see this new policy through. But he is at the end of his term, a "lame duck" and a lot of the District officials are dragging their feet on negotiations with klong communities progress, waiting to see how the wind will blow with the next governor.

I ask all these klong leaders why start a klong network?

Strong and together! Most have same problems. Want to gather around same issue to have power and togetherness, even though the BMA has allowed us to stay. Who knows how long this will last? The network has to outlast fickle changes of politics! You never know what will happen. Governments never last long, but the network has to be permanent! If we do alone, we have no power. Together, we have lots of people, lots of ideas. Good solutions come from lots of ideas and people involved. Stength in numbers. The October 14 revolt also gave idea. Everybody has these problems, have to share the ideas and need to have a forum to do this. Need to pool ideas. Tuang says "the law of the community worker is how to make a forum for people to discuss, NOT to make a solution - that has to come from people themselves." The BMA keeps trying tp push the poor out to th city periphery - why? Bbut if you have only rich people in the centre of the city, who will work? Who will sell things to eat? Who will do all the jobs if the poor are far away?

Three things the Klong Networks are doing :

1. Starting savings groups to show that people have resources, have money for their houses
2. Bargaining as a federation to stop eviction of Klong settlements
3. Bargaining for temporary housing registrations in Klong settlements- only a network can do this, not individual people - the policy to issue registration is with the BMA, but the extension of registrations through districts - amny of which are not cooperating, obstructing. There are "good and bad" districts
4. Plan projects to clean the canals and help BMA to learn about these, and to find out who the real polluters are.
5. Want to decide our lives ourselves, not the BMA.

The BMA's policy is good, even radical! to let people stay and redevelop, rather than evict them, but the implementation of the policy gets clogged in the lower levels - in district administrations, with old regulations and old attitudes towards Klong-side communities as "squatters" and encroachers.

Klong Clean-ups:

- **Songkhla:** In the southern Thai city of Songkhla, the communities along Klong Samrong, which runs through the middle of the city, were threatened with eviction. They developed plans to improve their settlement, first cleaning out the klong, then using funds from LIFE program (in which they built their own wooden walkways along canal-edge) and later with NHA budget (in which contractors built concrete walkways and other infrastructure, according to the redevelopment plans the people developed

themselves, in a series of extraordinary workshops conducted by a young Bangkok architect, Patama Roonrakwit.

- **Chiangmai communities along two canals** (Klong Mekhaa, and Klong Koowai) visit to Songkhla for Klong cleaning ideas. August 9th 1999 canal cleanup in Chiangmai, along Klong Mekhaa, with groups from BKK and Songkhla coming up to help. Consolidating ownership by cleaning up the place. Can take some stuff from Diana's notes. Patama's idea about "Pa Paa" concept, in Northern Thailand, where people in community get together to do things. Maybe this could be in a caption for the Chiang Mai Klong cleanup. (get photos of Chiangmai cleanup from Tun at DANCED / UCEA)

Nick's E-mail notes on Chiangmai Klongs :

The Klongs are mainly fed from the city moat, and other sources originating in the surrounding hills. The water is already polluted by the time it arrives in the city, at which point various markets and industry add to the pollution. By the time it reaches the communities, the water has clearly visible signs of pollution - dark colouration, dense algae and solid waste. The lives of those living around the Klong is tied with the water, naturally once cleaner and higher. There are still fish living in the water, but it is more of a hazard than an asset. With the communities, I am trying to develop a process of slowly filtering the pollution and redevelop the areas along either bank into usable green space. What I am looking for now is readings on river ecology that are relevant to this context and might help provide models of healthy systems towards which the communities can work. Models of river-canal systems that have been cleaned out elsewhere, ideas about filtering systems that the community might implement themselves as an initial step.

Klong Samrong in Songkhla :

- **Community-built walkway** first, then later community planning exercise with Patama and new NHA walkway. When the NHA built its heavy concrete walkway according to the design worked out by the people. Pi-leng's house. Photos from Pi-Duk of before and after on the Klong, and also food photos in the Japanese publication in Thailand File.
- **Community planning and city policy - how they relate :** Somsook says this is a good "precedent-setting" situation, where communities planned and convinced the city to go along with them. Also, using a Klong clean-up project to consolidate tenure.
- **The Klong clean up** - get notes from visit to Songkhla, with Howard and Nick - the stages. What communities can do, what the city has to do - the deep-dredging and moving back the house to make the Klong wide enough for the heavy municipal dredging raft. Distance across maintained. Also, agreement to move back toilets, so they don't feed into Klong. Sand bar at the end traps water. what to do.

BANGKOK Klong Update :

(copied from a column by Sanitsuda Ekachai in the Bangkok Post, Sept 23, 1999)
September 23, 1999

In mid September, 1999, the Minister for science, technology and the environment, Dr. Arthit Ourairat, reportedly publicly blamed the communities along Bangkok's canals of being the main cause of water pollution and announced a policy to evict them. Clean canals, he explained, are not only important for Bangkok's public health and environment, they also are potential sources of tourism money. According to his reasoning, the polluters must go. But is his reasoning sound?

Believe it or not, Bangkok, a city of more than 10 million, has no effective wastewater treatment. Basically, wastewater from all the households goes into the sewage and flows directly into natural waterways - together with polluted and often toxic waste water from factories. This is how canals and the Chao Phraya River have become the city's giant sewage lines. And how can this sewage be clean?

It is ridiculous to expect Bangkok's canals to be crystal clear simply by removing the canal-side communities without also tackling Bangkok's central sewage and water treatment system and the polluting businesses.

Although biased, Dr. Arthit's view struck a chord with Bangkok's middle class prejudice against the urban poor. For affluent Bangkokians, slums - whether along the canals or inland - are the hub of bad people who illegally encroach on public land, destroy the environment and turn any place into an underworld of drugs and crime, thus posing a danger to city safety. Few realize that without the cheap labour and goods supplied by the slums, the cost of living in BKK would be much, much higher....

But evicting BKK's slum communities won't be as easy as...among the grassroots movements in Thailand, Bangkok's slum movements are by far the strongest. After over two decades of fighting for housing rights, it is now standard practice for slum communities to take part in settlement negotiations.

There's also a fund to give them long-term, low interest loans for permanent residence. It's also clear that once the people feel safe from eviction, the slum environment improves immediately. As part of a growing civil society, the slum movement has proved how conflicts can be solved if people have security of land and a say in how to manage their environment.

