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The Guilds: a Self-Build Community Network



Over the past 3 years, community networks in many cities have started to make a list consisting of local masons, carpenters, plumbers, electricians and skill construction workers who actually lived in these communities. These people were called upon whenever there is any building need.

Unlike neo-liberal policies that promote *Self-Help* initiatives without holding the state responsible, CODI has managed to get the state to provide over 68,000 baht/unit subsidy directly to the people. The total budget is \$46 million covering 1,010 communities nationwide. The people can decide for themselves who to hire and work

with. They are the bosses. Compared to the “turn key” (ready to occupied) city housing projects, these self-build projects cost less and finished faster. This is inevitably due to the fact that there is less bureaucracy involved and people are allowed to do the “leg-work” themselves.

The self-build network is a technical support mechanism, but it's also a kind of job creation scheme and a collective business. In Klong Bang Bua, for example, a lot of people in the community have developed advance construction skills through on-the-job training designing and rebuilding their own community. A lot of this expertise is being channeled into community construction groups, who are taking on jobs with other communities, as well as small contracting jobs outside. These teams now proudly called themselves “**Chang Chumchon**” (**Guilds of the Commune**) which gives a new status to their work and to their movement. Most of these teams prefer to work for other poor communities for reasons that may seem strange to some: because their employers always pay them well and on-time – unlike rich folks!

Sometime communities hire *Chang Chumchon* like a contractor to build everything, and sometimes they just help out with the heavy work of laying foundations in communities that want to do most of the work themselves. Sometimes they provide the labor force, and sometime they're asked to provide specific technical expertise to work out problems of drainage, structural engineering, or house design.

Not all *Baan Mankong Collective Housing* projects were built by *Chang Chumchon* however. Houses and apartment buildings over 2 stories high typically required more specialized work. So far the Chang Chumchon has built 38 upgrading projects, covering 5,609 housing units. If you add up the labor costs involved in building all these houses, these projects have generated at least 225 million baht (\$6.4 million) worth of employment.

Self-Built \$74 / m²



These 2-story detached houses at Klong Lumnoon offer 99 m² of living space, and were built by three community construction teams for an average of 256,000 Baht (\$7,314) per unit. Average construction cost was 2,586 Baht (\$74) per m²

Self-Built \$81 / m²



These 2.5-story rowhouses at Ruam Samakee offer 110 m² of living space, and were built by the community's own construction team for an average of 310,000 Baht (\$8,857 per unit). Average construction cost was 2,818 Baht (\$81) per m².

Self-Built \$92 / m²



These 2-story rowhouses at Klong Bang Bua offer 100 m² of living space, and were built in phases by the community's own construction team for an average of 322,000 Baht (\$9,200) per unit. Average construction cost was 3,220 Baht (\$92) per m².

Contractor-Built \$192 / m²

These 2-story rowhouses at Kao Pattana offer 49 m² living space, and were built by a private contractor for an average cost of



329,000 Baht (\$9,400) per unit. Average construction cost was 6,714 Baht (\$192) per m²

**Contractor-Built
\$206 / m²**



These 2.5-story rowhouses at Suan Phlu offer 43.75 m² of living space and were built by a private contractor for a cost of 315,000 Baht (\$9,000) per unit. Average construction cost for these units worked out to 7,200 Baht (\$206) per m².