

# School of English for Engaged Social Service (SENS) Completes Its 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Course<sup>1</sup>

## Appreciation for All Who Made SENS 2019 Possible

As I write we are near the end of the New Year celebrations that take place in much of South and Southeast Asia in mid-April. We completed our fourth annual SENS program on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, at a Graduation Ceremony generously hosted by INEB supporter Dr. Pichai at his Nakhon Chai Si resort outside of Bangkok. We had our largest and most diverse student body ever, comprising 18 students from eight countries, including for the first time Pakistan and France. Their closing talks were inspiring and provided concrete evidence of their dramatic progress in English. Below you can find excerpts from a few of those talks.

I want to thank our very gifted work team of Assistant Director Soeui Fah from Hong Kong, tutors Cindy Stewart from the U.S., Olga Vita from Russia, and Siew Joo from Singapore, and Logistics Coordinator Topsis Rongrongmuang from Thailand. Everyone worked very hard, and the bodies of knowledge they brought—on meditation, sustainability, language teaching, and caring for the self and the earth—made a huge contribution to the course. The warmth and dedication with which they worked made an indelible impression on the students and the course itself.

We faced unusually difficult conditions this year, including numerous family emergencies, extraordinary visa problems, and extreme air pollution in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Yet everyone came through the course safely, and with gratitude for the experience of what 25 people can do together—when they are dedicated to supporting each other, growing through personal obstacles, and planning concrete action in the world. Our successes in spite of external difficulties, as well as our own mistakes, have given us confidence that we can continue to offer this program on a yearly basis, and that we can continue to learn to make it ever more effective.

The next SENS program will run from January 12<sup>th</sup> to April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020. You can support this upcoming program through spreading the word, encouraging deserving students to apply, and offering or helping to find the necessary financial support. We will also need to begin building our 2020 work team.

With gratitude and appreciation to all participants and supporters of the 2019 course,

Theodore Mayer  
Director of the SENS Program

---

<sup>1</sup> This article was prepared for publication in *Seeds of Peace*, Vol. 35 No. 2, May-Aug 2019

## Excerpts from Student Graduation Talks

*Rushda Noor, Research Associate and Teacher Trainer, Akhuwat Foundation, Pakistan:*

Before coming here, the only goal I had was to do something for underprivileged and orphan children.

After attending SENS, I have become able to think through every thought and action: what are the causes, what are the consequences, what do I gain, and what do others gain. After learning about the importance of interfaith dialog and conservation of the environment, now I want to work in these areas. My main goal is to start an awareness campaign about



protection of the environment by reducing the use of plastics and recycling trash. At the same time, I want to work on interfaith dialog and religious pluralism. As an Islamic scholar, it is one of my goals to write articles to emphasize the importance of living together in peace. My third main goal is to study about international human rights law regarding children affected by war.

I would like to express my profound gratitude to the founders, sponsors, and teachers of SENS. For me, this course isn't only about English; it is about learning humanity and compassion. The classroom created by Ted is the only place in the world I know where we who belong to different religions and backgrounds still experience a sense of deeply connected humanity and unbiased understanding. Thank you so much for including me in your lives. I will keep on propagating what I learnt from here.

Rushda Noor (L), with Fellow Student Phra Maha Napan from Thailand, and Thai Muslim Scholar, Saowani Chitmuat (R), at Kamalun Islam Mosque in Nong Jok, Thailand

*Christelle Nicolas, Freelance Worker in the Field of Preservation and Promotion of Natural and Cultural Heritage, Brittany, France:*

Good morning everybody, my name is Christelle, and I come from Brittany, in France. First of all, I would like to thank INEB, particularly Ted and all his team, for leading this 2019 SENS program. "Sens,"<sup>2</sup> what a beautiful word for an amazing program. Now my English is much better. And I'm convinced that personal transformation and commitment to deep social transformation are essential.

---

<sup>2</sup> "Sens" is a French word with rich meanings including: sense, instinct, judgment, reason, meaning, and direction or way.

In fact this program taught me a lot about myself, and about engagement for social transformation. Before I came here, I was already aware of the different societal issues, and engaged in a sustainable life in Brittany. However, something was absent in me, and I could feel emptiness in some way. During this program, I nourished this empty part of me, and I can feel a change in me today.