Visit to Chumchon Wat Klang, Ladprao Soi 132, Bang Kapi District
Tom's rough notes from a big event to celebrate the cleaning up the canal
Feb 28, 2003

This is not really an informal community. People own their houses. Doesn't seem to be any tenure or eviction problem here. Community strongly organized on one side of the klong, but lots of renters and apartments on the other side, not as easy to organize. Very old community, mostly Muslim.

The community started to organize activities about 2 years ago, starting with a community meeting where they talked about the issues in their community, which they prioritized as a) drugs, b) garbage, and c) general quality of life. They have focused on prevention for their youth drug threat, which carries over into many of their projects such as the kids garbage bank project. Starting with solid waste in the community, they eventually ended up seeing the smell and pollution of the canal as a next step. Back in on 23rd of October 2002, the community convened a meeting at the local schools which sits at the mouth of the klong where it meets Klong Saen Saep. At the meeting they set a plan to start a clean up, and set in motion a community canal care program. Only a week later, digging up the garbage from the canal begun, and carried over 4 weekends until more than 20 tonnes of garbage was extracted.

Chumchon Wat Klang is part of the Bang Kapi District community network of 10 communities, of which six are doing garbage recycling activities. Activities in the community really got moving

Very active community, lots of activities :

- **Have savings group**
- **garbage bank**, where garbage is separated at source (plastic, paper, toxic waste, tin, glass, etc.) The garbage bank's main focus is on awareness raising for the kids who participate in the bank. The kids have a garbage bank book which show "deposits" of X kilos of this and X kilos of that. The garbage is collected at the bank every Saturday, and value is recorded in the book. They can make a withdrawal at any time. They can also take loans up to 10 times the value of their savings, but not greater than 5,000 baht, on which they pay a monthly fee of 2 baht. The bank currently has 175 members with 88,915 baht in savings. The savings don't earn interest (as this would be against Muslim beliefs), but "dividends" are paid to kids in the form of pencil cases, books and other useful and educational equipment. Then recyclable garbage is taken to a recycling center nearby, where 6 other communities also take recyclable waste. It's a SIF sponsored garbage sorting and transfer station, also a learning center "Recycling Transfer Station" - sell cleaned stuff to industry. Awareness raising project. SIF also supported some of the community committee to visit innovative community garbage projects in Phitsanulok.
- **Boats from DANCED**, involvement of DANCED Bangkok people, who donated boat, to clean klong every week, and to dump in the EM weekly. Originally one boat has been on loan from Bangkok district. Now the community has three boats to do their weekly cleaning.
- **Weekly klong cleaning** (take out garbage) and EM dumping to keep water alive.
- **Put flags in the klong, to show respect to the river spirits!**
- **Kids do fashion show of clothes** made from recycled materials (newspaper, noodle packets, carburetor filters, etc.) Kids also make sand candles, lots of fun!

Vichai Poey is the technical assistant from the Thai Community Foundation. He helped measure the klong, estimate volume of water, determined how much EM to use and showed people how to make the EM. He's an environmental engineer.

Speeches at Ceremony :

Khun Saowai (woman) is 72 years old, and is one of the leaders in the community. She paddles us down the klong in one of the red plastic DANCED boats. She was born in this community, and her 93 year old mother is still alive, and they BOTH take part in the aerobic exercise sessions each evening! When we find out how old this lively, strong woman is, we insist on taking the oars and rowing the boat, Nu, Peter Shimokawa and I, but the going is slow, and we zig-zag back and forth badly, and everyone on shore laughs!

- She says she used to swim and bathe in the canal when she was a kid, but they never drank the water. By then, the roads were good, the houses were good, community was very clean, people were doing well, but the klong was dirtier and smellier than ever, filled solid with garbage. Got worse over the years. Earlier, people used to throw garbage in the klong, but because it was mostly biodegradable - leaf wrappings, and paper etc. it wasn't such a problem. Then came the era of plastic and foam, and suddenly the klong was clogged with stuff that never went away.
- **Plus, there used to be water hyacinths**, which helped naturally clean the water, nature's water filtering process. But the city believed these caused flooding and so they removed them every year, and there was no biological assistance to clean the water, got dirtier.
- Khun Saowai was the one who finally said, "We have to do something! Can't wait for others to change our community, need to start ourselves." First they cleaned out the klong of the garbage, pulling huge basketfuls of garbage out from under the houses, and dredging up sofas, beds, bicycles, chairs, car parts, shoes, sewing machines, fans, birdcages.
- **Organizing people** : This side of the klong was easy to get organized to clean the klong, but the other side, which is mostly renters, was harder. Used loudspeakers and sent letters to get people across the way involved. Some gave money but not much involved in the work of cleaning or EM or the Garbage bank.
- **Cleaning the Klong** : They dug out 2 tons of garbage, but still water was black with pollution from their houses, from upstream and coming in from Klong Saen Sap. Klong used to be filthy, black, stinky. Used "Effective Microorganism" (EM) to bring water in klong back to life. Put organic waste with molasses (sugar?) and water into drums, it ferments and turns into liquid, which is then dumped into the klong. Now water is green, alive, fish inside.

**Wat Klang community : "The canal protector"
(Report by Vichai Poey, December 2004)**

Bangkok, "The Venice of the East" and the waste Venice : Bangkok was called as the East Venice as it has more than thousand canals in the city and its neighbour. Since king Rama V period canal excavation had done in different places all around the city purposing for transportation irrigation and some canal was built to be the way to attack enemy during war. Later canal became function like main transportation for the city. As city was expanding a lot of people evacuated in city happen residential area everywhere especially near the canal. Urbanization was grow up more a long both side of canal. People like to live near canal because it was easy to move around, food was available canal was plentyful of aquatic animal, a good relaxing place near the canal as cool windy weather with nice synergy, washing cleaning bathing activities and even drinking was done by using water from canal. So canal became thing to keep life easier and convenience that cause it had residential and commercial area more everyday. While the population of the city was increasing everyday the city was changing quickly, road construction cut through everywhere to supply people and became main transportation for the city and reducing the use of canal by the time. Due to the lack of solid waste management and wastewater treatment canal became the place to support the waste from the city, garbage from residential area was dumped in canal drainage line carry wastewater disposing into canal which caused canal bare high pollution and became waste finally.

Klong Wat Klang - the illness in the canal : Klong Wat Klang canal is an 800 meters branch of big canal San Seap run through the East of Wat Klang community. It used to be clean and livable beneficial canal in the past but now face the same situation as many canal. More than 20 years canal had to bare the solid waste and wastewater from the resident on both side of the canal today it has such a serious case of high pollution, water is totally black with bad strong smell, garbage float on every and become small damping island in some portion.

