Realizing mobility’s global vision

World Vision* Foundation of Thailand empowers remote field support workers with low-cost Intel-powered classmate PCs

World Vision has more than 32,000 humanitarian aid and development workers delivering support to poor urban, rural and remote communities around the world, but couldn’t afford to mobilize many of them with computing resources — until it discovered the rugged, mobile Intel-powered classmate PC.

Assessing the Situation

Founded in 1950, World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Drawing on more than $US2.4 billion in annual funds raised, its 32,000 aid workers deliver sustainable community area development programs (ADPs) that support children’s well-being and foster community growth in 97 countries.

Within Thailand, World Vision Foundation of Thailand manages 81 separate ADPs as well as 24 special-purpose aid programs for specific groups, such as assisting migrant workers from neighboring Myanmar who have no formal legal protection.

As a global humanitarian agency, World Vision continually works to minimize administrative costs and maximize its investment in field programs. Although computers have long been recognized as valuable tools for field workers, their high cost has prevented World Vision from investing heavily in computers for remote field workers. Even in relatively large field offices such as that in Bangkok, workers might share just four or five desktop PCs and a few digital cameras.

Challenge

- **Support remote workers.** In rural and remote Thailand, data communications are patchy and IT support non-existent. This meant World Vision staff had to drive hours from the communities they served, back to their office, just to lodge status reports electronically.
- **Reduce expenses.** Like any aid and development agency, World Vision’s funding is tight and carefully scrutinized. Large-scale introduction of computers is difficult to cost justify without clear ROI figures.

Solution

- **Mobilize staff.** Providing remote workers with an Intel-powered classmate PC lets them file status reports on sponsored children, complete with photographs, while they’re still at the remote village.
- **Cut costs.** Intel-powered classmate PCs’ low cost makes them easy to justify. Enabling field data entry has reduced the number of trips made to rural communities — saving hundreds of dollars per trip to remote communities and hundreds of thousands of dollars per year.

“We are committed to provide our field staff the best tools that they can use in effectively serving the children and the communities. I am glad we came across classmate PC’s. They definitely make our field staff’s work fast and easy.”

Khun Chitra Thumborisuth
Operations Director/Deputy Executive Director
World Vision Foundation of Thailand
Lack of access to computing facilities made it difficult for field workers to operate efficiently. Notes were taken on paper, and workers had to drive hundreds of kilometers— at significant cost—to back field offices to enter program data related to the wellbeing of more than 121,000 Thai children sponsored by World Vision’s Thai and international donors.

With its continued growth, World Vision has faced a growing need to streamline its operations and improve operational transparency.

“With increased global communications, the need to understand what’s happening in the field is growing,” explained Govi Pillai, Director, Global Connectivity and ICT for Development, World Vision. “That has required us to invest more into the kind of systems we put in place to deliver accountability and transparency. Despite this, we used to worry about field workers carrying high-tech equipment because it sent the wrong message.”

As computers and mobile phones became more common, these concerns subsided. However, the high cost of laptops and other technology was only part of the problem. Conventional notebooks are often fragile, hard to back up, prone to data loss and difficult to support in rural areas where even dial-up Internet is often a luxury.

In even more remote areas, an almost total lack of connectivity in the field—except, in many places, over GSM* mobile networks—presented additional issues. Until recently, only half of the areas in which World Vision operates globally have any kind of Internet or mobile connectivity, although this is steadily increasing.

Challenges of accessibility and connectivity framed the challenge for World Vision’s Global Access and Connectivity Group, which coordinates global efforts to use communications to support World Vision’s aid workers and the communities they serve.

“In all programs, we want to use IT as a development tool for economic activity, education, health and more,” said Pillai. “If we can get computing into the hands of our field workers and raise their IT capability, they will really become change agents in the field.”

Delivering the Solution

Intel-powered classmate PCs provided the optimal solution for World Vision Foundation of Thailand’s needs, putting computers into field workers’ hands while avoiding the complexity and expense of supporting a conventional laptop.