Indeed, I started to practice meditation with Soeui Fah's guidance. Thank you, Soeui Fah for sharing your experience with me. And I became aware of my fears, emotions, and distress patterns. This practice gave me a lot, and it was complementary to the learning in Ted's class about human psychology and co-counseling. Also, I discovered principles of Buddhism, and especially about engaged Buddhism.

This learning inspired me in different ways, and I realized how this movement within Buddhism can be a helpful way to explore change, not only in Asia but globally.

Finally, this program has helped me to start a few steps on the path of peace, and to find a way of nourishing my mind, for growing my spiritual path, and at the same time to be engaged in change.

Now I go back to Brittany, with a will to find a way to go further to practice and to share with others. I want to start something new in Brittany, with my boyfriend Pierre, who participated in the ALT program this year. And at the same time I would like to continue the rich relationships and connections begun in SENS.



Christelle Nicolas, Brittany, France

As a first step I want to suggest to the SENS group to share ideas and information about different topics, like environmental and social issues in our countries, and about solutions and practice. To put it into practice, we need to come up with an appropriate platform, like for example Skype. To finish, I'm grateful to INEB for giving us the opportunity to live this beautiful experience.

*This student wishes to remain anonymous:*

When I first arrived here and started this program, in class I couldn't give an answer to common questions, for example, "Did you sleep well last night?" I didn't know how to answer. In my mind, I would need to think about five seconds, but now it's better than before. And my listening has improved a lot. In this program I started to speak out, and without fear. Through this program, I met a lot of community leaders and learned a lot. This program helped me clarify my life goals.

My most important goals for 2019 are learning English as much as I can, and reading an English book once a month. Also, I want to build a work team of tour guides for my region. My long-term goals are to write a tour book from the perspective of my people. To do this, when I go on a trip I will need to record everything, and my experiences, and study and read a lot of tour books about other places.



*Htet Naing Win, Peace Project Coordinator for the Kalyanamitta Foundation (KMF), Myanmar:*

The content of the SENS training was systematic and comprehensive. I got a lot of energy and a powerful sense of inner peace from the field trips. I hope many of the skills and knowledge I gained will be supportive of community development and peace building in my work.

My goal for my organization for the next year is to strengthen relations within our team with mutual trust and more friendliness. I want to be able to write reports in English more fluently. I want to be able to speak with the colleagues in my office more smoothly.

My long-term goal is to build trust between Burma's diverse ethnic groups and to grow confidence as we go towards a more peaceful and holistically developing society.

Htet Naing Win (R), with Tutor Siew Joo, at Bo Nok Beach, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Thailand

*Tongpang Kumzuk, Independent Activist, Nagaland, India:*

My name is Tongpang Kumzuk, belonging to the Naga indigenous tribe of India. I want to take this time to thank the SENS 2019 team and INEB for creating this wholesome platform to learn English with the aim of connecting with oneself and with others. I would like to thank my sponsors and the people supporting this program.

My region is war torn. Politically speaking it's a rogue or disturbed area. Militarily or patriotically speaking for the nation it's a buffer zone between China and India. The conditions I state here are just words, but I speak for my land and for people who are poor and lacking in infrastructure in terms of education, medicine, transport, and jobs.

We are mostly Christians of diverse denominations and in an identity struggle. Most of the groups are not focused on spirituality, and the sense of community relations is not realized as it once was. Their practice of religion is stagnant because they don't address the real problems.

I have a project, "YOUTHHEAL," which is focused on youth health, education, advocacy, and life. It is a part of my larger goal to start a community which has a focus on the younger generations in my region, and which can look beyond one another's differences. I plan to bring in the ideas of engaged Buddhism to support existing Christian institutes to respond more directly to peoples practical, spiritual, and relationship needs.

This program has helped me to articulate my thoughts and has raised my morale and readiness to share my viewpoints in English. In addition to that I have started reflecting on my actions



and deep emotions. I look forward to engaging in more programs like SENS, which don't limit creativity and which create the space for a person to realize their potential.

Lastly, I am grateful to myself and I thank myself for surviving, adapting, and overcoming the obstacles so far. I believe in love and co-existence of all life.