The care and responsibility to environment - Wat Klang community: Wat Klang community has long struggling on environmental problem and they started to deal with garbage issue in the year ----- . To deal with garbage management they has set up the recyclable bank named garbage bank. After sometime garbage bank is function well and reduce garbage in household and community which kept community much more clean. Community was more strong and powerful and became learning center for other community. The active leader later they move to fight with next issue, the polluted canal is the big challenge problem to them. To deal with it they need participation from people who live on both side of canal as they are stakeholder and should be key actor to take action. The community meeting had set up to find solution together people who lives near the canal express bad feeling to live near canal because of its strong bad smell and an unhealthy synergy they had lost their clean livable canal for long time and now they were going to took it back.

Cleaning up canal together : The volunteer team had formed with plan to clean up the canal. The first cleaning day was held on ----- with many people participated and good cooperation from district authority. About 5-7 tons of garbage had been collected on first day. Day by day people work hard on collecting garbage for 40 days about 21 tons of garbage had been collected most work almost done. The canal totally change it's physical to be clean and liable but still remain black color and bad strong smell.

"Heal the illness" in the canal by EM : To treat the waste canal people tried EM as they have seen in some community who succeeded in using EM for wastewater treatment and it is the only technology that was lowest cost easy to make by they own and they already made EM. An 800 meters was divided into 7 points and put red flag at every point to be the sign to pour EM at the point. The ratio of using EM was 1: 5,000 (one part of EM and 5,000 part of wastewater) each point will use about 280 liters approximately and pour EM into canal once a week.

Efficiency of EM : First week was not much changing but bad smell was reduced and still remain black color. Second week notice more fish in canal and les smell color still remain black. Third week was the big changing one day after pour EM the whole canal had changed to be new one , no bad smell and green livable color a lot of fish came in appear the air bubble everywhere small plankton born show quality of water

Happy ending together : People who live near the canal was excited to the new look canal . The hard working for almost 2 months people did together tiredly today bacame big pride when the result came out which was shown by their smile face. The reputation of Wat Klang community had spread out the district admired them as the leader of canal protector community and give them reward. A lot of people came to see and learn from them as a good example for other community. Wat Klang canal today still remain clean as people still clean up and pour EM continuesly

**Vichai's photos: Efficiency of EM on wastewater treatment
Case study : Wat Klang canal Bangkok, Thailand
December 2004**



ABOVE: Existing canal before development. Canal was filled by garbage and wastewater



ABOVE: Community meeting to find solution together



ABOVE: Community people cleaning up the canal



ABOVE: Young and old participate in cleaning up the canal. About 20 tons of garbage were collected from the canal by community people themselves, over 40 days of cleaning



ABOVE: Producing EM for treating the canal water



ABOVE: Putting red flags at the 7 points where they poured EM into the canal



ABOVE: After 3 weeks the canal had changing to the clean canal



ABOVE: New livable canal with lot of fish came in canal



ABOVE: Everywhere is now green. No bad smells any more. Both the fish and the people are happy.

INTERVIEW: Canal community development and canal cleaning activities in Bangkok

*This is an interview that was conducted by Tom at ACHR in December 2004 with **Vichai Poey**. Vichai is a young staff person at the Chumchon Thai Foundation, an NGO that works closely with CODI on canal community development in Bangkok. Since graduating from university with a degree in biology, Vichai has been working on water issues, and has been working with the Chumchon Thai Foundation for the last 3 years.*

December 2004

What is the history of Bangkok's canal system?

Bangkok was once called Venice of the Orient, because we had more than a thousand canals in Bangkok and neighbor provinces. The canals used to be the main transportation routes in Thailand in the past since the time of King Rama V, and sometimes we used them as a way to attack enemy.

There were few cars at the time of King Rama V, and the roads were very few. So any places near the canals would become communities and commercial areas because people liked to live near the canals, Thai people, because you can move around easily. And you can find your food easily also. There were plenty of aquatic animals, people can catch fish. This was the source of food, so people liked to live near the canals. It was nice atmosphere near the canals, it was windy, cool, not so hot.

Then urbanization came quickly, very fast. People came to the city more and more everyday. At that time we didn't have city planning yet. So when people migrated from rural areas to the city, they started to build their houses along the canals, or wherever that was empty to build their houses. So both sides of the canals became densed with people. There were many communities living along the canals. We didn't have the garbage management system and water treatment plant at that time. So the waste-water would be deposed into the canals. Later, when the city expanded everyday, a lot of people came to the city everyday, the roads cut through the whole city, so people turned to use buses or cars. The use of the canals was reduced finally, and later canals became just the drainage where the city left the garbage and waste-water.

When did the canals stop being the transportation routes?

Maybe 40, 50 years ago. We reduced using many things related to the canals at that time. People didn't use the canals so much, they used buses, so there was less care for the water. So after sometime the water in the canals became waste-water because they had to bear the bigger pollution from the whole city. We didn't build the water treatment plant until later, a few years ago.

When was the first water treatment plant built?

I think not more than 10 years, maybe 4 or 5 years ago. So the canals just became like a drainage system for the city to drain water and garbage into. The communities along both sides become victims. They are blamed as polluters. They do throw the garbage into the canals, but they were not the main ones, or the only ones to do so, because the whole city also used the canals as drainage. But the authority, the BMA (Bangkok Metropolitan Authority), when they looked at the canals and they thought that they should do something. And most of the people, the society and the authority blame the communities as polluters. So sometimes they evict the people, they try to move the people away from the canals. And the people who live on both sides of the canals have been living there for more than 20, 30 or 40 years, for a long time, I can say. They think that they have the right to live there, because they are Thai people also. So they have to prove themselves that they are not polluters. They try to be canals protectors instead. At that time the threat of eviction grew more and more serious, so lots of communities had to join each other and they built up the network, because fighting alone may be hard for one community to live.

Who owns the land along the canals in Bangkok?

Some of the land is public and belongs to the Thai Government's Treasury Department, and some belongs to private land-owners. I don't know why the private owners can occupy the land, because some don't have land title, some houses have title. We wonder why some houses can own the land, have land title. Sometimes the factory owns the land, or the company. Usually, the land along the canals belongs to the local authority, and the drainage/irrigation department.

When did these communities start to build a network? Was there an organization that came out and said communities should get together, or was it the communities themselves who realized that they had to work together?

