



MOEI Thailand 2009

Report

MOEI was launched by the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Hong Kong in 2008. Its core aim was to provide intensive English-language education for migrant children and adults along the Moei River section of the Thai-Burma border. Based in Mae Sot, it worked particularly closely with individuals from the Karen ethnic group. By recruiting undergraduate students as interns and volunteers, the programme also sought to boost engagement with Burma and promote student advocacy. By operating alongside NGOs with deep local knowledge, it was designed to complement existing work in migrant communities.

Following up on a small Thai-Burma border programme in 2008-09, MOEI returned to Mae Sot in 2009. This report provides an analysis of the work undertaken by MOEI Thailand participants in 2009.

Overview

In 2009, 26 students joined the MOEI programme in Mae Sot, Thailand. They first undertook one week of training in early June, and then through to early August delivered eight weeks of intensive English classes to roughly 1400 refugees and migrants in 17 schools. While some schools were in Mae La refugee camp, most classes took place in migrant schools in and beyond Mae Sot. In 2008, teaching with MOEI proved to be extremely hard work. If anything, it was even harder in 2009, as the teaching period was expanded from six weeks to eight. Nevertheless, it remained immensely rewarding. Every intern and volunteer

was very positive about the programme. For some it was a life-changing experience. The programme was also well received by pupils, schools and the community.

Participants

The 2009 cohort of 26 MOEI Thailand participants was drawn from universities in Hong Kong, Ireland, the UK and the USA. A majority – about three-quarters – came from the University of Hong Kong. Two of the 26 students, Winnie Kwan and Priscilla Sham, joined MOEI 2009 as coordinators. Both were undergraduate students from the University of Hong Kong, and MOEI veterans from 2008. An additional MOEI returnee, Steve Gomersall, joined the programme as a trainer in the first week and advised on teaching matters throughout the subsequent eight weeks of classroom delivery. Still another returnee, Carl Browne, was very helpful to the programme throughout. Both Steve and Carl currently live in Mae Sot and work with schools they first got to know as MOEI participants in 2008. The rest of the MOEI teachers joined the programme as either interns or volunteers.

Training

In the week of June 8-12, Steve, Priscilla and Winnie conducted an intensive training workshop in English-language teaching. They drew on and developed the excellent training provided to MOEI by the late Hugh Cory in 2008. The training week was hosted by one of MOEI's partner schools, Hsa Thoo Lei – for which grateful thanks.

Teaching

In-class teaching took place for eight weeks from June 15 to August 7. In general, MOEI Thailand participants had about four hours of classroom contact per day for five days a week, though there were substantial variations on this pattern. Throughout the teaching period, Winnie and Priscilla did an outstanding job of supporting interns and volunteers in Mae La refugee camp and Mae Sot. They also delivered classes themselves. All MOEI Thailand participants taught in either one or two schools for the entire eight weeks of the programme. A change from 2008 was that there was no switching of placements half-way through – all placements were fixed for eight weeks. In the table below, the Teachers column adds to more than 26 because several interns and volunteers spent half a day in one school, and half a day in another.

<i>Location</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Students</i>
Mae La Camp	Anglican Language and Computer Centre	2	95
	Engineering Studies Programme	2	66
	Leadership Management Course	2	97
	Leadership and Management Training Centre	2	64
	Number 6 High/Senior School	2	232
Mae Sot	Boarding High School for Orphans and Helpless Youths	3	220
	Champion	2	40
	Children's Development Centre	1	20
	Hsa Thoo Lei	5	148
	Mae Tao Clinic	2	40
	Minmahaw Education Foundation	1	19
	New Light	1	26
	Phy Chit	1	25
	Science and Technology Training Centre	1	16
	Social Action for Women High School	1	80
Beyond	Safe Haven	2	80
	Thoo Mweh Khee	4	140

Organization

MOEI Thailand 2009 was organized by the University of Hong Kong, which recruited and liaised with all participants and took care of legal matters by requiring participants to sign a contract with the University. Ahead of the training week and throughout the full nine weeks of the programme, Winnie and Priscilla were committed and enthusiastic coordinators. They did a brilliant job. Steve was also a dedicated organizer, contributing far more than just training to the programme. As before, NGOs in the border area were immensely helpful.

Funding

Core funding for MOEI Thailand 2009 was provided by two main donors associated with the University of Hong Kong. Their donations were used to cover major programme expenses, such as organizational costs, some transport costs, training costs, and essential

classroom materials for teachers. They were also used to provide partial scholarships for the eight MOEI interns from the University of Hong Kong, and smaller stipends for many of the volunteers. A great deal of staff time was contributed by the University of Hong Kong – heartfelt thanks to colleagues in the Faculty Office, Faculty of Social Sciences.

Evaluation

Formal evaluation undertaken with MOEI Thailand participants and partners indicates that the 2009 programme was if anything more successful than the launch 2008 programme. As before, there were minor problems here and there, but no major issues. MOEI participants were uniformly positive about most aspects of the programme, as were the students and schools in which classes were given. Many MOEI Thailand interns and volunteers are committed to undertaking Burma advocacy when they return to their university campuses.

MOEI 2010

Currently, plans are in hand to implement MOEI 2010 in China, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The provisional schedule for MOEI 2010 in all of these locations is:

Monday May 31 – Friday June 4, 2010	Training
Monday June 7 – Friday July 30, 2010	Teaching

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