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Solar Serve News



Dear friends,

For 15 years we have been doing charity work and since 2006 we are also running a social enterprise. It was not always easy to work with products depending on the environment. It was sometimes very hard to change the mindset of people. We learned a lot. The turn came when we included the clean cookstoves in our work. It became a good alternative in combination with the parabolic cookers. It improved people's health, finances but also the environment. This is one of the reasons why we kept on going after 15 years. And thanks to you, that we have never felt alone.

Considerations

At the moment we have been approached by organizations, individuals and groups from many countries to cooperate with them, but till now nothing came from the ground definitely. We know there are many things to take into consideration, but in the meantime we need to keep on going. It's not always easy when you run a small social enterprise and try to do charity work with the profits of the enterprise. We would love to see the above organization and groups taking clear decisions, so we can maintain employing disadvantaged people and helping people with our products.

Helping the Bru minority

We have given friends the opportunity to support low income families with our products. One month ago we drove a full truck of clean cookstoves to the mountains. They were all sponsored and for two days we supplied the Bru minority and helped them with cooking. It felt like we have given them many cups of water on thirsty souls. They were so happy and for us it was very rewarding to help them. We took pictures and sent them to the sponsors. They were pleased and thankful that they could help them with their support.



Approved and test

In one of our last letters we told you that SNV asked us to make a smaller clean cookstove with an affordable price for the poor. It took some effort but we came up with a smaller one ([see video clip](#)) and after some testing, the stoves were approved and certified by SHEER. They also chose another cookstove made in the north and asked a minority group in Thanh Hoa province to test both clean cookstoves for more than a month. After that SNV will make an assessment in order to know which cookstove will be the most suitable. Now we are waiting for the results.

More possibilities

In the meantime we still have 200 sponsored cookstoves to be given away. We already contacted some minorities and now we are preparing it with the local authorities. Sometimes it requires a lot of organization with the people in charge. We also need to consider what we should do when they live in very high mountain areas. Our truck is capable to do our local work in the countryside, but using it for the mountains requires more power to climb steep roads. The engine has to run full capacity when the truck is fully loaded. Maybe we should consider another truck in the near future. Any advice is welcome!!

New Video clips

We published three new video clips on our Youtube channel. Maybe you have seen the [first one](#), and the [second one](#) is a Vietnamese translation. The [third one](#) is our latest and is a very short video clip made in one of the houses of the Bru minority. They were so happy to receive the clean cookstoves that one lady decided to cook a meal for our staff on her new stove. The kitchen is always in the middle of the Bru home, so it is important that the stove does not produce a lot of smoke and that it is easy to use. Enjoy watching the videos and please feel free to share them with your friends.



Honest student

A student in Danang found a bag with almost 700 euro, two saving books with a value of 56,000 euro, and several phones. A woman, who had sold her parent's house that day, lost it after she drove on her motorbike through a small alley. When the student called the woman, she was very afraid that he wanted to blackmail her and took two police officers with her. She quickly learned that the Christian student was very honest and even refused a reward. Many newspapers wrote about this student and the fact that there are still honest people in Vietnam. A great testimony of someone who lives out what he believes.

Safety and hygiene

We asked our workers to stop working for a short gathering. We decided to teach them a short course of safety and hygiene. You will understand that this is necessary when you walk through our factory where safety is really required. We used information from a book which is also used successfully in the north. Everyone participated well, especially when they had to memorize the 5 S which helped them to improve safety, work efficiency, productivity and ownership. It was received well and now the workers understand more clearly that safety and hygiene are a very important part of their work.



Spot welding

Welding the inner parts of our stoves has been difficult and a long process. After researching better methods, we bought a spot welder that can 'meld' two pieces of metal together very fast. A large current is driven through two copper electrodes and concentrated on a small spot, which clamp (melt) the two sheets together. It saves a lot of work, energy and time. We are very happy with our new equipment. It improved the quality of our stoves and now we are also able to make many stoves in a reasonable time when there is a large demand.

Replacing bad parts

Our large sliding door needed to be repaired after eight years. Small plastic parts were breaking off which made it difficult to open and close. It was hard to find a company who wanted to repair it, and when we found one, they gave up soon because of some difficulties. But it needed to be done before the typhoon season. Finally we found a young man who was willing to help. He even bought metal parts for replacing the plastic ones. We promised to help him, so in one day all workers worked hard to get the door down and replaced all the parts. At the end of the day we reinstalled it and now it slides perfectly again.



Internet problems

There have been problems with the internet connection this year. Already three times in the last five months we could not communicate with the outside world clearly. The connection slowed down, so important things could only be done in the middle of the night when people were sleeping. There is a 20,000 km cable connecting Southeast Asia with the US mainland laying at the bottom of the sea and they do not know clearly if it was damaged by a vessel or even by some sharks. If your mail has been bounced back lately, this could be the reason. Learn to be patience like us ☺ !!



Good impression

In our last letter we told you about Mario, a Swiss consultant. He came to visit us in Danang when we were teaching a class of young students. We are using his teachings and methods and it was great that he was able to share a short time with the students. He enjoyed his time in Danang very much and was encouraged when he visited the companies of several students he taught before. Generally, he had a good impression and was encouraged. He also said to the club of small business owners in Danang that their (role) model was very good and should be applied in all Asia.