I can't remember the actual year, but I think these communities have been doing network-building for around 10 years. Actually they knew that fighting alone may be very hard, so they should contact each other because they were all facing the same problems. Because most of the communities that live along the bank of the canals do not own the land, the land is public land. So whenever one community is evicted, it affects the other community, so they become more stressed. So they try to contact each other, try to get together. So CODI sent staff to come and talk with them that they should form a network. This network would help them solve the problems. And it become more effective if you fight as a network.

How are these networks of canal communities organized?

There are many networks. There are about 300 to 400 communities that live along the canals in Bangkok. On one canal you have so many communities, the members the canal. Each canal becomes a network. And we have 2 main canal networks in Bangkok: one is organized by CODI with the people. This is called Community and Canal Development Network. The 2nd one is the Four Region Slums Network, under the Slum Federation. Some communities that live on the banks of the canals are the members of the Four Region Slums.

Some network had already been formed before the participation of CODI by the Four Region Slum Network, the Slum Federation. And then CODI joined and they tried to support the communities. Those who were members of the Four Region Slums would not join with CODI. The other communities who were not members of the Four Region Slums joined with CODI. There seems to be 2 groups: the CODI group and the Four Region Slums group, but they are doing the same work for housing rights. In Four Region Slums they have different kind of squatters, on public land, on private land, on the canals, with different land owners. So the canal group is one of many networks in the Four Region Slums.

Do these networks join at a higher level to form a national canal network?

There is no national canal network. In different cities, different networks. In Bangkok we have this network. Maybe in the North they have the communities on the banks, but they didn't form as a network. They network with other communities in the cities, on the land, on the canals, on the private land, and become one network. It depends on the city, we don't have a national canal network.

What was the initial purpose of establishing the network? To fight eviction or to clean up the canals?

The main concept is to help each other on housing issue. But for the housing issue you have to prove yourself that you can live fairly with the canals. Because to live with the canals you have to get together and take care of the canals. They became a network and then they started to do activities. Whatever the government blame on them, they have to take action on these issues. So they get together, they clean up the canals. Some communities block they waterway, then they move away from the waterway. Some houses occupy part of the canals, and the authority always blame them for blocking the waterway, which causes flooding. So these communities cut back their houses and move on the land. Some of them treat the water in the canals using the EM technology.

In Chiang Mai, in the Klong Mae Kha, the people who lived on the bank of the canal were illegal communities. And whenever the canal got serious problems, the whole city would blame the community, and they would try to evict these people. So the people cleaned up the canal to show that they werre responsible people, that they lived here and they were responsible. So the people become a network and cleaned up the canal together. Also in Song Khla, the whole city disposed waste water into the canal, but they blamed the canal people. So as in other cases, the people cleaned up the canal. Because of they were illegal communities, the authority wanted to move them already. So when there was a problem, they threw it to the people.

Have relations between communities and government changed after these canal cleaning campaigns?

Earlier, the communication with the government, or the relationship with the district was not so good. Sometimes they didn't know that the communities tried to clean up the canals. We didn't have the media, the newspaper, the TV to make news to support this activity. It was unknown to the society, to the public. Now we are more active in cleaning, making the canal good looking. But they still have the picture in their mind

that canal people are polluters. It takes sometimes. Later when we made it bigger and we tried to contact the media to support our work, to make a scene for the public. So I think the society can see what we are trying, and we are accepted more. This is what we feel. Whenever we ask for cooperation, we find that the authority cooperates with the communities better than in the past. In the past they just ignored the people, and nowadays, because whatever the communities do becomes the reputation for the district. The district can take the credit. They like to show off.

Have the canal-cleaning activities helped reduce the threat of eviction?

It doesn't stop eviction suddenly, it takes time. This is to reduce the bad image for the community as slum people, dirty people who make the city not good looking. But the main thing is that the people get together to make a bigger network as much as possible for bargaining power, for negotiation. If you're only one person, it's not easy to talk with the authority. And the strong network can stop, or postpone, or reduce (the threat). And the power to bargain with the government is stronger.

What is the role of the Thai Community Foundation in canal community development?

We're like organizer and facilitator to let people meet each other and talk and support the community's activities. They have the goal to live with the canals, proudly and friendly with the canals. And we'd like the authority to accept that these people can live friendly with the canals. We have worked with the canal communities for 3 years now. But we're having more communities. Earlier we had about 2 -3 canal communities/groups/members. Later we have more members in different canals.

Chumchon Thai works mainly in Bangkok. In Chiang Mai, in Mee Kha community, the municipality tried to arrange the waste water treatment plant and it was very high cost for the people, and they could not pay for that. The municipality thought that if the people would not do, maybe they had to leave this place. So now the people are looking for the low-cost technique. So I went there many times, we were preparing the treatment system for the community and we have already had the design and the cost and the materials. But at that time it was rainy season people couldn't work because the soil was soft. Now I think I have to go to the community and talk about this treatment tank construction.

How does the Thai Community Foundation help them meet and exchange experience?

There're a lot of meetings and exchanging experience at the network level and canal level. At canal level we have a lot of community members. We'll have a meeting in each community, and then at canal level we'll have meeting again. And then we'll have meeting again at network level, exchanging and visiting each other. This is normal to support the community through learning from each other. And whenever we have to talk with the authority, the government, the whole community can contact through direct and indirect ways. The network informs the canal, then the canal will inform the members, members will inform the communities, then we can call for participation. About communication between communities inside and outside Bangkok, sometimes when we have events such as conferences, we bring them together, let the people meet the authority, show what other communities have done.

What are the steps people go through to clean up the canals they live along?

Before, the gap in relationship between the community and the district, was very big. Later we found that if we worked alone and we didn't let them know about what we were doing, the public wouldn't know what we were doing. So we contact the district. Sometimes we need the tools, we need the trucks to collect the garbage, so the communities have to contact the district for the trucks or to provide the tools. And actually this is the work of the district, the district has to work on this. Whenever people work on this, the people help the district a lot. Actually if the district has to, they will send some officials to clean up the canals, but just 1 or 2 people. And there's a lot of work in the canals. Whenever people work on this they don't have to hire the officials to look after the canals. People will look after the canals instead of the authority. So they can reduce the cost. Both the community and the district are happy. So it pays off the cooperation with the community and working together.

To clean up the canal, first we plan together. Maybe in one canals if you have 10 communities, we have to get them all together. We have to contact all the communities because we all have the same problem. So we have a meeting to plan together, and then each community will inform their members in the households. And then we will inform the district and ask for the tools, the trucks to collect garbage. Then we set up the date.

