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STATISTICS

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

SOLS 24/7 crosses the hundredth mark for total number of students.

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

	Class	New Students	Drop Outs	Total no. of students (current and new)	Total no. of females	Total no. males
Full Time	2	13	6	45	23	22
Part Time	6	27	2	90	53	37

The month of May has been a proud achievement for SOLS 24/7 as we have crossed the hundredth mark for total number of students. Our program started in November 2006 and the number of both full time and part time students have increased every month. To meet the development and education needs of our students, we have opened one more full time and part time class. Thus in total we have 135 students attending 2 full time classes and 6 part time classes.



Students from our new class

But most importantly is the underlying achievement that has enabled SOLS 24/7 to achieve positive results over these 7 months. Both teachers and students have put in a lot of hard work, discipline, determination and effort to develop themselves and the school. But most definitely, the strongest power behind our progress has been everyone's sincerity, love and passion to help Timorese youths develop. By making everyone feel like family, it has only increased their positive attitude towards learning and change.

We hope to see further progress for the month of June, especially for our part-time program as we are sourcing for a new venue to expand our school in Dili. As more and more youths become literate in English, East Timor will slowly but surely open up to the international community and companies and thus creating more socio-economic improvements.

CURRENT SITUATION

Healing wounds and mending rifts.

A challenging 5 years ahead for President Jose Ramos-Horta.

It was a landslide victory for President Jose Ramos-Horta, a nobel laureate and long-term political activist. For the next 5 years, he will lead Asia's youngest nation, trying to mend long-term rifts and work towards the socio-economic development of the nation.

In April 2006, political dissensions between the government and the nation's security forces quickly led to a civil warfare that divided the East and the West. About 37 people died and



President Horta standing outside government house.

150,000 were displaced to makeshift shelters and refugee camps. Many do not have a home to return to and some are still anxious of the current situation and thus are still seeking shelter in these camps.

Serious and major development work has to take place for East Timor. Looting and arson has destroyed the nation's physical infrastructure. Over 50% of Timorese are unemployed due to the lack of job opportunity, skills or education. Stronger laws have to be enforced in a nation where weak security measures have allowed continued gang fights, which

has made many feel wary and fearful.

While change needs to happen from the top, it is also necessary to create change from the bottom and education is the most powerful tool to bring about multiple benefits to this scarred nation. SOLS 24/7 is committed in its support to assist East Timor in creating this bottom-up change by providing equitable access for both males and females to necessary academic, employment and life-skills education. Education prevents out-of-school youths from being idle and being involved in unhealthy social activities. They are made aware of their individual rights and in the long-term creates a civil society that is involved in social change.

Timorese are putting their hopes on President Jose Ramos Horta to solve immediate and long-term problems. While some skeptics do not foresee much change happening in the future, having a positive mindset towards the current leadership is the first step towards improvement. May we see socio-economic developments promised by President Jose Ramos Horta be carried out in the next 5 years for a better East Timor.

ENGLISH CLASS

Building a strong foundation through practice and positive thinking.

Impressive developments in English learning for both new and full time students.

"I can!" this simple two words have become very powerful for the progress of our new students. When these words were repeated, it increases their believe in self and despite not knowing much English, they have been trying very hard to learn the language fast. Giving them the boost and confidence has also made them feel that learning English is easy and enjoyable. All of these contribute to creating a positive environment for development and learning and this has been one of the organization's key strengths.



English practice sessions

In addition, for those who have a slower learning capacity, teachers attended to them individually and were being corrected on the spot. Much more support in the form of teaching and encouragement were given to them so that they were able to follow up with the lesson. They were taught how to clearly pronounce "ABCs" and they have started making sentences with nouns and asking question of location such as:

"Where is he?"

"Where are your parents?"

"Where is he going?"

Even though these exercises are simple, it is important for new students to confidently say these sentences so that they develop a strong foundation for the next stage of English learning.

For our old students, a lot of focus has been placed on the proper understanding, usage and spelling of adverbs and adjectives. Continuing to focus on practicing new words ensure that our students will be able to use the words learned in daily life. They have also

sat for their final exams and results have been very good. Only 2 students failed and a few students scored 90 and above. More students have come up to teachers to express their happiness after talking to more foreigners and we are definitely very pleased with their confidence and enthusiasm to use the language outside school.

Our students' development for the month of May has been impressive for they have only shown more interest to learn and develop. Having a positive environment definitely helps in their growth but their inner desire to go higher and achieve their dreams has been their biggest strength to continue growing together.

