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STATISTICS

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

Numbers remain the same for the month of March and February.

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

	Class	New Students	Drop Outs	Total no. of students (current and new)	Total no. of females	Total no. males
Full Time	1	0	0	36	18	18
Part Time	3	10	0	40	25	15

The number of full-time students has remained the same for the month of March but an increase in the number of part-time students reflects the good work that we are doing in our part time classes. In total, we have 40 part-time students compared to 27 last month and this is good news for us as even though the elections are nearing and the situation is heating up in East Timor, we are still getting new students.

Fightings, burning of houses or looting in Dili and the districts have prevented some of our students from returning to school but we hope that the situation will calm down and stabilize as we are concerned for our students' future and we would prefer that their studies would not be affected by such crisis.

CURRENT SITUATION

Experiencing Timor behind the gates of SOLS 24/7.

Witnessing the stories normally read in newspapers.

Breakfast entertainment is an opportunity to experience live morning news. As gangs are a determined lot, they would sometimes continue their night fights in the morning. Traffic would stop and sirens from either the ambulance or the police cars would turn curious heads. On special days, we get to see a parade full of people in trucks joyfully singing and waving colorful banners and flags heading to the government's house. All united in demanding justice and human rights.



Demonstrators resting in front of the school.

Once our morning entertainment ends, the roads return back to normal. Cars, pick-ups and buses with big UN labels are a normal sight in Dili. Australian tankers that slowly growl their

way down to any trouble spots often pass by in front of our school. Pretty noisy vehicles that help bring peace to the country. To prevent anything from getting too exciting, armed Australian soldiers walk up and down Fatuhada street, where the school is at. Fatuhada is after all known to be one of the most notorious spots in Dili, famous for gang fights and burning of houses.

Our students have slowly gotten used to this environment. Their initial worries about the situation in Dili were very real but after sessions of talks and prayers, they have become calmer and have gathered new strength and are now able to grow and develop despite the tense situation in the country.

ENGLISH CLASS

Building students' capacity in English.

Students improve on their usage of verbs, verb-to-be, past and future tense.



Students taking their monthly English test

A proof of our students' progress is their ability to converse with English speaking International Volunteers from Singapore and Japan. Many had no problems exchanging information about their country's background and sharing their study experiences in SOLS 24/7 with the international volunteers.

For the month of March, students were taught to how to use the verb-to-be, "am/is/are" with verbs ending with "ing" and with the phrase, "going to." They were also taught how to use "was and were" and the future tense, "will". As usual, students used the effective method of making and repeating sentences to develop the English.

We still have problems with students who do not want to ask questions when they do not understand something. There weren't able to make clear sentences smoothly but are either shy or unable to communicate their questions. Such students were given more guidance and encouragement from teachers.

SCIENCE OF LIFE CLASS

Dwelling into issues of discipline, being hardworking and fasting.

More topics are being discussed to develop our students' positive character.



Student shares her ideas with Teacher

The students had Teacher Raj give lessons on the topic of unwise pleasures (eg. drinking, smoking, gambling, sex and drugs). In depth discussions of discipline was held and students were made to reflect on why aren't people able to be discipline. Students were told to think about what pleasures social vices give to those who are trapped in them and to consider whether these pleasures are harmful to an individual in the long run.

As this was the students' first experience of fasting, students had many questions about fasting and teachers explained the holistic benefits of fasting. Besides the physical benefits of fasting, students learn that fasting is also a period when one should reflect on their weaknesses and seek to work on them.

Teacher Raj also gave another class on the issue of being hardworking. Questions such as 'Why people find it a pleasure in not being hardworking?' and 'Was this an unwise pleasure?' were discussed. All these Science of Life topics are important as they allow students to understand the kind of future & consequences they will face if they do not work towards developing a positive character now.

AFTERNOON ACTIVITIES

Increasing the challenge of counting beans and boosting positive change through alphamatics.

Students find it more challenging to count beans and alphamatics is added to our character development program.