Then every one will go out and collect the garbage by the boats. We will borrow the boats from the district, or sometimes some houses have boats too. We also need the baskets to collect the garbage. There are some recycling activities, but the garbage from the canals are quite dirty. For example some bottle can be recycled, but plastic sheets cannot.

After cleaning up, we will put EM into the klongs. In some canals we don't use EM because it's too big, too long. Sometimes you don't have only the communities on the canals, but you have markets, you have factories, you have buildings, you have villages, so many. So for example in one big canal, the canal flows from Rangsit to South Bangkok, it's too long. If you put EM it doesn't work, very little.

What do you do in these cases?

We collect the garbage, or we can put EM, but only to show that this is the responsibility for the canal. We cannot guarantee that the canal will be clean. Just to show the public that we are trying. If the canal is too big, it's not easy. Because you only do this portion, but not the upper and the lower parts of the canal. You can't do all the canal because it's maybe 10km, or 20km long. Some of the community gave up because they can't control the source of waste water. Some canal they cannot treat because there are so many drainage lines carrying waste water pouring into the canals. So they did it very little, just only the community is not able to solve. They do it today and tomorrow some factory or some market pour waste water out. They cannot control this, so they will not succeed, so they give up. Because it wastes their time doing this. But it's a tool to link the people activities, because if having nothing to do together, they start to live in isolation, no negotiation power.

EM is Effective Microorganism. EM is low-cost technology. People just use the waste from the kitchen such as vegetables, fruits, or the leftover food from the kitchen as materials to compost EM. There is just vegetables or fruits, with molass and water, all in one container and then seal it. You need just 3 things to make EM. So this is the way to recycle the waste from the kitchen, and to produce EM that can be used for many different purposes: to water the plants, to feed the animals, and to stop the bad smells wherever there is bad smell. It works effectively especially for stopping the bad smell. It can also be put into toilets when they are filled up, to break down big solid waste, and so you don't need to pump the toilets out as often.

How can EM be used in the klongs?

For example, In one canal, in one community, the length of the canal is about 850m. We use EM with a ratio of 1:5000, 1 part of EM and 5000 parts of water. You calculate the quantity of water in the canal, then you'll know how much EM you need according to this ratio. So you will calculate the volume of the canal first, and then you will calculate the amount of EM, quantity of EM to use in the canal. You will know how much EM you need, then you start to compost EM. And then put it in the canal once a week, just once a week, or maybe twice a week. But you should also calculate the time to produce EM because EM takes sometimes to make, about 20 days. You have to leave it for about 20 days for composting, for the fermentation, for the micro-organism to grow and to breed.

In one canal sometimes we divide, for example, in the canal I referred to, with the length of 850m, so every 100m is one point. We will put a red flag at each point where we will pour EM into the canal, so the EM will spread all over the canal. So we get 7 points in this canal, each point needs 280 liters of EM .

Let me tell you about one the story of the community of Lad Prao 101: There are about 4, 5 communities in this area, and they become a small network. There are 4, 5 communities and 3 schools joining. They do canal cleaning every month, once a month. They started 4 years ago. Now they make EM in the community, this is the container, this is the cover. They make EM here, and they pump it into the canal. Some communities do like this, they have a pipe across the canal with one end connected to the the container. This pipe has several holes. And then they open the tap, the EM flows through the pipe and comes out of the holes into the canal.

For small canals, we use EM once a week, for at least 1 month. We found in 1 community that after 3 weeks the water got better, the pollution is reduced after 3 weeks. After the first pouring, the bad smell was reduced. And the 2nd week, we observed that some living things appeared in the canal. And the 3rd week, the physical of the canal was changing into a new canal. It became green, light and lively, no bad smell anymore, and fish came back to the canal. We could see the air bubbles which mean that there are many fish.

But it's also depends on how much polluted the canal is. After 3 week the pollution is reduced and you have cleaner canal. After that EM should be used once a month, because then it becomes more sustainable. But

you have to keep doing this, otherwise... because the waste water comes from the roads, and the drainage system. You have to keep doing this, otherwise it will turn back to be the polluted canal again.

When can you decide that the water in the canal needs to be treated?

We let the community think. They will decide what they should do. Sometimes people decide, oh we should collect the garbage first, we should make campaign on making the canals clean, or we should make the network for the whole canal. We can suggest that in this case you should use this, but we want to hear from them first, what is their idea. We want them to feel as owners, because to be sustainable it should be done by the people themselves. Because this is their problem, because if someone does something for you, you will not feel that this is my problem, it's not my work. If you do, then I'll do, if you don't do, I won't do.

We can easily observe in the canals of Bangkok, most of the canals are totally black and smell bad with lots of garbage. Some canals have garbage floating on the surface, becoming the small island on the canal, a garbage island on the canal. So people know by common sense that it's quite a serious problem.

When the community makes EM, we train them, we train one canal, 1 group or 1 network and then next group whenever they want to do we try to let them train each other. We can provide technical help, but for training we let the people train themselves. Some way the people don't know much about techniques, for example the types of micro-organism, or how EM treats the water, how to reduce the cost, people don't know much about these technical details, so we can tell them, we can give them this information.

One example : The communities along the Klong Wat Klang :

The Wat Khlang community become the pilot project to prove themselves that they can live fairly with the canals. The city and the district accept this community and praise them a lot. They used to live on the water, some part of their houses overhang the canal. And their houses were not organised evenly, some on the canal, some on the land. And they didn't look nice. And this canal has one dead end, the other end connects to the main big canal.

So whenever the city or the road had flooding problem, they would blame these people because their houses were blocking the waterway, which caused the flooding. There were so many threats of eviction. The authority wanted to develop this area as a park, wanted to move the people out away from here. So the people tried to get together. They were living individually at that time, so when they had the same problem they got together.

They had a meeting, they discussed how to live with this canal. First, the authority blamed them that they were the polluters, that they blocked the waterway, and they were bad-looking. So they moved themselves away from the water. They organized themselves first, then they contacted us. They are member of the Four Region Slum Federation, but they got some fund from CODI, the DANCED fund (from the Danish government fund). Then we let the community write the project proposal to CODI, asking for the fund for developing the community. But they had to plan what they wanted to do, how they were going to do, then we reviewed the proposal and we funded them.

