



Bank-Led Scheme Puts Computers in Rural Thai Classrooms

A collaboration involving Cisco Networking Academy, the private sector, and government is helping Thailand's children.

Opening a World of Opportunities



"It is the first time we were able to use our knowledge of CCNA to solve a problem, to help children in rural areas of Thailand. We are grateful for the opportunity to give something back."

Methi Sasithornthada, Computer Engineering student, Dhurakij Bandij University

Giving schoolchildren access to computers and the Internet is a challenge in many developing countries, but in rural Thailand a collaboration between the private sector, government, and the Cisco Networking Academy® program is addressing this challenge in innovative ways.

The Open the World of Opportunities for Children scheme was piloted in June 2009 and launched in March 2010 after the country's largest financial institution, Bangkok Bank, decided to donate its old computers to schools in remote areas.

The bank originally contacted Thailand's Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC) for advice on which schools to target. OBEC then asked the country's National Electronics and Computer Technology Center to provide e-learning training for teachers. Microsoft provided Windows licenses and HP did a health check on the donated computers.

In support of this project, Cisco donated routers and switches to participating schools, and Networking Academy students installed and networked the computers.

Rigorous Selection

To minimize classroom disruption, the installations usually take place over school vacations in March, April, and October. Networking academies around the country are contacted by email to see if they have students who are willing to be part of the five- or six-person teams that carry out the installations over one or two days. The selection process is rigorous.

The students must have appropriate technical qualifications, and their instructors must provide a reference regarding their level of professionalism. Proximity to the target schools is also a consideration, to minimize travel costs. "The students are keen to get involved," says Chanunda Phongposob, Cisco® area academy manager for Thailand. "It is quite an honor because it provides an opportunity to use their skills outside the classroom."

So far eight schools, teaching 1373 students, have been wired this year, with another four scheduled to go online before the end of 2010. The remainder will be connected in 2011.

Future Plans

Chanunda hopes the scheme will spread. "This could be a good model for the government to follow because in the past, the Ministry of Education has donated computers to schools but it lacks resources to make sure they are installed and cared for properly," she says.

Open the World of Opportunities for Children aims to donate 400 computers to 20 schools over two years.

For More Information

To learn more about Cisco Networking Academy, please visit www.cisco.com/go/netacad.

To learn more about this project, please contact Chanunda Phongposob at cphongpo@cisco.com.