Tongpang Kumzuk (center), and Saw Ye Win Hein, a Student from Myanmar (R), Speaking with Mr. Karun Kuyai, Leader of a Muslim Community in Nong Jok, Thailand

*Dewi Martina, Lecturer in the Faculty of Communications, University of Muhammadiyah, Riau, Indonesia:*

I have studied for three months in this program, and it has helped me shape my goals.

Some important goals I made are that as a lecturer I want to spread knowledge about global warming and how to deal with it. Because from this course I learnt a lot about it, so I want to encourage my students to do the same. I believe spreading knowledge about global warming with youth will have a big impact.

Talking about issues of religion, I want to spread love and peace by being a good Muslim. I will start from myself and encourage people to love everyone, regardless of their religion.

Another goal for myself is that I want to make sure that my family is always united; that no matter what we are fighting for we will always be together as a family against any problem. I see many people facing internal and external problems. And I want my family to be able to face these together.

Within the next 10 years I have a plan to live in a village with my own family. I will plant my own food and have flexible and lovely work. It might sound impossible to some people, but I see the possibilities after learning about inter-being. Now I know how to value my life.

SENS not only taught me about English but also helped me understand about many issues that are happening around us. I learnt how to be a leader from several great leaders. I learnt about the suffering of people whom I had never known before, for example the story of Khun Krarok in Bo Nok. I also learnt about life from my friends. I learnt many things that I have never encountered before; it is because I joined this program and I feel grateful for that.



I would like to say thank you very much for SENS 2019, especially to Ajan Ted for having me and choosing me to join this incredible program. Thank you for the team, Soeui Fah, Siew Joo, Olga, and Cindy, who always supported us during this program, in the class room and in the break time. It was very helpful and fun! Thank you to all my friends, we have shared many things – stories, knowledge, time, food, laughter, and tears. When will I have many friends from different cultures like you all again? I think only in this program everyone is required to cry, as they discharge their patterns of hurt in co-counseling sessions. Oh, Tpsi! I'm saving you for the last. You always managed everything for us with your smile. Thank you! So I want to say thank you to INEB for making such a great program, the School of English for Engaged Social Service, and thank you to all the sponsors for supporting me and my friends to join this program.

Because of this course, I can set my goals clearly. And I hope I can fulfill them all properly.

Dewi Martina, Led by Dhanalakshmi from Tamil Nadu, India, in an Activity to Experience the Forest Directly through the Senses, Chaiyaphum, Thailand

*Yeseul Shin, Volunteer for the Join Together Society in India, Under the Jungto Society, South Korea:*

I have been a member of the Jungto society for 6 years. The Jungto Society emphasizes individual Buddhist practice, but it also supports broader goals like the unification of the two Koreas. The society's main attitude about work is that we do whatever is needed wherever we are needed. Before now I hadn't set my own goals in detail because I always did whatever the Jungto Society needed me to do.

I appreciate the SENS program because I've started to make my own goals. I believe it will be very helpful if I can learn to concentrate on my life and be able to work clearly on my life goals.

My main long-term goal is to be a field worker for emergency relief. Over the next 10 years, I will take the following steps:

First, I will concentrate on learning English, especially speaking, because English must be used in the field. I will also study standards for relief activities, like dealing with disaster response.

In two to four years, I will network with other NGOs in Korea that are also in this field and participate in relief work and training workshops. I also want to work with an expert in Junto Society and learn from her. Within five to ten years, I want to begin doing emergency relief in areas that are affected by disasters.

I think I am really lucky. Because I got many gifts from this program. First, I could examine myself when I did co-counseling. During my sessions I discovered my deep sadness related to my parents, and I could release some of that. Second, I met good friends who will be leaders in their respective fields. I hope we can work together. Third, I gained confidence in studying English.

I'm glad I had the chance to join this program. I appreciate Ajan Ted, who always tried to give us a lot! I am grateful to the work team for helping us. I'd like to recognize the Ashram staff, who supported us like mothers on hot sweaty days.



Yeseul Shin in a Classroom Activity

I will not forget the kindness I received from all of you. I will share it wherever it is needed.

❧