They rebuild the community by themselves: they do the rebuilding, some house reconstruction, moving it to the land. And before, some house was small, some house was big. Because they had the land in limited area, so they discussed and found that each house had to be the same size, so that all the houses could be together on the limited land. They made the houses themselves the same size. And then they made some part as a garden to make it clean and beautiful, because the authority wanted to make this place a park. So they said OK we'll make a park for you. So they cleaned up the canal, re-adjusted houses, made them beautiful, the houses of the same size. They painted their houses with new colours, make them look more beautiful, and they made a walkway. They cleaned up the canal, using EM. It used to be a dirty canal, less fish and full of floating plants, water hyacinth.

How long did it take to reach this result?

This project has been carried out in the last 4 years. First they moved the houses into one row, made the walkway and then cleaned up the canal, in 2 years. During these 2 years there was no support from the authority. After 2 years, when we opened up the community after finishing cleaning up and treating the water, we invited the authority, the media, many organizations to see. And everybody said oh good, this is good community, they are cleaning the canals. And then the authority, the district also get some benefit from this because this is under their responsibility, the district of this area. They feel better, they feel happy about this. But this is still insecure living. But in the period of 1996-2000, when Mr Pichit was the mayor, he praised

that this was the pilot community who can live with the canals. But these were just words, they didn't make it as a policy to protect these communities.

Does this community now have no more threat of eviction?

They can still live here, but nothing guarantees how long they can live here. Nothing guarantees that the authority will not develop this area into something else. I think they are going to join the Baan Mankong project. In this project they can rent the land, but they need to negotiate with the land owner. When they succeed, it will not be easy for the authority to remove them.

Is there any canal in Bangkok that's never been cleaned before? Any community that doesn't join any network?

Mostly I can say that the legal community, the formal community, they're not so active on this. Because when you have no problem, you don't need to struggle about anything. They don't care much about the canals. When they don't care, there's nobody that can force them. If you don't do, nobody can force you or put you in jail. Especially in villages, rich people will not act on this. If the canals smell bad, they will call the authority to do this, they think that this is the authority's work, not their work. There's nothing to force them. This is not their duty. This kind of network is more effective in informal settlements, because they have to prove themselves. The formal sector, especially the rich people do not do this thing, because it's dirty and hard to do.

Has the situation of canal-side communities in Bangkok improved now?

In some canals, but not every canals, because we have so many. And some canals we don't know, and some canals have no communities but commercial areas, or factories or department stores. These will never be cleaned, because no one will act on this. We found that where there's community living on the canal, especially the informal section, we can organize them easily.

How does the Baan Mankong project relate to this kind of canal cleaning activities?

When the Baan Mankong project was launched, the communities became more organized at that time. So people think about the security in living, to make themselves be the renters of the land. So everything they do is trying to be legal, to be accepted by the authority. Most of the communities living on the banks of the canals are insecure. So that's why they want to join the Baan Mankong project. Because many times the government has projects to use the land on the banks of the canals for something, maybe to make the roads, to make the wall, cement wall to protect from pollution. Sometimes they want to make a garden, many projects. So most communities are insecure. And the authority thought that communities are not beautiful, canal people throw garbage and pollute the water. So people try to show the authority by improving themselves, and when we have Baan Mankong project, people try this way. People think that if we can rent the land, and with what we have done shown to the government that we can live here, and if we live here we will take care of the canals, they don't have to hire officials to do, the communities will do this.

Most of the squatter communities really want to join the Baan Mankong project, because they don't know when the local authority will evict them, so if they don't feel sure about the future, they don't feel secure. The only thing that most of them want to make sure is that they can live a long life, and their kids, their daughters, their sons have families, and the next generation can also live here. Nowadays the land cost is very high, especially in the city. It's not easy to find a place to live, otherwise you have to go out of the city. This is not related to the way of life of these people, because every expense will increase if you move to the new place. And you work here, your kids study here in this area, so if you change, it changes your whole life.

Do you think that Baan Mankong is a motivation for people to work harder to prove themselves, to become a stronger network in order to become a member of the project?

Absolutely, because there have been so many threats of eviction from the government, such as this year they will move all of the communities out of the canal banks, next they'll have this project. Every year these people are in fear, so I think people want to make themselves legal, change from being illegal to legal, because otherwise you can't be secure in living.

How many canal-side communities are now applying to join the Baan Mankong project?

In each canal we'll select the communities who are ready, about 2 communities, to become the pilot communities to join the Baan Mankong project. Because some still need more organizing, so the ones that

are more ready than others will be made pilot cases. Every canal selects 2 communities, we have 9 canals, so about 18 communities are preparing to join the Baan Mankong project. But it doesn't mean that the others will not join, they will come later after the pilot groups, maybe next year.

In what ways do these activities bring about changes to the city of Bangkok?

It is the authority's duty to develop, to clean the canals, to treat the water. The authority has to do it, it's their responsibility. But if they do it alone, not cooperating with the people living on the canals then I think it's not easy because if you cooperate with the people, people will help you. Some districts who understand this join hand with the communities for the cleaning. Just like last Saturday (last Saturday of Nov 2004), the local district sent one officer, and the people helped the authority clean up the canals. The authority has the tools, they have the trucks, they have many things, they also have man power, but if you join with the people, people will help you, so in this way there can be some cooperation between the people and the authority. And also you can't move all of the communities out of this because it's not easy. There are more than 500 or 600 communities, so where you will take them, where you will keep them? If you want to use the land then you can use, but you have to support the people where they can live. You have to see this. People are not just like things that you can throw or leave somewhere. You have to see where you will put them. I think people are willing to move, they don't want to stop your project. But you have to find some place to move people to, and not so far from the city. If some place you don't want to use the land, you can let the people to rent the land, they will improve themselves, let them take care of the land.

What lessons from these activities could be useful for other communities, in other locations?

Every where you can live, however wherever you live, you should look after the environment, and you should help yourself first before you ask for the help from the authority, otherwise the society will be weak. The people should come up and join hand doing something together, not just wait for the authority to help you, so whether it's the squatters or the communities, the cooperation among you and the authority is important for a healthy city.

What do you think about the support from the media and the authority?

Now it's easier to get support, but the authority have so many things to do. Some district can cooperate very well with us, but some district are not interested. We will still try to contact them, but we will not wait for them. We just see how people think, and after they form the organization, the network, they will push the district.

In order to get recognition in society, what are the things that slum communities should do?

