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Solar Serve News



Dear friends,

The last few months it has been cold in Danang. In February during the Vietnamese new year it was so cold that many people tried to grow their flowers, trees and plants into plastic bags like small green houses. Only a few weeks ago the weather began to change. Spring and summer is in the air and we as Solar Serve are making preparations for a new season. So let us tell you a little bit about what we did and what we are planning to do.

Thank you

Dr Hung of the Danang University has been our mentor for the last 10 years. Recently he moved to the University of Dong Hoi (250 km north of Danang). It was good to work together with him all those years. Often he gave us advice and provided permits for us to work at the countryside. Now we are able to carry our projects and enterprise more independently. Our contract with him and the University of Danang will be finished, but we as Solar Serve are very thankful for all their support over the past ten years.



New cooker for picnics

We received a special parabolic cooker from a Korean friend. He designed an umbrella which can be used for cooking and also as a parasol. It comes in a small box and weighs only 5 kilos. It is easy to transport. The upside down umbrella sits on a four legged standard which we changed into a foldable tripod. It can only be used away from the wind and needs extra care for children, but it is a good alternative especially for picnics. We will try to improve the stability and use of the cooker.



Other models

We made a new parabolic cooker that concentrates sunlight onto two vacuum tubes. Heat is transferred through the tubes to a closed pot for cooking. We are still working on it. We also made another type of cooker that protects people against direct sunlight. It can also be used as a food stall to serve people. Our staff tried to improve a small wind turbine. Electricity can be stored in batteries, but to make it profitable depends on where and how you place the turbine.



Containers for poor families

We received from a friend in Hanoi six large boxes with 60 containers. We filled the containers with lots of candies, cookies, seeds and different kinds of nuts for the new years celebrations. After that we contacted the leader of our area where the center is located. He called two members of the local committee and they distributed the containers to poor families. It was a small gesture but well received and a good start for the new year.



Eating, biking, selling, walking and running

We received a letter from a Dutch youth group. They wanted to sponsor our work. A few weeks ago they cooked a five course dinner for 220 people. It was a huge success. People had to pay for it and some businessmen helped them to make it profitable. They will also organize a bicycle tour from Paris to Holland this summer. Not only the youth group but also others are active in helping us though walking, running, selling flowers and bazaars and other events.

Wedding Vu and Oanh

Vu has been a very diligent worker for the last three years. He is now very skillful in welding and building the parabolic frames. He fell in love with a beautiful girl working at a restaurant for deaf people. On March 28 they decided to get married and invited all Solar Serve staff for their wedding. Many other guests were also invited for dinner. It is always great when two young people get married and especially when they are deaf. It's a real commitment!



Right moment

Since we started our enterprise we had a desire to make our products more known to the public. Our center will soon be surrounded by other buildings and we would not be visible from the main road anymore. We are in the process of finding other options. One year ago we shared this with some of our Solar Serve friends and they responded with excitement. For us it is important to take the right decision at the right moment.

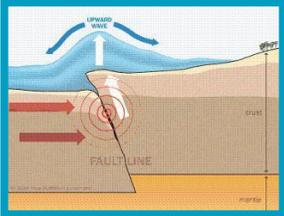


Hans and Linh

In the ancient town of Hoi An, Hans and Linh are owners of a restaurant called The Lighthouse. They came to our center and wanted to know if our solar cookers could be used in their cooking programs. Very soon they will move their restaurant to another location in Hoi An. They want to make it more environmentally friendly with solar panels, water boilers and maybe our solar cookers. Great idea! A green restaurant will attract lots of customers.

Solar lights

Earthen pots are easy to use for lamps. Some of them have holes at the side which give nice effects when you put a candle in it. Now we are trying to get the same effects with solar lights. We turned a pot upside down and attached a small solar collector (which you can use for garden lights) on it. It's a great idea but until now the capacity is not enough, so we are wondering if you have any suggestions? Please let us know.



Still at risk

According to a newspaper North Vietnam suffered two strong earthquakes in 1893 and 1935 measured 6.8 and 6.75. In the South, the most intense quake was 6.1 in 1923. The northern region is the most prone to quakes because of the Red River fault that runs from China through to the East Sea. No tsunami has ever been documented in Vietnam, but scientists have identified nine areas in the East Sea that might cause tsunamis. Vietnam is mostly hit by typhoons, floods, and landslides. In 1945 two million people died in the north of a famine.

Helping in Nghe An

We are not only making solar cookers, doing projects and developing a business, but we are also involved in serving others. A Finnish company asked us to assist them in their solar and communication projects. During their absence we have to check up to see if there is any progress made. Most of the locations are in very poor areas in the mountains. We are also asked by another foreign company to help them with paperwork. Importing solar equipment is not always easy. Through these experiences we learn a lot.



Inspired with hope

Two of our staff were invited to join a three-day gathering in Saigon organized for many volunteer workers in Vietnam. It was well prepared. The guest speaker gave lots of encouragements, ideas and hope. They also learned about their neighboring country Laos. It is the most heavily bombed country in history. After 40 years many cluster bombs are still hidden in the forests, rice fields, villages, school grounds, roads, and other populated areas. Tens of thousands of people have been killed or injured. Laos is a land in need and some volunteers were inspired to help.



Finally

We have been in contact with people in the South. They want to explore solar cooking as an alternative attraction for tourists. This is a great idea and we are excited that people are taking such new initiatives. So feel free to send your input, new ideas, information or new inventions that will help us. Let us do it together!

Greetings,

Solar Serve team

Called to Serve

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