

Portal to curb wasting of aid resources

NUS student teams up with others to create website to prevent duplication of volunteer efforts

Kok Xing Hui

When National University of Singapore economics student Chua Pei Fen organised a youth volunteering trip to Laos in 2011, she noticed the books her group of 16 had lugged along were going to a fully stocked library which nobody was using.

"If I had known they already had books, perhaps I would have thought of something else – like teaching the students how to read the books instead," the 24-year-old undergraduate told *The Sunday Times*.

Vexed by the duplication of volunteer efforts, Ms Chua teamed up with graduate student Lim Yan Chun, 24, and full-time national serviceman Edric Lian, 21, to create a website they hope can prevent charitable resources from being wasted.

It will explain what has already been done in a particular area and what is needed. A volunteer who goes on their website to look for an orphanage in Cambodia, for example, will be able to find out which groups had volunteered at that orphanage and what they had done, as well as what else the orphanage needs. He or she can also contact the other volunteers to exchange information.

The co-founders registered their social enterprise, Care Positioning System, in March last year and will launch their portal next month. Currently, 20 young people work part-time at Care Positioning System, taking on roles from marketing to strategy to finance.

They have pooled together \$5,000 to pay Web designers, and taken inspiration from foreign-based websites such as Transition Abroad and Online Volunteering that connect keen volunteers with organisations that list jobs that need volunteers.

But Ms Chua and her team have added an extra element to their portal – two-way feedback. Organisations will be able to list what they need and volunteers will be able to post what they have done, as well



ST PHOTO: CAROLINE CHIA

Some of the members of the team behind Care Positioning System – (from left) Ms Nur Afiah Juhari, 21; Ms Chua Pei Fen, 24; Mr Peter Htet, 23; Mr Yap Jia Qing, 20; and Mr Edric Lian, 21. The social enterprise is launching an online portal next month that aims to prevent charitable resources from being wasted.

as share information such as teaching material.

"We're also hoping to get backpackers to contribute," said Ms Chua.

As many overseas volunteering efforts are carried out as school projects, Care Positioning System has been trying to get tertiary institutes on board.

Ms Chua said all 12 schools that the team has approached have been receptive to the idea.

The website will start with listing eight projects, including recycling efforts for a village in Vietnam and helping with the healthcare needs of another in Laos.

Dunman High alumna Lee Pin Qi, 25, the co-founder of social enterprise, Service and Learning Training Solution, will be listing the school's volunteer projects in Cambodia, Vietnam and China on the site. She said: "It is a useful platform to record and share information between generations of student volunteers and other teams who go to the same location. This would allow the good practices to continue."

Ms Chua added: "We hope to match groups who've gone to certain places with future groups, so the future teams can have better planning."

✉ kxinghui@sph.com.sg