The society used to look at the slum communities as polluters, same as authority because they didn't know. Also it was true at that time that people disposed garbage, waste water. But nowadays people do try hard to make the public accept them. Sometimes we show the effort through the newspaper or TV programs in stories about community development. So nowadays I think people are accepted more because of some picture from the communities have been cleared out, so many people have seen this and accept. But there are still some communities that are not developed.

What do you think the authority should do to improve the situation?

I think it is important that the authority cooperate with the people and the people are willing to cooperate. You just need to open the space for the people, and that people will help your work. But if you look at the people as problem, you will never understand the people, and you will always be like the enemy. I think if you are going to make the city clean, why don't you talk to the people with the problem. If you talk to them about what the problem is and join hand with them, I think this will help the authority.

Canal Cleaning on Klong Bungthonglang, Ladprao Soi 101
(Tom's notes taken during a canal-cleaning event)
August 7 - 8, 2004

6 communities along this canal have formed a network along Klong Bungthonglang

The canal becomes the joining force which brings together poor communities and other local actors together : Klong Bungthonglang is a very old canal, but now it has become very polluted. Housing estates,

restaurants, hospitals and factories all pour their effluent and sewage into the canal. People used to have a fresh, clean canal in their neighborhood. Fed up. The initiative to clean up this canal came from the people in the 6 informal communities that live along the canal. Later, 3 schools (including one Arts College) and a big Wat (Wat Bungthonglang) are also along the canal, and join the cleaning activities. Wat Bungthonglang supports these activities by providing the place for the meeting and ceremony, drinks. Head monks participate in the klong cleaning activities, help rally the locals. A brass marching band from local high-school, with full uniforms and feathered caps, come to play a victory march for the canal-cleaners!

A Swedish Water Engineer comes to observe and join in the cleaning. Much discussion between him and Vichai about the dilution of E.M. to affect water cleanness. Vichai says that if they put enough E.M. in the klong to produce 1:5,000 (good proportions for cleaning the polluted water), it means a VERY big quantity of E.M.

This klong-cleaning event has been planned to be in honor of the Queen's Birthday, so a big altar and photo of the queen, with flowers and bunting, are displayed prominently in the big grounds beside the temple, where the meeting before the clean-up is held. The Queen's Birthday is used as an excuse, or as a focus, for making the klong-cleaning into a kind of ceremony. This is a common strategy used for planning canal cleaning events, to "legitimize" them by tying them to such public holidays, or linking them to revered public figures.

How they clean the canal : The canal is very long, and is subdivided into three canals, but today, we will clean only 1.2 kms of the klong. To clean the canal, they divide the crowd into three groups, which go to different sections of the klong. More than 150-200 people come to help, including monks, students, young soldiers, local middle-class people, teachers, district officials, and members of the communities along the canal. The actual cleaning happens in two stages :

1. ***Removal of garbage and plants*** : First to pull out the garbage and water hyacinth (the physical stuff that clogs the canals) - this is the work of today. ***They have made beautiful rakes for pulling plants and garbage out of the klong - rakes made from long bamboo poles with recycled table-fan screens wired to the end.***
2. ***Putting in "E.M." ("Effective Microorganism") into the water***, as an organic water-purifier. The cleaning ceremony begins with the ceremonial pouring of E.M. into the part of the canal running beside Wat Bungthonglang. Hundreds of plastic bottles of E.M. have been lined up along the canal embankment for this purpose, which hundreds of participants then happily pour into the dirty klong water, with a great brown foaming noise! Vichai says this is not the real E.M., "just for show." The real putting in requires much larger amounts, and has to be done regularly. This will happen at 18 points along the canal, and responsibility for producing the E.M. along the way, and putting it into these 18 points has been divided up between the communities and the schools along the way. The E.M. will be put into the canal twice a month, on the same day, at all these 18 points, in the afternoon, when the sun isn't so strong. VERY organized! Some communities make the E.M. in plastic buckets right on the edge of the klong, so it's easy to pour in. Vichai says that after 3 weeks, we should see a real change in the quality of the water.

After the three groups go off to start cleaning their stretches of the klong, we go for a walk with Vichai. One of the schools is cleaning out part of the canal we pass. Huge amounts of garbage and water hyacinth being pulled out, and dumped into dump-trucks provided by the District. Everybody laughing and posing for photos and making jokes. Big hubub!

Problems with Water Hyacinth : The water hyacinth are a natural canal-cleaning plant, but when there are too many of them, they cover the surface of the canal and shut out the oxygen to the water, so fish and microorganisms cannot survive. The District office uses a strong chemical herbicide to kill the water hyacinth, which again makes the water more poison than it already is. So here in Klong Bungthonglang, they negotiated with the District to stop putting in the herbicide in the klong, and let the people remove the water hyacinth manually, on a regular basis. Much more environmentally friendly way of dealing with the problem.

Signs along the canal : The community has prepared signs and put them up along the canal. ***"If you throw a piece of garbage in the canal, it kills the canal. Think before you throw!"***

Vichai says that in Bangkok, the very big klongs are managed by the BMA's water authorities, but the smaller klongs are managed by the Districts they pass through.

Canal-Improvement Network Event:

Environmental Fair and Public Dialogue with Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA) "Building cooperation between communities and the BMA on issue of environment"

These are Tom's notes from a big fair organized in Bangkok, December 19, 2004 by two networks :

- **Canal-Improvement Network**
- **Garbage Recycling Network**

VENUE : The event took place at the Science Institute, "TONG FAA CHAI LONG" - next to Ekkamai Transport Station, on Sukhumvit Road, starting at 08:30, on Sunday morning.

December 19, 2004

The event included community members from these two networks, academics, NGO people, CODI, Thai Community Foundation, children from schools, BMA officials, and the Vice Mayor of Bangkok (lady - name?), Greenpeace. The event was supported by Chumchon Thai Foundation. CODI and Chumchon Thai support the networks. The purpose of the fair and dialogue was to show the city government what people have done to help clean up the city, and to ask that the city policy be changed to support people's ideas. The idea is that it is the city's job to manage water pollution and solid waste collection in Bangkok, but it can't solve the problems. People are today demonstrating that they are actively and creatively contributing in many ways to solving these problems. In the past, their efforts have been ignored, or even opposed - especially those efforts by poor communities. This event is another chance to celebrate what people have done and to ask the BMA to support such community involvement in handling these problems that are too big for the city to handle alone.

