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STATISTICS

Total number of students and classes in SOLS 24/7 for the month of April.

Timorese females values English and Life-skills education.

The following is the students' statistic and the number of full-time and part-time classes for the month of April.

	Class	New Students	Drop Outs	Total no. of students (current and new)	Total no. of females	Total no. males
Full Time	1	3	1	38	21	17
Part Time	4	25	5	53	37	16

An additional part-time class was opened for newly registered students in the second-week of April. Our part-time classes are receiving very positive response and we are pleased that many have registered even though we have not actively promoted our classes.

Furthermore, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of our part-time students are females and we are glad to see that Timorese females value education and sees it as a way to come up in their life. We believe females are an important and crucial component of a community and country's capacity building and development. SOLS 24/7 hopes to reach out to more Timorese females by providing education in English and Life-skills that will most definitely provide them with more opportunities in employment and a more holistic view of life.

CURRENT SITUATION

Voicing hopes for a better future.

Students share developments they would like to see after April elections.

Hoping for future progress and development, Timorese including the students of SOLS 24/7 casted their votes on the 10th of April 2007. Local and international force undertook serious security measures to ensure that Timorese were able to vote peacefully and smoothly. The election result was a tie between the current Prime Minister Jose Ramos Horta and the party leader of Fretelin, Francisco Guterres.

Looking into the personal hopes of students, they would like to see a more effective government that would be able solve the East West divide in East Timor. Problems caused by this disunity have destroyed the country's physical, economic and social infrastructure.

Students would also like to see positive developments in the country's education system. Many schools were broken down during the unrest in 2006 and because of the lack of financial income, many youths are not able to attend school and have remained unemployed. Many end up remaining idle at home or they sell cigarettes, phone cards or drive taxis to earn a living. While such activities give them enough income to survive, it does not allow them to get more skills to go higher in life.

Mateus Carlos Sarmiento, a student at SOLS 24/7 hopes to see developments in the districts where electricity will be provided for 24 hours a day, instead of just from 8am to 12 midnight. He would also like to have a bus terminal in the city, better roads and stricter regulations that bans road side shops.

As an educational training center, SOLS 24/7 shares the same hope for progress in Timor. We are confident that this election will bring more peace and stability which will allow SOLS 24/7 to do more service for the development of East Timor.

ENGLISH CLASS

Combining Dreams and Exposure- Pushing students' to greater heights.

Realizing their own progress after speaking to native English speakers.

We at SOLS 24/7 believe strongly that "what the mind can conceive and believe, it can be achieved!" Student's desire and aspiration to achieve their dreams are increasing daily and this has shown in their interest and improved efforts to develop their English. Many would like to become teacher trainees in the districts as they know that it would give them the great opportunity to lead, manage, teach and build the lives of their fellow Timorese.

During a local procession of the statue of Mary, they were excited to communicate with Australian soldiers who were doing crowd-control. This gave them more confidence in their English as they could see for themselves that their communication skills has developed so much that they were able to speak to native English speakers. Furthermore, they were very comfortable with speaking English that they did not speak Tetun amongst themselves during the ceremony.

Even with the good progress, we still had to overcome some problems in our English class. A few students did not want to ask questions when they weren't able to understand certain explanations in class thus they were grouped with stronger students to practice their English so as to allow them to consult with their friends who they were more comfortable with. A new student who had little knowledge of English felt demoralized when she compared herself to the

older students. However with the support and encouragement from teachers and friends, her spirits rose again and she was able to return back to her studies.

Discussing and sharing with the students about their dreams has definitely increased their morale and motivation to learn and grow. When students have more believe in self after speaking English to foreigners, their attitude towards their own self-development and other school program also changed to become more focused and disciplined. Combining dreams and exposure can definitely push the students to greater heights.

SCIENCE OF LIFE CLASS

Effective systems to mould students' character and leadership skills.

Character building through practical application and self-evaluation has produced positive results.

