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Science of Life Systems 24/7 (SOLS 24/7)

*“Youths can change the world with the guidance from
adults”*

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Who are We?

SOLS 24/7 is a non-religious, non-profit and non-government international NGO with a MOU with the Government of East Timor offering an award-winning program that provides holistic life skills education to East Timor's disadvantaged youth. The high unemployment rate, limited funding for education, lack of basic infrastructure and skilled professionals as well as rampant poverty limit the underprivileged youths of East Timor which sadly prevents them from attaining a brighter future that they so rightly deserve.

Major Challenges in East Timor

1. As with most post conflict nations, little attention is given to those who have spent their adolescent years during periods of conflict. Not only is their education disrupted but much uncertainty and trauma is also experienced during their school years. Now, during peaceful times, it is either too late to return to school or the lack of qualifications limited access to university or business programs. Due to no fault of their own, these youths will continue to live with difficulties and have a low standard of living just because they were born at the wrong time. Therefore, a special kind of education that takes into consideration these unique circumstances is required for these youths.
2. The current workforce consists of professionals (5 -10%), semi skilled workers (10 -15%), business people (10%) and office workers, sales people and general staff with little or no skills (60 – 70%). As the latter does not require a strong educational foundation, most youths compete for work in this category. But to successfully compete for these jobs, English, computer skills, character and confidence are required.
3. Due to the special circumstances of disrupted education and past trauma of these youths, programs need to be tailored for easier understanding and to be able to be applied to every day life where possible. For programs to be effective, youth need to work on both their mental and intellectual obstacles due to these unique circumstances. This is SOLS 24/7 main target group and the latest research in educational development is used. SOLS 24/7 has been carrying out unregistered research in this field since 1984 and have tested findings through programs since 1997 in Cambodia, East Timor and Malaysia.

The participatory method of learning and teaching is used at SOLS 24/7 and the supervision of trained teachers is used to oversee the development. The peer modelling system also helps to build the confidence and self esteem of students and new student teachers as they take up the challenges of teaching.

4. The lack of trust in education by parents and youths is another major problem that prevents youths from completing educational programs. Most people are aware of the importance of English and computer studies but do not realise that being able to speak basic English or use simple computer programs will not be enough to secure future promotions in their career and parents have been known to pull students out of the program. SOLS 24/7 tries to discourage students from discontinuing their education by providing more programs and

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helping them to understand that life is a challenge. Students need to understand that education is a necessity not a choice for a better life.

5. Another challenge is the urban migration as more and more youths move to the city to look for work that is still not available. To reduce this problem and to keep youths in developing activities while waiting for jobs to become available, schools have been set up in the districts. But to be more effective, more computer programs need to be established.
6. To educate the large numbers of available students, suitable numbers of human resources, buildings and other materials are required. SOLS 24/7 uses innovative ways to address these aspects effectively by using a system where the youth are students and teachers for 50% of the time; cheap and free building materials are used and second-hand equipment used where possible. Minimal cost is also spent on cooking and food. This is a temporary strategy to reach as many youths as possible in the shortest possible time.

What SOLS Can Do

Through a 16 month comprehensive Science of Life Systems training program, SOLS 24/7 provides a well-rounded educational program so as to equip the youth with not only employment skills but also values and an attitude that will help them rebuild their country and adapt to changing economic and social environments. Our innovative educational methods also allow students to acquire English within 4 months and at the end of the 16 months, students will be equipped with management, business, marketing, accounting, office administration and computer skills.

Leadership and character building values are also greatly needed and our enormous success so far is based on our self-motivating Leadership and Character Building program. One of the ways this is achieved is by encouraging students to question, listen, to explore different solutions to problems and to take full responsibility for their actions, thus producing confident, responsible, disciplined and energetic young adults.

As an organization, SOLS 24/7 has successfully trained over 26,000 underprivileged Cambodian youths over the past 9 years. Operations began in East Timor in 2006, Malaysia in 2007 and we are currently in the planning stages of introducing our program into Laos and Japan. SOLS 24/7 is proud to have trained over 8,000 full-time and part-time students in East Timor since November 2006.

We currently have 300 full-time boarding students and 1000 daily part-time students in our Dili training centre and have already expanded to 10 district centres, currently reaching 400 full-time and 2,000 part-time students. Boarding students are not charged fees while part-time students pay a minimal monthly fee to attend classes.

Our Vision

To develop underprivileged youth to become skilled, responsible, disciplined and socially conscious adults.

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Our Mission

To provide holistic life-skills education to as many young people as possible. To improve current living standards by providing practical and applicable knowledge, skills and direction to improve employment opportunities.

Our Commitment

SOLS 24/7 is dedicated to educating and developing East Timorese youths to bring about positive change and a brighter future. We are proud to be one of the largest non-formal education providers in Timor Leste.

Our Program

Full-Time

Our 16 month full-time program consists of a four stage, 4 months per stage, process based on the highly successful model. This program is free to all full-time students.

Stage 1 – Basics: Based in the district centres only, Stage 1 offers the first level of a life skills curriculum where English and personal development are taught. This includes developing personal confidence, creating a positive attitude towards learning, providing concentration activities and learning to live with love and unity. Students who graduate from Stage 1 move to the Stage 2 Teacher Training program if they wish to.

Stage 2 – Personal Development: Based in the Dili Training Centre, Stage 2 continues with the Stage 1 curriculum of English and personal development but also places emphasis on such personal aptitudes as being self reliant, responsible and trustworthy as well as helping to develop leadership skills. Our large computer facility of over 200 computers allow students to become proficient in the use of computers by learning how to type and to use Microsoft Word, Excel and Powerpoint applications.

The development of teaching skills are also introduced in Stage 2. Those students who display high performance levels and show an aptitude for teaching move to Stage 3 where they are trained as volunteer teachers for the district centers.

Stage 3 – Trainee Industrial Training: Based in the Dili Training Centre, students are trained to become teacher-trainees to part-time Students in Dili. Advanced Trainees are sent to the district centers as volunteers to teach Stage 1 to new students. All volunteer students are given direction by the District Centre Manager who is a SOLS 24/7 graduate.

Stage 4 - Academy: This final stage focuses on job requirement skills and includes such subjects as management, office administration, accounting and marketing and continues with computer training (internet use and searching/researching, emailing, software and hardware maintenance). Students are also taught how to start a small business, to prepare resumes, apply for jobs and are coached through the interview process. The opportunity to move into the Medical Program is also available (see below).

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Part-Time

Each stage of our part-time program consists of 1-3 hours for 3 months. Fees of US \$3-9 per month are charged to Dili students only, a nominal contribution fee towards sustainable operations. No fees are charged to part-time students in the districts.

Stage 1: This stage consists of learning basic English.

Stage 2: The focus in Stage 2 is placed on extending English learnt in Stage 1 to conversational English as well as computer skills (typing, Microsoft Word, Excel and Powerpoint) leadership and character building skills as per Stage 2 in the Full-time program.

Stage 3 – Once graduating to Stage 3, students are taught how to prepare resumes, apply for jobs and are coached through the interview process.

External Medical Services

In cooperation with Bairo Pite Clinic's Health Education and Services program, selected full-time students volunteer at the clinic to learn about health care by helping doctors and nurses within the local and mobile clinics and gain valuable experience in such areas as emergency, pharmacy and patient wards. A health topic is selected each week to research and findings are presented and discussed each Friday.

As volunteers at Bairo Pite Clinic, students gain valuable health care experience and are informed of the common medical problems facing the Timorese people. This program also provides exposure to those considering working in the health care industry

Development can only happen when the people themselves take the initiative and effort to change and develop their country.