SCIENCE OF LIFE CLASS

Life Skills Education- Quality Imperative in Education

Focusing on different areas to understand future challenges in life.

Many education systems in developing countries merely focus on the attainment of academic and necessary hard skills for the future employment of their students. Such systems underestimate how life-skills training create quality and well-rounded education that equip youths with necessary skills to meet future challenges in the different areas of life.

Our life-skills program takes students step-by-step from understanding simpler topics to more complex training and discussions on leadership and life skills. More challenging topics such as 5 areas of life, equal potential and dominoes were introduced throughout this month. 5 areas of life looks at the macro perspective of an individual needs i.e. in areas such as physical, emotional, intellectual, mental and spiritual. The topic on equal potential introduces to the students the truth that there are untapped capabilities within a human being to achieve in these 5 areas while dominoes analyses the various short-term and long-term consequences of individuals' actions.

Saturday seminars have been an effective evaluation method to know the level of students' understanding of the topics taught during the week. While some students were able to accurately answer the seminar questions, others only had a surface understanding of the topics taught. This was understandable, as the topics learned required more explanation and exercises for one to clearly comprehend them. As these are life-skills topics, we are going to constantly discuss about them and train students to apply lessons learned in their daily activities.

It has become more evident that developing leadership and soft skills forms a strong foundation for a person's success in every area of life. Teachers adopt a personal

approach in understanding students' problems and level of development and teaching and learning effectiveness is always measured to maintain high standards of quality in the education taught here. SOLS 24/7 strongly believes in giving importance to good life skills education to ensure the overall good quality of our education.

AFTERNOON ACTIVITIES

Growing minds, body and spirit.

Getting into the afternoon gear of afternoon activities.

Textbook education has long been inadequate in meeting the current challenges in education. Thus many new and better learning methodologies have been applied to give ample focus to the development of an individual's mind, body and spirit. Our new students are slowly being introduced to programs, which trains them in these 3 important areas.

To start of, new students are counting 200 beans thrice a week. Even though it sounds easy, the exercise and benefits isn't a simple affair. Until today, old students are still making mistakes in counting beans which shows the amount of mental discipline required to perform well in this activity. Counting beans develops a student's concentration and step-by-step, as their focus and thinking ability sharpens, they are able to learn faster in class and other activities.



New students counting beans

Despite their inability to understand much English, the new students were excited to learn simple English songs which essentially helps them to develop their vocabulary, sentence structure and tongue flexibility. Memorizing songs makes English learning fun and enjoyable. It has also become natural for them to sing the songs taught outside class time and thus English learning continues even after the activity has stopped.

Both new and old students gather together for games activity, which hones their confidence creativity, flexibility and strategizing skills. The enjoyment that comes from games makes students feel that learning is not a tedious affair. Since many of these activities were being introduced for the first time to the new students, they have taken a bit more time to react during games. But with the guidance and support from the old students, the learning process has become much easier and much faster.

Last but not least, SOLS 24/7 also looks into the spiritual development of students. New students learn devotions from different religions, which primarily helps them to understand the connectivity and similarity of various religions. This allows them to also appreciate and respect other religion and thus ensures harmony and cohesion within the organization.

SOLS 24/7 believes in having learning methodologies that is both effective and creative. We have not neglected traditional academic training but have combined other forms of learning that essentially trains important areas of an individual's development which eventually leads to their holistic development.

ADVANCED AND TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM

No harm in seeing more green.

More effort, co-operation, learning and questions to achieve green results.

Green only means growth for our students as they sweat it out to achieve results in their agricultural projects. Both old and new full time students were divided into 6 groups and projects ranged from planting Chinese kale, sawi, watergreen, papaya, carrots, bittergourd, ladies' finger and long beans. In addition, some groups had to work on making non-chemical composed fertilizer and EM.

Agricultural project work essentially hones important hard and soft skills for our students' future development. Their level of motivation and eagerness to learn has increased greatly and this was evident from the amount of questions asked and hard work put in to achieve results in their project. Different experiments and techniques were applied to find out the most effective method to grow the various vegetables. An example was how a group experimented growing watergreen with normal seeds and seeds soaked overnight with water. Results have shown that the latter method proved more effective.



Yellow sunflowers grown in our school garden.



Carrot baby plants

By monitoring the growth of plants, students also develop the discipline to be responsible for the proper and detailed monitoring of progress and problems in their projects. Step-by-step they are developing problem-solving skills by trying to find out the root cause of the problems faced

such as plants with holes, dried plants, and varied quality in plant growth. With the advise of their teacher, the teams then tried to find out various possible solutions that might help them solve the problems they face with their vegetables.