“Our field workers have normally used desktops in field offices for their administrative work. They like the portability the Intel-powered classmate PC provides: they can bring it anywhere and use it where they need it.”

Meliza Aberin
DO Officer
World Vision Foundation of Thailand

* GSM: Global System for Mobile Communications

Spotlight: World Vision Foundation of Thailand

- World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice.
- More than 32,000 field workers support the delivery of World Vision programs to local communities in 97 countries.
- World Vision Foundation of Thailand manages 81 community programs focused on supporting rural villagers or urban slums as well as 24 special programs focused on traditionally disenfranchised groups such as migrant workers.
- World Vision Foundation of Thailand’s programs directly benefit over 121,300 children in need.
The organization initially intended to test ten of the laptops in four ADPs across Thailand, but upon seeing the actual features decided to spread the ten classmate PCs to one worker at each of the ten ADPs. In the pilot program, targeted field workers used the laptops to record details relating to child wellbeing indicators, program monitoring and evaluation, communications and other everyday documentation.

Early feedback was strongly positive. Users found classmate PCs convenient to bring into the field, durable, easy to use, and fast enough to meet a range of requirements. Overall, the laptops were seen as valuable tools for reducing the redundancy of data recording, supporting multiple work requirements, saving time and helping workers complete their work.

Classmate PCs significantly reduced operating costs for field staff. At an estimated US$1 in gas and running expenses per kilometer traveled, eliminating a single round trip to a moderately remote community – 100km from a World Vision field office – saves World Vision over US$200.

Multiplied by the dozens of workers and programs active in Thailand alone, savings from reductions in travel alone could quickly grow into the hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. That money can instead be put directly into community development programs, delivering even more value from donations to World Vision.

"Normally, I have to spend 45 minutes to travel to the community and another 45 minutes to travel back to the office for data recording. My classmate PC enables me to do data entry right in the field, allowing me to do my other tasks and truly helping me become more productive in my field work."

Suchira Thongnork
Monitoring and Evaluation Officer
World Vision

The pilot tests had significant implications for World Vision’s activities worldwide, since ADPs all over the world face similar challenges. The pilot program not only tested the classmate PCs’ value as productivity tools for field workers, but provided a proving ground to evaluate local support options, and to test distribution and partnership models that could eventually be duplicated in other countries.

Feedback from the Thai field workers has been strongly positive, with many noting the Intel-powered classmate PCs are convenient, durable, functional and offering robust battery life. This boosts their efficiency and makes better data management part of their everyday work.

Local support, provided by local Intel partner SVOA*, ensured that classmate PCs were localized with Thai-language keyboards and field support. This meant technical issues could be addressed without having to be escalated outside the country.

Support was also eased by configuring classmate PCs with a standard operating environment including Microsoft* Windows* XP, Microsoft Office and IBM* Lotus* Notes*. However, all personal data is stored on USB

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| • Intel-powered classmate PCs let workers enter data on sponsored children in the field, including photographs taken with the built-in camera. | • Integral Answers
| • The classmate PCs’ WiFi connectivity connects them to local WiFi hotspots in some World Vision communities or wherever else they are available. | • Thai reseller and Intel partner SVOA provided language localization and local support for the classmate PCs. |
Return on Investment

- Using Intel-powered classmate PCs for field data entry saves round trips that can cost $US200 or more per week, per aid worker.
- The lightweight, robust design and long battery life of Intel-powered classmate PCs has minimized support costs and maximized productivity for field workers, who can record data and photographs in the field and work more efficiently than ever.
- Intel-powered classmate PCs provide significant process improvement for a low upfront cost.

With their rugged design, low cost and complexity, Intel-powered classmate PCs have proven to be ideal travelling companions for World Vision Foundation of Thailand’s field workers. As connectivity continues to improve, classmate PCs will provide an invaluable link between World Vision’s global organizers and the thousands of staff delivering care programs on the ground.

Achieve Your Vision

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