



April / May / June 2016 No.47 Solar Serve News

Dear friends,

What could be better than a visit by a beautiful white dove during the New Year? We have never seen a dove around our building, but suddenly it appeared at our doorstep and for the whole day it was sitting on our roof. Everyone noticed it and we were amazed. A dove is not only a symbol of peace but it also reminds us that we cannot do our work in our own strength. We always think that we have to do it by ourselves. What a beautiful reminder and we look forward to what will be in store for us.



Solar restaurant

A man from France came to visit us. He runs a restaurant in Vung Tau, a popular seaside resort in the south of Vietnam. He knew all about solar cookers and other environmentally friendly devices. He was very excited and wanted to buy several devices for his restaurant (three box cookers, two parabols and three clean cookstoves). He also ordered two solar lamps. For us it was interesting that after several years someone requested our boxcookers again. Because of the sunny weather in the south they could be an attraction for tourists eating in his restaurant.

Visit from Holland

More than twenty years ago Marieke worked with streetkids in Hanoi. Recently she came back to Vietnam and visited them. They are all adults now and one of them moved to Saigon and got married to Long, a food engineer. He invested a lot of time and money into making chocolates, but did not know how to put them on the market. Marieke encouraged him to participate in one of our FBT seminars. After two days he not only made his own business model, but also wrote his action plan for marketing his chocolates. We were thrilled that he also made other good decisions for his life.



New solar lamp

We are now making lamps that work on solar energy. Although we have not finished our design, we've already had several orders. Tuan is our electrician and loves to work on it. The solar lamps are not a new concept and you can find several models on the internet. We want to make it very practical and also give it a personal touch by naming it Light of the World. The price needs to be reasonable too because many poor people in the mountains are going to use it. They are also interested in our solar water pump. It requires more research too, so that brings us to our next story.

New challenge

Beside our center lays a piece of land (14 x 17.5m). After considering it carefully, we got the impression that this piece of land was meant for us. Everything developed very quickly and we have already purchased the land with a wonderful provision of one of our Solar Serve friends. We will use the land for building a research center, in order to develop more environmentally friendly devices. We made a rough photoshop montage to give you an impression (see circle). We will contact an architect for an official design and hope to start building in August. Now we trust for more provisions and are very excited about it!



Malaysia

We got an invitation from a Vietnamese social worker (70yrs) in Malaysia. She asked if we could train Vietnamese workers who will return back to Vietnam this year with setting up a family business. Almost 67 Vietnamese workers registered for the FBT training. They were so excited when they participated in the course. This was exactly what they needed! The social worker is helping those who are often being forced into labor or being exploited into prostitution. She is able to contact officials for helping the workers whose papers are either lost or being kept by their employers.



Good report

A SNV staff came to visit us and wanted to know how the clean cookstoves were used. She interviewed three families, who have been using our stoves for six months to two years. She was very surprised when they told her that they were very happy with our stoves. Here are some answers: *“Since I began using your stove, I have saved one bottle of gas every three months.”...“Every day I am cooking food on your stove for my pigs. It saves me 5 -7 million VND in one year on fuel costs.”... “I have a business selling sea mussels. I love your stove because it is durable. I can save 2-4 million VND every year.”*

More targets

This year we will teach six FBT courses, but we will also build a new research center and double the production of our portable clean cookstoves. The last few years we already made 7000 stoves and many of them have been used throughout the country. There is a growing demand by people who can afford them, but in poor areas additional support is still needed. This year we will double the production of the stoves from 250 to 500 per month. We also want to expand our connections with neighboring countries like Cambodia and Laos. But we keep in mind: One step at a time.



Very cold

We are now moving into a dry and hot season, but the last few months we have experienced very cold weather in Vietnam together with strong winds. Not only in the far north but snow also fell in Nghe An, which is very unusual for this province. Temperatures dropped below zero and places were covered with 2 to 3 cm of snow. This is very unique and it broke all records in the history of Vietnam. Even Danang had to face it, although we have never experienced snow or ice.

Foreign inspiration

Many years ago many foreigners worked in the highlands of Vietnam. They worked hard and helped many tribes to find their unique purpose of life. A few months ago we had an opportunity to introduce our family business training course near Kuntum and almost 45 people showed up. We were impressed that so many young and old people were so well organized and lived a very happy community life. Although the foreigners left many years ago, they still inspired us. We also want to leave something behind that will have a wonderful impact in their lives for many years to come.



Being thirsty

We received an invitation from a leader in the Mekong delta, who told us that many families were not able to use their talents properly and needed training. We answered his call and travelled to Vinh Long and stayed in a hotel where the owner became very interested in our seminar. The next day she and her son decided to attend the training too and during the workshop her eyes were opened. She became so excited that she wanted to attend another workshop and followed our staff all the way to

Kieng Giang. It was wonderful to meet a person like her who was so hungry and thirsty for more.



Finally

As Solar Serve we also want to serve others. A few years ago Mr Quan did his internship for electrical engineering at Solar Serve. Now he runs his own business and has designed a new cooling system for a new type of fishing boats (see Danang news). We have helped him with the construction of this system in our factory. Also a school for disabled children asked us to assist them with the construction of a new solar system on their roof. If we have time we love to serve those who have a similar purpose and passion in life and you will hear more from us in our next letter.



That's all for now.

Greetings,

Solar Serve team

Called to Serve

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