Egg plants taken from our field

As the goal of growing healthy vegetables was very real and achievable to students, they realized that success depended on their initiative to attain more knowledge and change it to become skills. Applying the agricultural knowledge in the field builds the positive attitude of hard work, effort, initiative, determination and the attitude of not giving up. A 17-year-old female part-time student even commented, "They work so hard, they look like real man!"

Team discussions build co-operation, creativity and important listening skills, as everybody had to listen to different viewpoint of team members to find out the best methods to achieve the desired outcomes. Without realizing it themselves, the students will naturally apply these soft skills acquired in their studies, general infrastructure work in school and personal life.

No one can ever underestimate the multiple short and long-term benefits of agriculture work. The skills acquired influences all aspects of their development, which eventually ensures the success and progress of the organization as a whole. Our focus and seriousness to develop our agriculture program is part of our full commitment to assist in the rebuilding of East Timor.

LOGISTICS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Construction work- Action and co-operation while acquiring valuable construction skills.

Building new classroom and water tank creates multiple and long-term benefits.

Take a 5-minute walk down Fatuhada, where our school is located and anyone can witness the reality of the situation in East Timor. It is a country in urgent need of a massive reconstruction effort. Many houses were rampaged and burned down by gangs during the civil conflict in April 2006 and to rebuild these houses, the country requires a workforce with the necessary construction knowledge and skills.

To develop both the students and the school, 2 major construction work were carried out in May. Teachers and students have constructed a new classroom and have re-build the water tank which will store water for the use of agriculture. The new classroom is currently used for our new full time and part time classes.



Placing canvas roof for the new classroom

Besides saving cost and the immediate benefits of having a new class, more importantly are the valuable and long term benefits of the hard and soft skills acquired by our students from doing construction work. To list a few, students learn where to get cheap or free materials, think of creative ways to make necessary equipments such as sand filter, how to make smooth flooring and how to build strong water tank that can handle the water pressure. Knowledge and skills such as these will allow them to gain employment and open businesses in the construction industry. We

foresee that as East Timor develops, construction will be a growing industry and we are already taking the first step to provide for this future development.

The soft skills that our students acquire are aplenty. Working together with schoolmates to build the classroom and water tank develops co-operation, team-bonding and thus imbues solidarity and unity. The hard work required strengthens the students' determination and endurance. When they can finally see the outcome of their effort, their believe in self and potential to achieve increases. Inner developments such as these are powerful as their confidence to achieve will slowly extend to other areas such as studies, relationships, managing, organizing, leading etc and thus allowing them to come up in life.



Happy sifting free sand



Working against time was the main challenge that everybody faced. As the class had to be ready for use by the end of the week, students and teachers had to work until late evening and some students weren't able to attend class. But fortunately for

them, they were able to catch up with their studies by following up on their schoolwork with their friends.

Working hard till night to finish the flooring.

We strongly believe in the positive and multiple benefits of doing construction work on our own. The end results provides for the immediate daily running of activities in the organization but the effort put in to achieve the results provides the necessary hard and soft skills that will help out students gain future employment and achieve in other areas of life.

PART-TIME ENGLISH PROGRAM

Attainable and equitable access to English learning for adults in Timor.

Providing basic and continuing education for all.

While SOLS 24/7's program primarily concentrates on youths, SOLS 24/7 provides equal chances to adults who would like to develop their English literacy and gain important life-skills. Providing equal and affordable access to education for both youths and adults increases our capacity building efforts as outcomes produce social and economic progress on an individual, community, social and national level.



Adult part time student

Aged from 30-50, our adult students are mostly employees of international NGOs, companies and embassies who see English and life-skills as an effective tool to communicate and attain more opportunities in their work. Some of our adult students are also housewives who are learning English for their personal development.

Youths and adults attend the same part-time

classes and we are observing positive developments in their interest, understanding and literacy in English. Most have had very minimal exposure to English learning and are starting from basics and due to our simplified English teaching and practice-focused learning methods, they have been following up with the lessons well.

Zeferina Celesta Da Costa, age 35, mother of 3, is currently working at a Japanese NGO-Peace Winds. Besides working, she is also attending a course at a private university and has been taking English lessons for 2 months. Asked how does English help her, she answered that it would be easier for her to travel to English speaking countries for her work.

