

Youth E-Service, Taiwan (YES) participates in 20<sup>th</sup> IAVE World Volunteer Conference.

The workshop of production appeared about Taiwanese Youths promote International e-service.

Topic: YES helps bridge the digital gap between the border of Thailand and Burma.

Subheading: Not only Computer Made in Taiwan, But also “E-Service from Taiwan”

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### **Abstract**

In July, 2005, five students from the Department of Information Management of Chung Yuan Christian University in Taiwan went to Mae Sot, a town at the border of Thailand and Burma, as a part of their thesis about overseas e-service. In 2006, they recruited other young volunteers, formed a “Thai-Burmese Border IT Volunteers (TBBITV),” and started to formulate a project, “Assisting the border of Thai-Burma in reducing the digital divide, building 'Mae Tao Clinic Digital Opportunity Center”” sponsored by the Government and the private enterprises, like Acer Volunteer Team and Shinkong Life Foundation. The aim was to promote the e-service reducing the digital illiteracy. In 2007, TBBITV applied to The Ministry of the Interior for a registration as an NGO under the name of “Youth E-Service (YES), Taiwan.” Over the past two years, under the spirit of “Not only Computer Made in Taiwan, But also 'E-Service from Taiwan' ”, YES continued to call for young volunteers, reaching nearly 50 people, to provide e-service and to help bridge the digital gap between the border of Thailand and Burma. Besides YES successively raises hardware from the private enterprises and carries on the operation for Mae Tao Clinic Digital Opportunity Center. Each year, YES persistently recruits young IT volunteers to the Mae Tao Clinic and NGOs in Mae Sot to provide local workers and teaches with training programs in information education. In addition, YES holds camps to promote information education for students at Burma migrant-workers schools and Thai village schools.

## **Introduction**

Mae Sot, located in the north-west of Thailand, is an important bordering town of bilateral trade between Thailand and Burma. Mae Sot is also a trading center for its well-known Myanmar jade and precious stones. Due to the Burmese military government's dictatorship and perennial civil war, not only the refugee camps along the border have been hosting 150,000 refugees, Mae Sot also gathered lots of illegal migrant workers, political and economic refugees from Myanmar. Therefore, so many international NGOs establish service position in Mae Sot, aiding tens of thousands of Myanmar refugees.

Not only the inconvenience of traffic and inadequacy of resources, but also lack of teachers and their uneven quality of training, many students cannot have good quality education from remote schools at the border of Thailand and Burma. Besides, there is the gap between the urban and rural, also the lack of information for the outside world. In such a vicious circle, disadvantage and poverty have almost become the synonym of the ethnic minority, Karen. However, these outstanding Karen young people did not give up, but actively participate in community-based organizations and international NGOs in the service work, learning new knowledge and upgrade their skills. At the same time, they make every effort for the future of their compatriots.

In July, 2005, five students from the Department of Information Management of Chung Yuan Christian University in Taiwan started to participate in overseas e-service in Mae Sot, Tak Province, Thailand. Before that, those five students had devoted themselves to domestic e-service in aboriginal communities over a period of time. Annually, they continue to send other young IT volunteers to Mae Sot to cooperate with local Karen youths, holding rudimentary e-camps to teach local students how to use computer at Thai village and Burma migrant-workers schools during winter and summer vacation. At the same time, they provide local NGOs with services in information technology as well as training programs in information education for the effort to local electronization and talents training.

In April 2006, recruiting young volunteers, formed a "Thai-Burmese Border IT Volunteers (TBBITV)," and started to formulate a project plan, assisting the border of Thai-Burma in reducing the digital divide, building 'Mae Tao Clinic (MTC) Digital Opportunity Center.' MTC is founded and directed by Dr. Cynthia Maung. Dr. Cynthia is so called "Burmese Mother Teresa," once received "Magsaysay Award" for community leadership, Philippines and "Rights of the Child Award" by

the Swedish Children's World Organization though she has concerned about human rights of Burmese refugees at the border for such a long time since 1988. Under the spirit of “Not only Computer Made in Taiwan, But also 'E-Service from Taiwan,' ” TBBITV, as a student group, successfully persuaded international well-known computer brand – Acer to donate eight computers and other IT equipment as hardware for MTC Digital Opportunity Center; Taiwanese domestic insurance company’s charitable institution - Shinkong Life Foundation sponsored funding, such as overseas insurance; Internet company - SOGI supplied IT engineers with technical support. TBBITV integrated limited resources from the Government, private enterprises, social units and academic units, set up MTC Digital Opportunity Center and helped to solve dilemma of old and inadequate computer equipment to enhance the efficiency of anamnesis and medical analysis. MTC Digital Opportunity Center is also a computer learning environment as well as communication network for refugees, international volunteers and community organizations in Mae Sot. TBBITV also assisted Taipei Overseas Peace Service (TOPS), Tak Border Child Assistance Foundation (TBCAF), more than 10 other NGOs at the border, remote Thai village schools and Burmese migrant schools in running programs in information education and rudimentary e-camp.

TBBITV annually conducts IT volunteer recruitment and training program held for new coming volunteers. Originally, it only recruited volunteers from Chung Yuan Christian University students, expanding to social youths, such as national university students, IT engineers, imaging workers and social workers. Every year, TBBITV even gives chances to Burmese students studying in Taiwan to serve their own countrymen. It establishes the mechanism of complete Service Learning, cooperative action, reflection and feedback through interviews, overseas volunteer training, field services, and a forum to share their volunteer experiences.

In 2007, TBBITV applied to The Ministry of the Interior for a registration as an **NPO** under the name of “Youth E-Service (YES), Taiwan.” YES starts from scratch and integrates limited resources to encourage the young in Taiwan to join the ranks of volunteer services. Over the past three years, YES totally sent nine echelons and reached as many as 50 people. YES continues to promote the project, “Assisting the border of Thai-Burma in reducing the digital divide” like a relay race. YES scrolls the trend of youths volunteer abroad in Taiwan. The trend spreads to private enterprises, school clubs or individuals. YES’ case becomes one of the lessons for the young people who want to join overseas voluntary service.