# Urban project in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, targets poor areas

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HCM CITY — The lives of more than 35,000 families living in the 100 poorest neighbourhoods in Ho Chi Minh City (popularly known as Saigon) have improved thanks to a World Bank-funded urban upgrade project that has been under way since 2004.

The project, which has received more than US$500 million from the bank, has helped upgrade infrastructure in these areas and provide loans to displaced residents for doing business.

It will be completed in 2014 when around 1.7 million people will have benefited.

Hundreds of alleys around the city have been widened with land-use right and houses being bought from residents at a cost of VND131 billion ($6.7 million).

The poor families that had to give up their lands got new houses and loans to do business, Le Thanh Liem, deputy head of the project, said.

Lam Thi Tot of Ward 12, District 6, said she built a new house at a cost of VND15 million (US$773).

Trieu Le Hoa, her neighbour, borrowed VND5 million to do business.

Nearly 100 families in Ward 12 alone got the loans on easy terms, including low interest rates.

So far 35,000 families have borrowed VND300 billion and are repaying promptly, according to reports. They are also getting clean water now.

Nguyen Hoang Nhan, chief project manager, said the work had been implemented well because of people's support.

Local authorities and relevant agencies publicised the project to enable residents to clearly understand and support it, he said.

The second phase is under way and expected to be finished next year.