Focusing on practical application of the lessons taught in class has produced significant results in our students' character and leadership development. Characteristics of 'co-operation', 'responsibility', and 'punctuality' were the main highlight for the month of April and students were made to understand and apply these values in their daily activities in school.

By applying what they've learned in programs such as agriculture, games, and work, they were able to see the difference in the results produced. Many could see that with co-operation, more things could be done faster. Moreover, they felt happier to work together as everyone was becoming more helpful and because of this spirit, it has build the closeness and unity between the students.

To follow-up on the students' progress, teachers constantly monitored the students' development in their studies, work and attitude. Self-evaluation classes have allowed students' to compare the changes they see within themselves as well as confirm the results that they are producing in the school. Since "the only prove of ability is results," students were able to asses their improvement through the results they were producing in their school duties such as being in-charge of agriculture, kitchen, school cleanliness and dorms. Knowing that they are making good progress in their self-development and responsibilities have given them a boost to do and achieve more.

However, they are still trying to fine the balance applying the different soft skills as they sometimes are so engrossed in working together that they run over time. Nevertheless, we look at it as a positive sign that students are more than excited to develop their skills in being co-operative and responsible.

Foundation of a good character is essential for anyone to attain more opportunities and achieve positive results in their life and we are constantly finding systems to effectively mould a person's character. Focusing on practical application of lessons taught in class, consistent monitoring and evaluation of student progress, and student self-evaluation has produced positive results for the month of April. In May, we will continue to improve our teaching methods as we are committed to develop the lives of Timorese youths.

AFTERNOON ACTIVITIES

Independent thinkers, excellent team players

Afternoon programs run smoothly without the direct supervision of teachers.

One of our main goal for our students' is for them to become independent thinkers but excellent team players. Through our afternoon activities, we are pleased to observe students' becoming more independent and responsible.

Coming into their 6-month studies in SOLS 24/7, teachers are taking a step back and are not directly supervising programs where students are able to manage on their own. We were able to see that activities could run smoothly as students were trying to consciously apply lessons on co-operation and responsibility in their programs. Activities such as counting beans, meditation and alphamatics and games were co-ordinated by student leaders. With the co-operation of their fellow classmates, activities could run well, without any big problems or hiccups.



Students playing afternoon games

This development is essential and very important as students' need to become more independent and effective for them to be able to train other youths in the districts. A ripple effect of positive change will only happen once our students' leadership skills are strong enough and they are able to reach out to more Timorese youths. To create a positive impact in our students' development, we will continuously train and give them more opportunities to hone their character. In the long-run, we strongly believe that change will occur on a community and national level once our students are ready to develop and help Timorese youths come up in life.

ADVANCED AND TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM

Skilled youths to tap on Timor's potential in the agricultural industry.

Field extension and new student project to develop more interest and skills in agriculture.

SOLS 24/7 foresees the future potential of a strong agricultural economy in East Timor. There are many possible future opportunities in agriculture as the weather and soil condition is conducive for the healthy growth of plants and vegetables. Thus SOLS 24/7 is serious and focused in developing our students' skills in agriculture and we are making good progress in the program.



Non-chemical fertilizers- EM

without using any chemical fertilizers. We have made more composted fertilizer and non-chemical fertilizers named EM. Different types of EM have been made using sugar and water mixed with either food waste, coconut, pumpkin, orange or bananas. The benefits of these non-chemical fertilizers is they can be made at a very low cost and this will allow low income families to grow their own vegetables and either sell or make agricultural products out of the agricultural produce.

To increase our students' interest in agriculture and to develop their skills, students have been divided into groups and were given group projects to plant different types of vegetables. Students become responsible for either their group's success or failure and this has encouraged them to become more co-operative, inquisitive and hardworking. Their desire to see their group perform well pushes them to do more and thus they eventually develop more knowledge and improve



Lady's finger

their agricultural skills.

We also have plans to propagate plants and flowers to acquire more knowledge and skills that will enable our students to earn an income from selling flowers and propagated plants in the future. We will also compile an agricultural guidebook to transfer the agricultural knowledge and skills to Cambodia.