- The **Canal Improvement Network** presented the work they have done to clean up canals in Bangkok.
- The **Garbage Recycling Network** also presented the work they have done to help clean up the city.
- **Booths with demonstrations and information** about garbage recycling, waste water treatment, use of E.M. to clean canals and treat sewage locally, integrated systems for recycling community waste water and use for plants, gardens, as well as other people-managed environmental techniques. Maps of canal settlements in Bangkok, maps of the canal system and canal-cleaning projects so far, etc.
- (There were plans to display some 3-D models of some of the canal-side community upgrading projects being planned under "Baan Mankong" to lead the negotiations about getting long-term leases for the land for these communities. But I didn't see any of these plans in the display area.)
- **Many children's activities**, many school-children involved. Braiding reeds, painting, mosaics made from recycled garbage. Also, a "treasure hunt" has been organized for the children in the afternoon, to show what kind of treasures can be found in garbage!

Panel Discussion : In the morning, a panel discussion with six members on the panel:

1. the Vice Mayor of Bangkok (the current BMA administration under Apirak, has so far been much more receptive to people's involvement in maintaining the city's canal network - much more than the last mayor (Samak) who was fairly hostile to any people-driven initiatives, and pushed for eviction of canal settlements in many cases.
2. A guy from the Health System Research Institute
3. Community leader from Wat Klang canal network
4. Community leader from Bangkok Garbage Network
5. Community leader from Klong Hualamphon canal network.
6. Guy from Greenpeace-Thailand.

In the afternoon, small group discussions about issues that came up in the morning panel discussion.

Exchange learning with other districts, provinces, sectors : A crowd of about 400 - 500 people came to the fair today. Also an exchange meeting between people in canal side communities in various parts of Bangkok, and from other cities : Rayong, Chantaburi, Samut Prakhon, Nakhon Pathom, and canal settlements around Bangkok. How to strengthen networks of communities to deal with issues of canal and garbage?

Four important change-making principles at work here :

1. **The principle of keeping busy!** Bangkok's canal communities are practitioners of the principle of keeping busy. Constant activities, constant dialogue, constant motion, constant creation of projects, high visibility. This is one very busy network - or actually group of networks. To build excitement, to

build a sense that people are in control, to get rid of that sense of helplessness, of passivity - that these are problems which it is someone else's job to solve. Killer passivity! These kinds of public events: canal cleanings, environmental fairs, public dialogue on issue of environment now happen almost monthly within Bangkok.

2. **The principle of making one city's milestone into learning for other cities :** Besides Bangkok's own canal cleaning and garbage management networks, the event provided an opportunity for poor communities from other cities and provinces to come and watch and learn about how to deal with environmental problems - and more importantly, now to use the environmental issue to build community processes, to create a basis for dialogue with the city, and to consolidate their right to stay in the city..
3. **The principle of involving other sectors :** Always involve local schools, school children, monks, wats, district offices, NGOs, civic society groups, BMA officials - as well as other communities from around the city, around the region. All these events and all these activities are rigorously multi-sectoral, but the poor communities take the lead. This is not just for hospitality's sake, but to consciously build common cause on these issues among groups with very different agendas, to demonstrate that clean canals is in everyone's interest, to build partnership to solve problems that any one group cannot solve alone.
4. **The principle of getting at land tenure via the back door :** Almost all of the communities in the canal-cleaning network and garbage management network are informal, and do not have secure tenure. At the fair today, there was no specific discussion of land tenure, but many of these canal communities are now planning Baan Mankong upgrading projects in their communities. The land issue was not discussed in this fair - it was kept intentionally separate for the time being. The environmental issue is a softer, less threatening issue to build a dialogue around, and then later on, when there are bonds, then the tenure and housing issue can come in naturally.

What was accomplished at this fair ? Vichai says it was a clear success. *Why?*

- The BMA has clearly expressed its willingness to cooperate with these efforts, and with these two networks on dealing with the city-wide issues of canal cleaning and garbage management.
- The BMA has clearly acknowledged and praised these efforts people have made, and considers them part of the solution, not a problem!
- The BMA has expressed its willingness to support these efforts by people more actively - even with budget.
- It was decided to set up a **cooperation team**, comprising BMA officials and community network leaders (both Garbage and Canal-cleaning) to discuss and initiate specific ways the BMA can cooperate and support these efforts. The committee will be set up after the holidays, in early January, and will begin discussions right away.

**Canal-side community upgrading "Face Lift" in Bangkok's Klong Toey area
(a UCEA Phase-two project involving six communities along Klong Hualamphong)
Date: Some time in 2004?**

6 communities total, but so far, only 4 communities involved :

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| • Ban Kluay - | 148 households |
| • Rong Moo - | 400 households |
| • Ruam Jai - | 162 households |
| • Rim Klong Watana - | 200 households |
| • Sub Total | 910 households |

+ 2 so-far-uninvolved communities - 390 households

TOTAL 1300 households (about 6,500 people)

Klong Toey canal house face-lift and walkway : (DANCED Grant : 1 million Baht) Lot of squatters along the canal, very dense, very poor. under the expressway. We thought, with the NGO and the people, might be interesting to make a project in which we paint the houses – with a little bit of improvement, because normally when you look at the squatters from the other side of the canal, it looks bad, because people show their back-side, laundry, all storage - "It's nice, also not too nice." So we propose first we make a walkway with the people, along the canal, try to get the authorities to agree to that walkway – maybe simple wooden walkway – people help construct that. And once you make a walkway along the canal, then it's the front, and everybody will deck their houses with flowers, decorations, face-lifts. Then paint it all, so it looks beautiful. All DANCED. This is a group of 5 communities along the klong, -- start with the easiest

one, make a walkway, get the people to work together and paint it – simple, then will be “demonstration” projects.

Duang : This project was not initiated by the community, but by the UCDO and BMA advisor and the Klong Toey district. They would like to improve the landscape in the Klong Toey district, but then the process will go to the community and will ask the people what they would like to do – like house improvement, house painting, infrastructure improvement. Under the expressway, there are 7 communities, The district would like to evict them, but they can't. Because the alternative land that they have proposed for resettlement of the communities is too far away, people won't go. Maybe this DANCED project will lead to a housing project, (and to tenure consolidation, shhh, don't tell). So the repainting and bridge is a kind of first step leading to more improvements – maybe housing, more infrastructure, etc. Typical DANCED concept of the project-as-change-kick-start. The city people feel that the slum is not beautiful, and this project will make this area look better, and then the city people will accept their settlement, and maybe the people in the community can look after and take care of the canal – maybe if they look better, maybe can show to the tourists. (!) People can produce community products, etc. Lots of ideas to follow. How much is the grant for this? 1 million baht.

x