SOLS 24/7 is very particular about the effectiveness of our programs and that was why the method of counting beans was corrected immediately after teachers saw that students were not following the rules of counting beans. Done properly, students will be able to attain better concentration and focus, which will help them progress faster in their studies and work. The right way of counting beans is more tedious and challenging but it would produce more effective results in the long run.



Sitting in meditation position

Alphamatics has been added to our students' character development program. Positive phrases such as:-

" My English getting better and better everyday."

" I am a wise and effective person."

" I am an intelligent person."

were repeated to boost our students' believe that they have great potential within them to become fantastic individuals who are able to achieve great heights in life, tasting all the happiness in the 5 areas of life; physical, emotional, mental, intellectual and spiritual.

AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM- TRADITIONAL AND MODERN TECHNIQUES

Planting and digging into organic vegetables.

Students enjoy sawi, Chinese kale and water green from our fields.



Students picking vegetables

Days digging and sewing finally paid off as students were able to cook the sawi, Chinese kale and water green that they've planted on the agricultural field.

We faced several difficulties in the beginning with ants that ate our plants and birds that came to feed on our vegetables. We could not get the results that we wanted during our first attempt to plant the vegetables as we did not know how to control the amount of sunlight that reached our vegetables but we came up with the solution of making sun roofs using palm leaves.

And because we believe that 'when there's a will, there's a way,' we were all able to enjoy our delicious and healthy vegetables together.

Currently, we are also propagating plants so that we can grow them in the school. We are propagating flowers, creepers and some trees.

All the agricultural skills are valuable for our students' future as they can support themselves or start their own businesses through agriculture.



Propagated plants

LOGISTICS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Making improvements for the overall benefit of the school and students.

New plant propagation area build and flooring for the new class has been laid.

"Let today be better than yesterday," and we at SOLS 24/7 are constantly looking at ways to improve the school.

A new plant propagation area was build to propagate some plants that we would like to grow in the school garden and at our agricultural field. It only took one day to build the propagation area. We are also planning to construct a new classroom so we can open new part-time classes. Students and teachers have been busy transferring stones and soil to lay the foundation of the class. Once it finishes, we are ready to open new part-time classes and provide more service to East Timorese.



Laying the foundation of the new classroom

By having the philosophy of improvement and change, it sub-consciously influences our students' attitude and mindset to constantly work towards progress. There is always something new to learn and there will always be new heights to reach.

PART-TIME ENGLISH PROGRAM

Adding one hour Science of Life Enrichment program .

Our part-time students are being introduced to viewing life more holistically.

Our part-time students were being given the extra privilege of learning Science of Life every Friday. Topics such as 5 areas of life and the challenges that one might face were being explained and discussed. Many students were still unclear of the lessons taught to them as Science of Life is still very new to them and the teachers understood that it would take some time for them to get a picture of life. However, the teachers still hope to continue the classes, as understanding the challenges of life is essential for anyone's future.



Part-time students

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

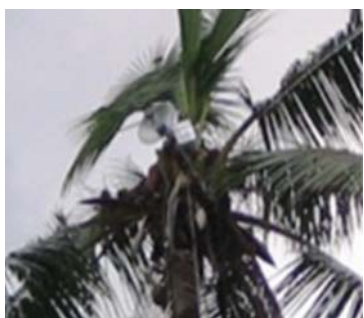
Successfully organized the clearance of the tax exemption.

All the hard work and effort finally paid off as we were able to get the clearance for tax exemption for our truck.

It was really a lot of effort trying to attain the clearance for Full tax exemption instead of the initial Temporary tax exemption for our truck. Many hours were spent preparing the right documents and going up and down to the ministry but we were finally able to secure it. By getting this clearance, there wouldn't be any future hassle or cost of renewing our tax exemption. With hard work and patience, things are made easier for our future.

Let's get connected – ICT4D

Long awaited internet finally arrives in SOLS 24/7.



Antenna

We were also very fortunate to finally get an internet connection at very minimum cost. With the co-operation of another NGO, we worked day and night to configure the internet settings and to fix our DIY antenna on top of the 20m high coconut tree. Because of all the effort put in, we are now able to research on the internet and communicate with our beloved friends and family members back home.