Chilies grown on our field

We are constantly looking for different and effective methods for agriculture that will allow individuals to grow healthy and excellent quality vegetables and plants at a minimal cost. Once more people can attain these knowledge and skills, more would be able to become independent income earners by opening small businesses selling their agricultural produce, making agricultural bi-products or exporting produce overseas. The possibilities of East Timor having a strong agricultural economy is very real and we are going to

continue co-operating, finding and implementing new and creative ideas to help build the community and country.

LOGISTICS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Cost saving measures by tapping our local and international networks.

Reducing expenses by getting free firewood and replacing zinc roofs with canvas.

Saving on cost will in the long-run allow us to become an independent, self-sustainable organization. Adopting a resourceful attitude and tapping our local and international networks, we have come up with solutions to reduce our school expenses.

We are currently looking at ways to get free firewood and also to build a heat stove that can store heat for 24 hours. Our students are helping us source for free firewood and one of our previous local volunteer has offered to teach us how to build the heat stove. He has also previously provided us with free seeds for agriculture, saving more cost for our school.

Tapping into our international networks, we have managed to import rolls of canvas from Singapore. As zinc panels are quite expensive in East Timor, we are replacing our roofs with canvas and any future expansions will use canvasses for roofs.



By being resourceful and knowing how to tap our local and international networks, we are slowly working towards our goal of becoming a self-sustainable organization. Combining this skill with our cost saving attitude, slowly we hope to become financially independent so as to enable to us to reach out to more youths. *Canvas bought to replace zinc roofs*

PART-TIME ENGLISH PROGRAM

New part-time class opens and sourcing for new venue for part-time program.

Plans to have more part-time classes due to the good response in April.

Due to the good response for our part-time program in April, we have opened a new class (from 3pm-4pm) for our 24 newly registered students. They are starting from lesson 1 and are learning nouns and making simple sentences. To develop their interest in English learning, teachers are also taking some time to form closer relationships with students. This will make their studies more enjoyable as they know that teachers here care and are concerned for their development in English. So far, the attendance for our part-time class has been consistent and this is a good feedback that students are happy and are benefiting from their part-time class.

Many of our students who have studied in our part-time program are continuing their studies for another 3 months. Thus, they will be able to complete the full 6-month English program and they will receive a certificate of completion in the month of July or August.

Due to this positive response and the relative calm situation in the country, we are sourcing for a new place outside the school to have more part-time programs. As English is an essential language for studies and business, we hope to help more Timorese who want to seize this learning opportunity to attain a better future.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Giving a personal touch as an appreciation for co-operation with Forum NGO Timor Leste.

A lunch get together with Lemi from Forum NGO Timor Leste.

Delicious chicken curry was served on a Wednesday lunch session with Lemi from Forum NGO Timor Leste and teachers and trainees had an enjoyable time discussing previous and future co-operative works with him.

Forum NGO Forum Timor Leste has given SOLS 24/7 tremendous support by providing us information, networks, advertising space and by helping promote our programs in Dili and the districts. Most recently, we have worked closely with NGO Forum Timor Leste for our ICT development and we currently have internet access in the school.

We are very thankful for all the assistance that NGO Forum Timor Leste has given to us and we look forward to many more meaningful co-operations in the future.

EVENTS

Rest and Relax under the sun and in the sea.

Amazing fun swimming, playing and performing during our Saturday picnic at the beach.



Great fun in the waters

Our Saturday picnic was an amazing event as we swam in the calm and beautiful beach of East Timor and enjoyed playing beach games together. Students put up unexpected performances that were simply comical and entertaining. It was an excellent initiative by the students and a quick one indeed as they only took one day to prepare for the performance. Musically talented students played the guitar while others joined in, singing songs Tetun, Indonesian, Portugese and English.

