

V-STAY Gazette

V-STAY: Volunteer- Serve Thailand And Yourself

Youth Group in Thaptawan, Phang Nga

World Youth Peace Summit volunteers are busily helping a local youth group in Southern Thailand launch an exciting project as part of their tsunami recovery process. The Thaptawan Youth Group comprises approximately 15 young girls of Morgen Sea Gypsy descent. They are establishing a centre where they can provide a safe space for young people in the Thaptawan area and hopefully provide for their education. Already they are producing batik and serving drinks while WYPS volunteers build a kitchen, dining area and batik studio to complete the youth centre. 'This is something we really wanted to do, so we are very glad people are helping us make it happen' said Ngeon, 18.



The tsunami ripped through Thaptawan village in Phang Nga province, destroying homes and killing many. It is a hot spot for land disputes, resulting in many people being threatened off their land and receiving limited assistance. Ning, 19, lost her cousin and brother in the tsunami but she somehow survived when their seaside restaurant was washed away. Although nothing can bring them back, and her community faces huge challenges, today she is smiling as she serves iced coffee and jokes with her friends.

Jay Lamey, WYPS

World, please meets Khao Lak

After just a couple of days in Thailand, I realized how good things are in Australia. I had taken for granted hot water, air-conditioning in the heat, drinking water from the tap and all my material wants such as CDs, DVDs and a huge bed.

By about the tenth day you begin to adjust to life without the things mentioned above. You begin to appreciate everything living in a Thailand village has to offer.



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"Dan with his sunny smile always"

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Our Change Agent:

- **Daniel**, Australian Volunteer has managed to raise the fund from his home, Perth and donated to several local people. Shirts for Burmese children to go to school, Ceiling for one of the construction house, Kitchen ware for the youth group in Thaptawan.

Little By Little

“Being a volunteer in Thailand to help the people in need?” It seemed so great to me when I first found out this project but I wasn’t too sure what I could do. It is true that I have been having a desire to do that sort of thing for a long time, however, every time I saw the job details, organisations were always looking for qualified people in any field. It didn’t matter for them how he or she is strongly committed to work, the experience was everything. I always thought that ‘How can we, university students, gain work experiences?’ Thus, I was almost giving up finding one. Since I joined AIESEC, the world’s largest student organisation, my insight has changed significantly and here I am, in the small province of Phang Nga, in Thailand, doing construction work for the Tsunami victims.

Situation here is so disastrous. Honestly, I couldn’t believe my eyes when I saw a massive boat hanging around on the ground, approximately 4 km from the beach. Even more, it has been more than 6 months after the earthquake but they desperately need a help. My main task is doing construction work, and I have dealt with three projects.

The first few weeks were the hardest time for me, particularly because I wasn’t used to doing construction work. I got quite stressful for being not helpful and also it was very difficult to adapt climate in Thailand. It is incredibly hot and humid here, and living in the house without an air-conditioner made it even worse. My back has peeled twice since I came here, because of the strong sunshine. I have also struggled coping with mosquitoes. Apparently some of them might carry virus, then we have to be very careful of our health before getting any work done in Thailand.

As time goes on, I realise that I am constantly learning something and getting used to living here. Thai people are so kind and friendly; I won’t be able to forget their big smiles on their faces. Working at the site is really great because you can feel that you are working for people in need. Simply donating money is so easy and often makes you feel good, but at the same time, it could be the worst thing to do. I have heard of many problems of how badly some of donations were treated. Most of the donations tend to go to large organisations or the worst affected area, whereas others seem to be forgotten. Furthermore, there are problems such as that money hasn’t been spent on the right thing or donations are not distributed to people equally. After a few months of working experience in Phangnga, I have realised that even one university student without any prior knowledge in construction can do something, and can make a difference.

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Village is not actually the right term for Khao Lak. It is a tourist town now home to many volunteers from a number of organizations. There are many restaurants serving Thai and Western food, a couple of popular bars and stores for the essentials. In the village nearby Khao Lak, Bang Niang, Taptawan and Bang Muang, the people welcome volunteers warmly. It is never a problem to get anywhere because someone is always willing to stop and giving you a lift. We are brought food and drinks by those we are working for and often receive unnecessary volunteer discounts.

World please meets ...

What I really like and find interesting is the people outside of Bangkok and Phuket outlook on life. People are not defined by what their occupation is. As long as they have what they need, to provide for themselves and their family. They are happy. They do not have the urge to earn more and more money to buy fancy electronics, cars, boats, etc.

