

— IDC SUCCESS STORY —
Teaching from the Heart

Mark Soworka's
DIVE CAREERS
— WORLDWIDE —



Sri Lanka, the pearl of the Indian Ocean, boasts spectacular coral reefs and famous shipwrecks for year round diving off many parts of the island. Tourism and scuba diving holidays remain on the rise after the end of the war making it critical for dive operators to continue to provide safe diving practices and develop comprehensive marine conservation measures and systems.

Dive Seenigama, Dive Lanka Water Sports Centre located in Seenigama, is a not-for-profit community based tourism initiative managed by Sri Lankan NGO, Foundation of Goodness (FoG). Dive Seenigama, Dive Lanka is committed to delivering a high quality recreational scuba diving operation while educating their customers, the local village community and area fisherman on marine conservation. FoG, in partnership with PADI and Platinum Course Director Mark Soworka sent Dive Seenigama, Dive Lanka head dive master, Roshan Deepal to Temple Adventures in India to take part in the PADI Instructor Development Course. This was all made possible through PADI's Scholarship programme whereby Roshan's PADI fees were fully covered by the organisation enabling him to obtain this esteemed certification.

Roshan's scuba career began over 20 years ago in a small coastal fishing village in Dodanduwa in southern Sri Lanka. His first memories are of the sea where the village community comes together for work and life. He was given the opportunity to obtain a certificate through the Sri Lankan government in basic diving and swimming skills. Little did he know his first job as a lifeguard at a hotel in Negombo would be the start of an exciting adventure ahead. The hotel expanded on his government training and enabled him to be employed at their onsite diving centre taking hotel guests on scuba day trips. There began Roshan's passion for showing others the wonders under the sea.



Roshan is very grateful for the opportunities he has been provided all along his scuba career and the pinnacle has been his recent IDC at Temple Adventures in Pondicherry, India. With PADI's scholarship programme assistance, Roshan was able to secure something he never thought possible. He also met many new friends, networked with other professional divers and to his delight, went diving in a fresh water quarry for the very first time.



Roshan has since returned to Dive Seenigama, Dive Lanka with an enthusiastic outlook on growing the scuba industry and awareness of marine conservation in Sri Lanka. His first major task will be to teach OWD and conservation topics to the many disadvantaged rural young people who have gone through FoG's diving & training programme. Without Roshan and FoG, a PADI certification would not be attainable within the resources of this rural community. He will also introduce marine conservation materials and coral planting initiatives to Foundation of Goodness for possible funding to continue preserving and repairing the coral reef off the Seenigama coastline.

In the coming years, Roshan would like to widen his experience and become qualified as an equipment specialist as this specialty is rather unique to Sri Lanka. He is grateful for the many opportunities and has always felt that his role within the Foundation of Goodness was serendipitous. Before he was hired on as Dive Seenigama, Dive Lanka's Dive Master, he was merely weeks away from leaving his wife and two small children for a long-term diving job in Oman.

Roshan never wants to stop learning and growing in his career. He wants to teach from his heart and ensure his students, Sri Lankan and foreign, are excited and learning to dive at the highest level of safety and care. He feels it's his destiny.

DIVESEENIGAMADIVELANKA.COM

More Information:

The Foundation of Goodness, a local NGO located in a coastal village named Seenigama has been in operation since 1999 but really became most effective after the 2004 Tsunami which resulted in over 150 lives lost in Seenigama alone.

Before the Tsunami, for many generations, one of the main livelihoods in this coastal region was coral mining and burning to make quicklime, which was illegal, dangerous, and an environmental nightmare. Research conducted after the tsunami quickly showed that in areas where coral reef had been destroyed, the waves were much more powerful and destructive. This research led to the banning of coral mining resulting in many people (and youth) losing their means of making an income.

In response, the Seenigama Diving & Training Centre commenced in 2008 to redirect local diving and swimming skills from a destructive purpose to one that is constructive. Through our training programme, rural young people have the opportunity to gain diving qualifications to achieve well-paid employment in the technical and recreational diving industry. It is only through previous donation and support that the Foundation of Goodness has been able to successfully implement this project. In recent years, with the economic recession, it has become more difficult to fund this vital programme. Therefore, in 2013, Dive Seenigama, Dive Lanka Water Sports Centre was established as a community based tourism initiative to sustain the Seenigama Diving & Training Centre. Dive Seenigama, Dive Lanka is the first not-for-profit dive centre in the region and 100% of the profits are reinvested back into the Foundation of Goodness.