The month of October could not have passed without fruitful celebrations by various organizations in Thailand, recognizing the importance of sustainable urbanization in alignments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly goal 11. Every year and throughout October, partners organize a month of activities, events and discussions on urban issues and sustainable development. The month kicks-off with World Habitat Day, designated by the United Nations as the first Monday of October every year and ending with World Cities Day on October 31.

In 2019, the worldwide theme of World Habitat Day was “Frontier Technology as an Innovative Tool to Transform Waste to Wealth”. And the worldwide theme of the World Cities Day was “Changing the World; Innovation and a Better Life for Future Generations”.

In Thailand, waste and pollution issues are one of the key factors that widen the inequality gap. The presence of wage inequality in countless informal settlements directly correlates to the lack of sufficient waste management, which ultimately leads to trash on the street, pollution in the water and dust in the air. The most disadvantaged groups are those from the bottom-rung of the society, especially those with lack of adequate housing. Solving waste and pollution issues will not only create a better city but help improve the inequality gap in the society as well. Housing represents a fundamental right ensuring broader social and economic development.

Recognizing the importance of waste mitigation and housing rights for all, institutions from the Royal Thai government and non-profit organizations had launched joint activities to commemorate the Urban October event throughout the period of the month. Various governmental officials, technical experts as well as representatives from the marginalized community, had participated in these events, sharing experiences, bringing back fruitful knowledge and establishing potential connections with different sectors.
It was only befitting that Urban October commenced with a strong community mobilization by the Four Regions Slum Network on October 7. Gathering over hundreds representatives from informal settlements from across Thailand, the President of the Network, Ms. Varind Damrongphan, called for the United Nations and other ministries from the Royal Thai Government, to act on the issue of homelessness and to alleviate the suffering of those in need by providing living spaces and a sustainable community in alignment to the demand for land rights to Thai informal settlers.

Meeting leading up to event*
Quote from the letter*
Highlighting concerns that has been raised*
Bangkok Site Visit and Panel Discussion on Collective Housing, October 9-10

To complement the theme of housing rights this year, the Community Organization Development Institutions (CODI) under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, in collaboration with the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) organized a site visit to collective housing projects in Bangkok on the October 9, followed by a seminar on the October 10. The seminar was to supplement on the site visit, discussing key stories around the success and the future implementation of ‘Baan Mankong’ program whose mission is to initiate various affordable housing projects for the poor and the most vulnerable Thai communities.

The event received an honorable mention by Mr. Jurin Laksanawisit, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, who presided over the opening ceremony and exchanged conversations with the locals attendees. Over 300 participants from all relevant sectors were delighted and inspired to hear the opening remarks by his excellency who recognizes the importance of affordable housing and sustainable urbanization for all.

The knowledge shared during the session has been inspiring among participants especially international delegates who seeks to learn from the success of the ‘Baan Mankong’ program. In extension to this topic, another panel presentation on experiences with public housing was shared by housing specialists from the ACHR, detailing various aspects of public housing in the context of each locations around the world.
Panel Discussion and Workshop with the National Housing Authority of Thailand, October 31

To complete the celebration of the Urban October 2019, a seminar was organized by the National Housing Authority of Thailand (NHA) on October 31. With the topic “transforming waste to wealth” in accordance to the theme of World Habitat Day, over 200 participants took part in the event from various institutions, including many students from universities in Thailand who represents the young generation in alignment to in the theme of World Cities Day. Presiding over the event was Mr. Sakul Muangsiri, Vice Minister of the MSDHS, who gave an opening remarks and paid a visit to various exhibition showcasing local products created from waste.

Recognizing the importance of youth empowerment, the Vice Minister along with Mr. Tuchapol Kanchanakul, Director of the NHA, also exchanged conversations and together wrote on the ‘wall of innovation’ expressing ideas of innovation with student representatives who were delighted to be by the presents of their excellencies.

To complement further from the seminar session, a meeting with senior officers from the community development division was organized to explore for potential collaboration between the NHA and universities in Thailand. Student representatives who participated in the panel presentation, jointly took part in the consultation to involve students in community development projects in Thailand through waste management competition expected to launch on May until end on October 2020, linking with the upcoming celebration of Urban October Event.
Mr. Jurin Laksanawisit, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand gave an interview to the press on WHD celebration.
Kanchanaburi Site Visit and House Building Activity, October 7