Going for outings such as this makes their stay and learning at SOLS 24/7 more enjoyable. The Saturday outing allowed all the students to relax and de-stress while developing a closer bond amongst themselves and the teachers and of course, many requested for more outings in the future.

We could see that our students were becoming more confident and friendly as they approached youths from another NGO who were having an outing as well. They showed little hesitance to go up to them and happily shared with them about their school program at SOLS 24/7.



Surprise performance by students

Making an impression with students' display of good character.

Receiving praise from priests and nuns during the procession of the Statue of Virgin Mary.



Even though, it was raining cats and dogs, students stayed to witness the procession of the Statue of Virgin Mary. This annual event brought people from different villages and districts to Dili to come and say prayers and gave their respects to Mother Mary. Many events in East Timor display local customs that combine religious beliefs and traditional cultures. Apart from the prayers, there were men who performed traditional dances with swords and it was also a nice sight to see children wearing traditional clothes, joining the procession.

Children walk with candles

However, it was more pleasing to see our students' discipline, co-operation and humility during the event. All of them spoke English even though they were out of school and they did not split themselves up but made sure they stick together so that no one would get lost. For displaying an excellent behavior, the nun and the priest praised our students and the teachers were also commended for their respect and humility.



Waiting for event to start

We have more confidence in the students' development as now, they not only exercise good character in school but outside as well. As they practice more of their soft skills, we believe they will have the same positive attitude and approach towards other areas in their life.

VOLUNTEER AND STUDENT AFFAIRS

Volunteer Value added training program.

One month training in report-writing, computer, accounts, Tetun and agriculture to develop multi-skilled volunteers.

SOLS 24/7 Timor Leste teachers and trainees are undergoing a one-month hard skills training program in report-writing, computer, accounts, Tetun and agriculture skills. As individual volunteers have experience in these different areas, daily sessions have been arranged for volunteers to share their knowledge and experience in these hard skills. We would like our volunteers to become flexible and multi-skilled individuals who can perform different kinds of job in the organization. With more skills, our volunteers will be able to do more service and help more youths acquire essential education that will benefit their lives.

Monday and Friday students sharing session

Influencing the perception of students on daily issues.

Students, like everyone have to deal with issues such as friendships, personal dreams, emotional problems, family problems, and feelings of worry or anxiety with the country's current

situation. Our bi-weekly sharing sessions allow students to voice their concerns and share with their friends what they are going through. Most students require an adult perspective of things in order for them to see the positive or lighter side of the situation that they are facing and they also need advice from someone who they can trust to deal with their problems.

During one of the sessions, a very simple but real topic was discussed- "Is crying good?" While some felt that crying makes them feel better every time they faced a problem, the teachers reminded them that crying will not solve anything and thus, they had to be realistic and deal with the situation. Teachers committed one evening to letting students talk about their personal dreams. Some wanted to travel, speak excellent English, become a vet and a student even had the dream of going into the jungle to study plants. Some did not have full confidence that they could achieve their dreams but teachers explained and showed them that 'the sky is the only limit.'

The sharing sessions not only help build closer relationships with the students but by teachers making the first step to reach out personally to the students, the students will not be afraid to come to the teachers when they face any difficulties in their studies or personal life in the future. When the students are able to be free of any negative thoughts or feelings, they are happier to study and can stay focused in their development.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Doing extra in our '2-task a day' project.

Benefiting everyone by doing more.

The more we do, the more everyone in the school benefits and thus, 5 teachers and trainees from SOLS 24/7 have undertaken the '2-task a day' project. It was a brilliant idea given by our volunteer, Say Ranny, for everyone to do 2 extra things everyday that was out of their daily responsibilities. Everyone could choose what they wanted to do and so far, the schools' notice board had been decorated, the bathroom mat had been washed and the door or the store had been fixed.

All the teachers and trainees had made a conscious effort to talk to individual students daily to get closer to them so as to understand them more and encourage them in their studies. At SOLS 24/7, we believe strongly in connecting with our students' minds and hearts so that they know we truly care for their development in all the different areas of their life.