



April / May / June 2013 No.36

# Solar Serve News

**Dear friends,**

Climate change affected Vietnam a few weeks ago when over 10,000 houses were damaged and at least 26 people were injured during a hail storm in the northern Lao Cai province. Hail may fall during the transitional period between dry and wet seasons, but hailstones measuring up to 10 cm in diameter are very rare. It reminded us again that we as Solar Serve should make products in order to protect the environment and also, when a disaster hits the country, we can provide simple and effective solutions. For example: What can be used when there is no water, gas, electricity or other necessities after a disaster? Please share with us your ideas too and we will be happy to think it over.



## Clean Cooking Forum in Cambodia

Although we are still producing solar cookers, we would like to improve our cleanstoves with better and more durable material. Sometimes we are limited in what we have. Importing material from other countries is not always the best solution in keeping the price down. So Bich attended the Clean Cooking Forum in Cambodia in the third week of March to explore the possibilities. It was also good for him to meet some people from the Solar Cooking Forum of 2006 in Spain. The main focus of this forum was the global adoption of clean cooking solutions. By 2020, 100 million households should have access to these environmentally friendly cooking stoves. Many organizations are behind it and even former secretary of state Hillary Clinton is a great supporter. During the many discussions and presentations there was a display of many clean stoves outside the hotel. People were surprised by the simplicity of our stove. We found out that using bio-pellets for fuel was very effective. Bich came back with lots of ideas. He also found out that an organization had used our parabolic model for producing hundreds of parabols in Cambodia. It was very encouraging that so many people are using our model. More reports on Youtube ([click](#))



## People visiting us

Sometimes we receive visitors or groups who do not contribute any new ideas for our work, but they are very important for us because of their encouragements and support. Regularly we get tour groups from Australia for 30 minutes to visit our center. Their excitement gives us always a great boost to carry on. One group of eight students from Korea came to visit us in January. They not only loved our work but also loved the culture, food and even Vietnamese coffee. They were able to help in a school for handicapped children and also came to visit our center and encouraged our staff. It was hard for them to leave, but their visit was a major highlight for us and also for them.

### New accountant

Thuy Vy has done our accounting since the end of 2010. She got married and is expecting a baby now. She asked if she could be released by working fewer hours at our center. We found Thanh, a student who will graduate this summer from University as an accountant. As part of his study he has to practice with a company and we agreed that he could do this at Solar Serve. Just in time when Thuy Vy wants to be more released. He is a great guy and he fits into our work well.



### New worker

Another need came when Vu, our last deaf worker wanted to change his job. We were concerned that he could not fit into his new environment, but we were also sad to lose a dear friend and excellent worker. Soon after that we were introduced to mister Dang from a southern province. He just arrived in Danang to find work. He already had years of working experience and we accepted him right on the spot. After this Vu told us that after seeing his new environment and the difficult condition he had to work in, he decided to stay on with us. We were very happy and saw it as a confirmation that some good things will be in store for the coming years.

### Favor

We have one foreigner working as a technical advisor at our center. Hans is from Holland and has been in Vietnam for many years. It has not always been easy to get a visa or work permit for him, but this year he experienced favor with the authorities. After the Vietnamese New Years celebrations in February, Mr.Bich as director of Solar Serve had to apply for an extension for his work permit. After a few minor changes, they allowed Hans to work for three years more. But this was not the end. A work permit does not guarantee a permit to stay in Vietnam. This needed to be applied separately. This has not been easy the last years, but Bich experienced favor again with the authorities this year and in a short time he came back with a permit for one year. They were even willing to give two years, but the passport of Hans expired before the two years, so they could not give it. We were amazed and are thankful for all this favor.



### Really listening

Bich and Thang were invited to a conference where government officials were present. The main focus was to understand social entrepreneurs. The goal of a social enterprise is to help people and to influence social life. They are not focused on profit. It was explained very clearly by a professor who visited Solar Serve a few years ago. That time he was so surprised that we could do this work without any support from the government. During the conference the officials were very interested and listened carefully. They finally understood that social entrepreneurs have a completely different approach. They promised to work on new laws, so that social entrepreneurs could be officially supported in the near future. Bich showed a power point presentation and talked about the ups and downs of Solar Serve as a social enterprise. Bich and Thang had the impression that they were really listening well.

### Finally

We closed our center for two weeks during the Vietnamese New Year's celebrations in February. We finished the year with a nice meal and a special bonus for our staff.



We received a box of secondhand earphones and some glasses from some donors for the lepers (see last newsletter).



We changed our old Solar Serve brochure (English-Vietnamese) for the conference in Cambodia. The day before Bich left, it was finished and could be printed in time.

We sent our new smaller parabolic cooker, a clean stove and hundreds of dragon flies to a support group, in order to use them for fairs, exhibitions and support.

We are still excited in what we are doing. The road is not always easy, but there are some breakthroughs and new ideas that keep us going.

Well, that's all for now! Thanks for standing with us.

Greetings,

Solar Serve team

### Called to Serve

More information: [www.vietnamsolarserve.org/](http://www.vietnamsolarserve.org/) or write to: [solarserve@yahoo.com](mailto:solarserve@yahoo.com)