Interesting contacts

The Middle East came very close to us when we got a visit from a businessman from Kuwait. He got to know us through the internet and visited us in Danang. He was very interested in using our cleanstoves for many refugees in the Middle East. Another request came from a group of businessmen in Nepal who invited sealed bids to supply 10,000 portable stoves for the disaster areas in Nepal. This request came too late and we were not able to complete all the necessary documents and information in time, but they invited us to bid for the next load.



Sponsor activities

This year there were some activities arranged by volunteers in order to support us. Several of them were jumble sales and flea markets. Don't think about big sales, but it was very rewarding, especially when a lot of disabled children came to visit their stand. This year another sponsor walk & run was organized. For accomplishing each km a certain amount was supported by a bank. Later on they found out that the bank had made a mistake by mixing up another group, so the volunteers had to transfer money back.



Finally

One of our new workers left when he had some family problems, although he loved to work with us. Other workers applied but we have been careful in accepting new people when we are still waiting for future orders. Maybe you did not know but many organizations around the world made an effort in helping around 100 million households with clean cookstoves and cleaner fuel by 2020. This is also one of our goals. It keeps us going also with other products and projects. What a challenge and it is great to be a part of helping people!



Greetings,

Solar Serve team

Called to Serve

More information: www.vietnamsolarserve.org/ or write to: solarserve@yahoo.com



The first colorful run

Many athletes, residents and visitors were bombarded on June 27 with different colored paints during the first ever happiest five kilometer colorful run in Danang. The event, the first of its kind to be held in the city, attracted over 5,000 runners. The runners jogged the five-kilometer course and were sprayed from head to toe with colored paint at each kilometer. It became one of the most colorful running events in Viet Nam

Intense heat wave

A 40-degree heat wave has been sweeping through the northern and central regions of Vietnam. The north is suffering intense heat from the early morning. The heat is particularly bad in Ha Noi where there are many buildings and few trees. The temperature in the western mountainous area have been surpassing 40 degrees Celsius due to severe and hot winds from Laos. In July and August higher temperatures and less rainfall will be expected.



The first triathlon

A triathlon, the first of its kind held in Vietnam took place in Danang. The event attracted 1,000 athletes from 54 countries and territories around the world. The race featured a 1.9-km swim, a two-loop 90-km bike ride and a 21-km run along the coastline. The finishing line was at the foot of the Marble Mountains. The race became the newest sought-after destination race in Asia, with many international athletes eager to participate.

Underwater center

A center for Underwater Archaeological Research will be built in Hoi An, near Danang. At the 3,200km coastline, many shipwrecks still need to be discovered. The center will also explore the precious value of the underwater heritage and history of the sea and islands. According to some historians, central Vietnamese ports were among the busiest in Asia as artwork on the ancient bronze drums shows.



Stabbed in heart

Doctors at a Danang hospital have successfully saved the life of 50-year-old man. He was trying to stop a fight between some men in his village when one of the fighters stabbed him in his heart with a long bush-hook. He had to be rushed to the hospital and was in a very critical condition. The doctors performed surgery on him and detected a hole about 1 cm away from the right ventricle of his heart. It would have been fatal if the doctors had not promptly treated it.

A Powerful festival

The third Motorcycle Festival was held in Danang with the participants of more than 40 clubs, associations, groups and individuals from all across the country. The event drew a number of famous world brands, such as Harley-Davidson, Ducati, Triumph, Honda, BMW, Kawasaki and Yamaha. After the opening ceremony, hundreds of motorcycles paraded around the streets. Now [motorcycle tours](#) can be organized, even over the northern mountains, down the HCM Trail.



Losing license

Some building resort projects along the beach of Danang have failed to get construction work started and will be dealt with tough hands. Although licenses have been given and high walls have been erected around their lands, investors have not started to build for several years. In the mean time they are blocking local people from entering the beach. Now the local authorities have decided to 'return the beach' to the public. Investors will lose their license or be penalized.

Watching langurs

Now sightseeing tours to Son Tra Peninsula (also called Monkey mountain) can be organized to discover the endangered langurs. The 2-3 hour tour will start at 4:00 am and 4:00 pm every day (the time when the langurs regularly appear). The visitors need to wear dark clothes or camouflage themselves with leaves, make no noise, use cameras with telephoto lens to keep a certain distance from the langurs, and not infiltrate the living space of the animals.



Heartbreaking job

Every night in one of the markets an elderly woman is catching cockroaches for a living. She is not allowed to use spray and gets a very small amount for each cockroach. Catching 500 cockroaches alive in one night is the maximum. She is able to earn a little more than a dollar a night. A newspaper made [a short video](#) of her life and it is worth watching. It is heartbreaking what people sometimes have to do for a living. It should make us be more grateful.

An amazing experience

Bana Hill in Danang has the world's longest cable car line (more than 5.700m) and it can carry around 1,500 visitors per hour at six meters per second. It has a total of 86 cabins, which can accommodate ten people each. It won several Guinness world records. It opened in 2013, after various parts were shipped to Vietnam from Sweden, Switzerland and Germany.