Stopping plans to open at Ulmera.

Permission to open school not granted by the Catholic church.

Even though we have signed an MOU with the Village of Ulmera for a 20 year lease of Sekolah Unggul (School for the Elite), a school abandoned during the fight for independence, we soon found out that the land the school was build on is now part of a 160 hectare land that belongs to the Catholic church in Ulmera, Liquica.

After meeting and discussing and giving various possible solutions with the representatives of the Bishop of the church, our request to use the school even temporarily to expand our operations was declined. Even though the community has urged us to go ahead with opening up a Teacher Training Center at Ulmera as the land had been given by the community to the church many years ago for the community development, and thus the land still belongs to the community. Till date there has been no result or any kind of development by the Church.

A decision was made to not open our TTC at Ulmera as we do not want to oppose any authority and in the districts, the Catholic Church holds great authority & respect.

This was a lesson for both the teachers and students as we understood the need to abide by the law and to co-operate well with authorities.

EVENTS

Time to Party! and get closer with the community.

SOLS 24/7 held her first Nawruz Party and Community meeting.

Sumptuous food was served at the party and 2 performances were put up, showing our students' hidden acrobatic talents and hip hop moves. Guests were definitely entertained as they cheered for our students and laughed at their silly moves and antics. Then it was time for everyone to swirl and twirl to jovial Portuguese and Timorese music on the dance floor. Timorese dance in partners and this makes dancing a rather lovely affair.



Smiles at our first Nawruz Party

The party was not without any hiccups. The electricity cut and rain were circumstances beyond our control but fortunately, we had our own generator and the decoration was moved indoors as soon as the rain started. Later at night, stones were thrown onto the school's roof and gang fights in front of the school prevented our part-time students from returning home. But all of these were minor inconveniences that could not remove the joy, love, happiness felt throughout the amazing party.

Get-to-know community meeting

Forming closer ties with the community.



Get-to-know community meeting

The spirit of unity continued as our students welcomed priests, nuns, community members and students' parents to come and have an orientation of the school and get to know more about the school's program.

Teacher Raj introduced and explained the school's mission of bringing holistic life-skills education to youths and to date has reached out to over 23,000 youths from Cambodia, East Timor, Malaysia, Japan, UK and Singapore. Guests were able to share their opinion with the teachers and students and they were

impressed with the work that the school is doing to develop and provide educational opportunities to East Timorese youths.

VOLUNTEER AND STUDENT AFFAIRS

Naoko and Fishah get their one year East Timor visa.

Continuing their service to educate and develop Timorese youths.

Our Japanese and Singapore volunteers received their one year visa this month. They feel very lucky to get close to Timorese youths and to experience for themselves the environment, people, situations and developments in East Timor. The country provides many learning opportunities for them to grow as a person and for that, they feel very blessed and privileged.

ADMINISTRATION

Implementation of professional accounting systems.

Teacher Raj and Mercy have finally implemented professional accounting systems.

Not wanting to be stuck in administration, SOLS 24/7 has been working to create simple but professional administrative systems that can be used in all our schools. Teacher Raj and Mercy has worked day and night to organize the school accounts, and even though it was tedious work, the final result was an effective way of keeping records and supervising the school accounts.

Every week, the school accounts will be presented in front of the board so that everyone is aware of how the school funds are being used.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Production of the first SOLS 24/7 East Timor video starts.

Sharing our East Timor experience with everyone in Cambodia and Malaysia.

The shooting of SOLS 24/7 East Timor first institutional video started in late March. Our all-in one director-producer-editor-actor-cameraman and voice over, Excellence, excitedly went around the school to capture students' attending the school program and activities. Repeated shots of the school had to be made to perfect the quality of the video and Excellence had spend nights editing the video.



Shot of man at market taken for the video

We hope with the video, viewers will be able to get an idea and the feel of the school and learn more about the different experiences that all of us go through everyday. Once completed, this video will be shown to the public & SOLS 24/7 family members in Cambodia, East Timor and Malaysia.