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Woman On A Mission: Dr Jane Goodall



She stresses, however, there is more to her than just the Jane that travels the globe to save the planet.

and has fun," she says



But that's not to say that Dr Goodall feels burdened by expectations.

To her, it is simply a matter of just "doing what I can at any given day. That's all I can do. And as long as you do what you can, that takes the pressure away because you can't do what you can't do."

One thing's for sure: Dr Goodall does not intend to stop fighting for a better tomorrow

"I don't have other plans. I just go on doing what I'm doing, until my body refuses to do it anymore. And I don't know when that will be."

Premier caught up with Dr Goodall, who turns 81 this April, during her short visit to Singapore recently. The primatologist, anthropologist and ethologist – she earned her PhD In Ethology (study of animal behavior) in 1965 – travels an average of 300 days a year to speak to diverse audiences about the threats mankind faces.

room has been turne she is amidst nature.

As I approach Dr Goodall to begin our interview, she looks up and smiles, her kind eyes twinkling with the sort of wisdom that only someone who has experienced the world like she has can deliver.

"Shall we start?" I ask her. "Oh, absolutely," she replies.

Many have heard the story of Dr Goodall and her remarkable breakthroughs with the chimpanzees of Gombe Strean National Park in Tanzania, where she spent more than 20 years doing landmark research that secured her status as the world's leading primatologist.

But what started out as a singular passion for wildlife spiraled into something much bigger — a mi

"One is to alleviate poverty... Secondly, there's the unsustainable lifestyle of the rest of us, which is much harder to change than poverty actually. And then there's the growing numbers of the human race."

In the mid-eighties when she discovered that chimpanzee numbers and forests were threatened, Dr G Gombe to promote conservation all over the world. It was during her travels that she realised that cor doesn't just involve animals and the environment. People are part of that picture too.

"Every single one of us, includes you and me, every day we live we make a difference," she stresses, her silver hair pulled back into her trademark low ponytail. "And if we make ethical decisions, all of us, we'll start moving into the kind of world that we want."

'Never give up'

For someone who has seen the world go from being lusciously green to being fraught with climate change today, Dr Goodall holds an incredibly positive outlook on life.

She attributes that to her mother, whom she describes as being "quite extraordinary", and who always told her to believe in herself and never give up.

Dr Goodall has also met people who have inspired her greatly, giving her the strength to carry on doing what she

"As I go along, I meet various inspirational people who tackle seemingly ir people who somehow emerge from a very difficult background and becor positive attitude and really work hard to make the world a better place."

Born in London, Dr Goodall has achieved several milestones in her life.

ments was getting the chimpanzees to accept her, because it was only then that she was One of her important achievemen able to start learning about them.

"You know, there isn't just one milestone in 80 years," says Dr Goodall. "It was a milestone getting my PhD with no earlier degree. It was a milestone having my baby." She had her son Hugo from her first marriage at 33.

The most significant turning point for her came when she went to a conference and learnt that chimpanzees were disappearing all across Africa.

"That was when I went to the conference as a scientist and came out as an ac

Rooting for the youth

For many years now, one of Dr Goodall's missions is nurturing the youth to become conservationists. She be that young people are key to achieving a world at peace.

"If our youth loses hope, we might as well give up because if you don't have hope, you do nothing," Dr Goodall says

she recalls meeting many young people, after leaving Gombe, who thought the world was so ruined that they had lost tope for a better future.

But Dr Goodall has found hope in the youth's growing awareness of the problems, such as poverty, uneven distribution of wealth and overpopulation, which are threatening our world.

In 1991, twelve high school students visited Goodall at her home in Tanzania to discuss their concerns. Their verve and drive to change their community led to the birth of Roots and Shoots.

Established in Tanzania, Roots and Shoots has inspired many young people to rise to the challenge of developing community-based solutions to the world's big problems. More than two decades since Roots and Shoots started, the programme has sprouted across 158 countries with about 150,000 groups. Each group works on three projects to tackle a single problem — one to help animals, one to help people, and one to help the environment.

"It's not about learning, it's about you thinking about what you care about, and choosing a project that will help to do something about that problem," says Dr Goodali.

"That's what Roots and Shoots is all about — thinking about the problems, deciding what you can do and rolling up your sleeves and doing it."

Teo Min Ru first joined Roots and Shoots last year when she was still in Nanyang Girls' High School, one of the institutions that is part of the programme. Her project involved educating the public on how to co-exist with the long-tailed macaques at Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. The macaques are primates that are native to Southeast As

"As youth, sometimes the first thing we have to do is to teach ourselves what it is about the environment that's so important for us to protect," says Teo, now a student at Hwa Chong Junior College.

the 17-year-old feels especially driven knowing that there are people in other parts of the world who are flighting for he same causes, albeit in different ways, and considers Dr Goodall as one of her role models.

"What I find most inspiring about her is she is a realily grounded person. So even though you know she's Dr Jane Goodall, she's realily famous, and everyone knows her... she's really grounded in the sense that she doesn't forget the work that she's doing," says Teo.

Touching lives and inspiring young people like Teo, Dr Goodall has proven yet again that there is more to her crus than championing the cause of chimpanzees.