To make English learning more accessible, outside English learning programs have been arranged for organizations who have more than 20 staff who are interested in learning English. This initiative is in line with our commitment to provide education to as many Timorese so as to assist in the overall and long term development of the country. Currently, we are extending our good co-operation with NGO Forum Timor Leste by having English classes for 3 times a week with their staff.

Another positive development is the opening of three new part-time classes for our newly registered students. While the numbers for our new morning class has increased only gradually in the month of May, there has been a healthy demand for our afternoon part-time program. Overall, 27 new students have registered for our program and this development is a positive feedback that our program is practical and effective in meeting the educational and development needs of Timorese.



Morning part-time class

Maintaining high standards of quality in our teaching has been our success formula. Even without active promotion, new students are registering for our programs as we apply tried and tested successful teaching and learning methods which have produced results since SOLS 24/7 opened 7 years ago. Furthermore, we constantly monitor students' improvements in English and are always coming up with creative ideas to teach. By constantly evaluating all these important aspects in teaching and education, we are able to see which areas require changes or improvements and thus allow us to continue our high standards of education.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Valuable learning lessons gained from facing setbacks.

The right attitude and mindset changes every negative to positive.

We are indeed very fortunate to face initial setbacks in our effort to source for a new building for our part-time program. These setbacks were a good training and learning experience that we can use for future work in East Timor and other countries.

We were not able to finalize the usage of two buildings in Dili to expand our part-time program. Even though no one was staying in the first building, the rental contract has not ended. For the second building, it was unfortunate that both parties were not able to agree with the contract terms last minute.

Having a positive mindset, these attempts were certainly not failures as many important and helpful lessons were learned from trying to source for a venue in a foreign country. Firstly, to facilitate in giving and getting information, it is very important to have good communication. Communication became the main difficulty when negotiating terms to use the buildings and even with the help of local students, certain information could not be relayed clearly. We eventually could not reach any final agreement to use the second building as there was a slight misunderstanding regarding last minute requests from the chief of village. This was a good lesson to make us improve on Tetun as we now understand how important communication is for us to achieve results in our work.

From this experience, we are gaining valuable experience in decision-making skills. Two heads are better than one and making decisions in a team ensures that all important factors and areas are considered. When decisions are being made as a team, this strengthens team bonding and co-operation as everyone feels that they are a part of the project. Furthermore, the expert advise from a more experienced superior allows team members to make the best decision so as to achieve positive results at work.

Lastly this experience has also taught us not to be fully dependent on others to get our results. We have to push ourselves to follow up with commitments made by others and we cannot leave it up to them to fulfill responsibilities promised. We need to be constantly aware of what is happening and we have to be politely persistent in requesting for what we want. This attitude ensures that we reduce any delay in work and we are given what we've requested.

Even though we have not gotten a building yet, we have learned much from these initial setbacks. Most definitely, we were disappointed when we could not reach any final agreements to use the building but with a positive mindset and attitude, we were able to look for the benefit behind the setbacks. What is important now is to use all the experiences attained and lessons learned to continue finding for new buildings in Dili.

VOLUNTEER AND STUDENT AFFAIRS

Volunteer Value added training program.

Training in report-writing, computer, accounts, Tetun and agriculture continues.

Despite a tight working schedule, SOLS 24/7 volunteers have been working hard to develop various hard skills in report-writing, computer, accounts, English, Tetun and agriculture. While in April volunteers had to go through theoretical understanding, more practical work was done in the month of May.

All the volunteers are in the process of completing their first monthly report, doing computer assignments and agriculture projects. By putting knowledge to practice, all the volunteers are able to identify problems and mistakes in their assignments or projects and then find out solutions to improve on their work.

Volunteers have attained multiple benefits from this training program. Writing professional reports have improved their writing skills and have increased their vocabulary commonly used in development work. Computer classes have taught volunteers to not only do simple presentations but create simple graphics, pictures, banners and maps that will surely come in useful for their work. Communication with new students has been made easier due the daily Tetun classes and teachers are able to get closer to the students and explain instructions and lessons more clearly

Coming from the developed world, it was Fishah's and Naoko's first attempt at planting vegetables and they did not foresee that the baby sawi will wilt from too much sunlight. Fortunately, the roots did not die and the sawi grew back after they were watered and after a roof was placed to shade the sawi from the sunlight. To ensure that the roots will not be destroyed, Azaron's and Mercy's technique of scattering and planting egg plants in containers made out of banana leaves have been a success so far.



Fishah making roof to shade the sawi. Naoko with baby sawi.

The training program will continue in the month of June as there are still many more skills that need to be developed to prepare for future challenges and responsibilities in the organization. wilt