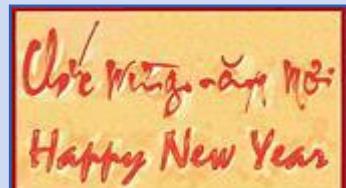




Jan / Febr / March 2007 No.13 Solar Serve News

Dear friends,

If you have visited our web site recently, you received our wishes already, if not: Happy New Year. We have been working hard to change and update our web site. You can find our last newsletters, including this one, video clips, photos and lots of solar cooking information locally and worldwide. We also changed our colors and layout. We are not professionals in making a perfect website, but do our best to make it readable. During the conference in Spain, one of the leaders gave us useful hints and links in how to make and change a web site. We got the skills and now we are able to update and add pictures and news frequently. Please have a look for yourself:
<http://www.vietnamsolarserve.org/>



Raining season

Behind our information room the ponds are sometimes overflowing because of heavy rains. Yes, we are in the middle of the raining season. A good raincoat is now important, but you can easily buy a large plastic bag with sleeves and a cap for 15 dollar cents to put it over your head, incase you forgot the real one. It is difficult now to convince people the need of solar cooking, but there are times of sunshine during the day which helps us not to give up hope. Behind the clouds there is a lot of energy available. It is just a matter of time.

Typhoon Xangsane



It all began when Vietnamese authorities evacuated 300.000 people. Strong winds and gusts with speed of 150 up to 180 km per hour raged on Danang. The typhoon hit the city on Sunday morning in all its strength. Everything flew around. It was very dangerous for people to stand near the windows. We had never seen something like this before. A 15 meters long roof with all its iron bars flew like paper in the air and smashed down on the street in front of our information room. When the storm lost its power we could see the damage. In a park nearby many of the old trees were uprooted or leveled to the ground. Local restaurants were empty because their roofs were gone. Many electric poles have been bended or cut like matches and many houses close to the beach were in total ruin. 100,000 people became homeless. 69 people died and 500 people became seriously wounded.

An amazing story

During the typhoon a 13 months old baby boy was sleeping in a cradle attached to the roof beams of his small home. When the winds tore off the roof, the little boy in his cradle went flying with it. He was blown over a three-story school before landing in a pond 150 meters away. His fall was cushioned by a bed of floating plants that also kept him from sinking until his father plucked him out. The boy sustained only a slight head injury. He gained the nickname "Parachute Boy" after his wild ride.



Support for victims



After the typhoon our staff made an assessment of the damage and came back with a truck full of parabolic cookers, pots, kettles and 1000 kg of rice in supporting the victims in a village near the sea. We decided to give the parabols away and the rice bags were sponsored by one of our solar friends. Although our support was small, it brought lots of people together, even old people came and carried gratefully the heavy rice bags on their shoulders to their homes. When we taught the people how to use the parabolic



cookers, we were almost stopped by the police but after one of our staff explained the situation we were allowed to go on. It was wonderful to serve and some people were very emotional when we helped them.

Shaping the parabolic cookers

Dr. Hung our supervisor of the University of Danang is open for new ideas. He is making a special machine, which can press a piece of aluminum or stainless steel into the shape of a parabolic cooker. This will save a lot of time in making them by hand. The mold will be manufactured in Hanoi. Last month dr Hung requested several photographs, pp presentations, video clips and other material of our project. He had to give a presentation about solar energy and promoting our work. This year he wants us to set up a project in and around Danang city.



Shaping the box cookers

In 1997 a recycling shop in the Netherlands introduced us to solar cooking. This year they supported us in making a mold for our new box cooker. When we were in Spain we saw several new box cookers. The inner box of the cookers had almost the same shape as the mold of the recycling shop. Last year it was very hard to buy wood for our present box cookers. Therefore we want to make two different molds in making the inner and outside box from aluminum. We have been researching this possibility and made some progress. We could easily reach temperatures of 145 °C and even higher under normal weather conditions.

Motorbike

We got an e-mail of one of our solar friends in Saigon. She wanted to give us her motorbike, which was still in good shape. Surprisingly, one of our staff expressed her need for a motorbike a few weeks before this e-mail. Mrs. Ngoc needs it for her work with Solar Serve. She frequently visits families in remote villages. We were able to pick the motorbike immediately with our truck and it is used already. What a wonderful Christmas gift



Wonderful contacts

A Vietnamese woman from America wanted to sponsor our project in Phanrang by providing parabols for the needy people. A few months ago she came to Vietnam and called us and wanted to see the results. We took her to the place where she could see with her own eyes how the parabolic cookers were used. She was very pleased and wanted to sponsor again some families. This is a good way for helping the people and working together with sponsors. Another sponsor from Holland with his friend came to visit us. Every year he walks 200km to sponsor our project. It was good for them to see what we are doing. An overseas Vietnamese man came by and was also very interested in buying a parabolic cooker in order to promote solar cooking in Africa. We had also an order from Pakistan to build many solar cookers, but we had to turn it down in order to have time for building our own solar cookers. We have to rethink this year our ways of doing things and need wisdom.

New 'solar' helpers



Thanh is a student from the North and wants to be a tour guide in the future. He is studying English and tourism in Danang. When we needed a person to help us with the translation of our newsletters for our website, we asked him to help us. It will help him to improve his English, but also helps us to keep our Vietnamese web site updated. We are very pleased to have him. **Tuan** has his own small repair shop near our information room. He often visits us and loves the idea of solar cooking. When we showed him our plans of making a kitchen parabolic cooker, he was very interested and came up with some good ideas. When we showed him the mechanical clock, which moves the parabolic cooker towards the sun during cooking, he offered to help us in making the clock. It will not be easy, but we are very thankful for his help.



Challenge

A whole new year is in front of us. A great challenge. We hope to keep you informed through our web site and this letter of what we are doing. Please drop us a note if you have time and take care of yourself.

Warm solar greetings from:

The Solar Serve family



Called to Serve

For more Solar Serve News:

Or write to:

<http://www.vietnamsolarserve.org/solarservenews.html>

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