

Dealing with the science of life



EDUCATION

Sunday, 19 Jan 2014
12:00 AM MYT



SOLS-BMF Borneo Youth Development Centre trainee Alton Gampar helping his peers during an English language lesson.

A MONTH-long trip to Cambodia was the deciding factor that led Raj Ridvan Singh, 30, to pursue the path of humanity and social work when he was just a teen.

It was also the route he would take when embarking on a career.

The current international director and co-founder of Science of Life Studies 24/7 (SOLS 24/7), was earning between RM5000 and RM6000 a month back then as the youngest computer systems engineer and professional deejay.

"My family had always been involved in serving the downtrodden and dealing with all kinds of humanitarian causes.

"So it was only natural that I followed in their footsteps," said Raj, as he spoke in glowing terms of his father Dr Madenjit Singh, the prime mover of SOLS 24/7, a charity and social services organisation that focuses on providing holistic education programmes to urban and rural communities throughout Asia.

Raj added that the objective of its programmes was to teach English, Information Technology and Life Skills.



Committed: Raj is all for social service and started volunteering when he was still a teen.

The organisation is also involved in providing free education to rural and urban underserved communities especially the disadvantaged and "at-risk" youth who are likely to stray into criminal activities.

Dr Madenjit Singh created SOLS 24/7 based on a peer modelling system that provided personal development and motivation programmes for the underprivileged communities in Cambodia.

The organisation has since set up branch centres in countries such as Timor Leste, Malaysia and India.

Raj's stint so far has seen him establishing two state-of-the-art information and communication technology (ICT) labs for the National University of Timor Leste, fully funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

He also received a letter of praise and support from Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Timor Leste President Dr Jose Ramos Horta for the organisation's work in the country in 2009.

Raj has been instrumental in establishing the SOLS 24/7 Malaysia Youth Development Centre in Kuala Lumpur.

"There really is no "right age" to get involved in social work", said Raj who was only 17 when he fully immersed himself in SOLS 24/7.

The organisation is funded through sponsorships, donations and SOLS SMART Sdn Bhd, a company it set up about 12 years ago.



Student power: These schoolmates pitching in to paint a section of their classrooms in Sabah under a SOL project.

The company utilises its expertise in education and offers training programmes to companies, organisations and government agencies to generate income.

Corporations and individuals are charged a fee to take part in its wide variety of programmes focusing on English proficiency, human development and life skills.

Raj is the CEO of SOLS SMART that channels 80% of all profits generated towards SOLS 24/7.

The company has a presence in six countries.

"It is not easy to become rich through social entrepreneurship ... it requires lots of hard work in the beginning and one needs to be extremely disciplined to move up and make it.

"It was extremely hard for us ... but then again, when you look at other businesses and entrepreneurs, even they were without funds in the beginning," Raj said.

"There is something about suffering, struggling and striving that teaches you not to fear failure.

"It breaks the sense of a need for security," he shared.

"You also need patience, love, understanding, and a strong sense of commitment. That's why you need to have a good reason to engage in social work," Raj added.

His experiences in dealing with the poor communities may not always have been pleasant but that has not deterred him.

"The poor will try to lie, cheat and steal from you.

"The poor remain so because they do not know better.

"The reason is because they have little or no education.

"What other options do they have?"

Despite all that, Raj's passion and his role in SOLS 24/7 is clearly evident as he talked about what he had achieved during his time so far with the organisation.

"Everyday is memorable. Every morning I wake up loving it.

"We're training people who are backward and economically deprived in English ... we have opened many youth development centres.

"The centres focus primarily on education and empowering children through the universal morals of discipline, perseverance and hard work amongst others.

"So far, SOLS 24/7 has trained over 1,000 students ... the organisation has made great inroads and gained considerable publicity," added Raj.

Follow us on our official [WhatsApp channel](#) for breaking news alerts and key updates!

TAGS / KEYWORDS:

Education , Social Entrepreneur