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Apart from working, I have met many volunteers during my stay in Phangnga and got to know them very well, especially with those who stayed in the same house for months. Living with other nationalities isn't very easy at first hand, but then at the end of the day, you get to know more about different beliefs and cultures which enable you to improve your interpersonal skills and think objectively on behalf of everyone.

"Unity in diversity", this is one of the phrases that I hear often since I joined AIESEC and I think I have learnt what it implies. There were many challenges that I had to tackle, especially because I didn't speak Thai language and wasn't familiar with its culture, but if you are committed to do something, then language barrier isn't really important. I have built a good relationship with the local people. It has been a tremendous experience.

Above all, I might have been useless as I had no previous experiences, but I had been doing something little by little. Throughout the project, I discovered my capabilities and limitations. Simply knowing that people appreciate what I am doing and that I am in fact giving something back to the society give me a deep sense of achievement. Now thinking back how much I have done, I can proudly tell that I can be of help and have a strong sense of self-fulfillment. V-STAY, Volunteer-Serve Thailand And Yourself, gave me a fantastic opportunity to develop my independence.

Without reservations, volunteering is truly a rewarding experience that you can ever do in your life. It will surely be an asset in my life.

Finally, before finishing my report, may I take this opportunity to thank all the people who supported me to participate in this project this summer. I am heavily indebted by my family who has always taken care of me, and my university, Warwick, which generously donated me to make this experience happen. And without Weaw, our project manager who has always taken care of us and helped us a lot to adapt new environment, I would not be here and have wonderful summer. *Thank you all.*



... Khao Lak

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Houses aren't huge here and don't need to be because people don't have the clutter, the things we think we need back home in Australia. More time is spent outdoor socializing with family and friends. People seem to have more time to do this because they are not working or traveling to work for such a large portion of the week. As the expression goes, you don't need money to be happy. I perhaps thought before I came that Westernized countries had more knowledge and lessons to offer Thailand. But I see now that small villages in Thailand have many lessons to offer the world.

Daniel , Australia

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"We don't want to preach,
we would rather ACT"

V-STAY is a new program that will provide a coordinated and systematic approach to volunteering, ensuring efficient placement and training of volunteers so the maximum benefit is given to local people. **WYPS** believes in empowering young people to make a positive impact on the world and **AIESEC** is the world's leading global organization in developing Youth Leadership. Together with local NGOs, we will facilitate a connection between young individuals who are eager to help with those who are eager to receive them. Ways **V-STAY** volunteers will assist the community include teaching, building houses, collecting information and conducting activities for local children.

V-STAY's emphasis will be placed on mutual benefit: empowering and providing experience for youth volunteers while helping local communities recover. The first group of volunteers was placed in April 2005.

I am Thai?!

"A land of smile, Thailand

A land of IT industry, Taiwan"

This is my first time to visit Thailand and stay aboard for a long time. They say that people get confuse the name between Thailand and Taiwan. Now I am in Thailand and I also confuse. Here I also have delicious rice dishes and fresh tropical fruits. There are similar house style, lots of motorcycles and the same hot weather with Taiwan. Hence, I am easy to live here and there be fewer culture shocks for me. That sounds great, right? However, there is a small problem.

After tsunami happened, lots of volunteers arrived at the Kao Lak. Most don't have vehicle to move. Therefore, one way to arrive the destination is to "hitch a ride". Thai people are kind to accept these "Farangs" (foreigners) around their land and pick them up. Here I have same job with Mali (Polish) and Chum-poo (USA) to teach

English in Ban Lumpi School. "Hitch a ride" is one way that we go to school. Every time as we hitch a ride, the first eye contact of drivers is me. Because I am Asian people, I company with foreigners that I should be a Thai helper. They start saying Thai to me but I am so innocent to reply that I am from Taiwan.

For this reason, I eager to learn Thai and try to have a conversation with Thai drivers. Until now I am proud of myself can have a short conversation with Thai driver even sometimes I don't know what they say and just smile to say "Mai Kao-Jai" (I don't understand). Thai drivers are still kind to me and share fresh fruits with me. I really appreciate that they treat everyone friendly.

How do I learn Thai? One way is from the lovely kids in Lumpi School. I teach them English. Kids teach me Thai and give me a test

every time. They are naturedly good teachers. Besides, teaching in school needs patient for kids. Because I don't understand all Thai, sometimes I have to guess what the kids say. It's interesting that as I get the right answer from the kids, kids and I are all happy.

The last but not least, Thailand and Taiwan is just different one pronounce. No matter what I am, I am pleased to be Thai now. Life in Thailand is wonderful memory and experiences in my life. Thank you Thailand and all people whom I meet.



Yvonne- Taiwan, in Thai University Uniform