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Solar Serve News

Dear friends,

First of all Happy New Year. We hope it will be a great year. Don't give up doing good and expecting hard situations to change into wonderful opportunities. Enjoy and love your work so that you never have 'to work' again! But if you want to work with us, don't dream about the weather. Lately, it has been very cold in Danang and even in the northern provinces of Vietnam. Some mountains near Sapa were covered with snow. Unthinkable but everything is possible in Vietnam, so welcome to our world!



Typhoons, floods and landslides

The devastating storm of the Philippines also moved straight to Danang, but in a miraculous way it turned to a different direction. The city really escaped from a disaster, although weeks before another typhoon caused hundreds of trees to fall down as we had never seen before. Not long after, the middle of Vietnam was hit by heavy rainfall. A dam in the mountains was accidentally opened, therefore many villages were



flooded in three meter deep water. It left blankets of mud everywhere. People were desperate. The social entrepreneur club in Danang decided to do their part and through donations they helped the elderly with rice, and children with new schoolbags



Award in Nairobi

Almost 500 social entrepreneurs from 85 countries participated in an international competition organized by SEED, which supports small scale entrepreneurs who integrate social and environmental benefits into their business models. It was founded by UNEP, UNDP and IUCN in 2002. Solar Serve was nominated and later chosen as one of the Low Carbon Awards winners. Our director Nguyen Tan Bich had to travel to Kenya in order to receive this reward. It was a great honor for him and we as Solar Serve were very excited for this recognition.

Australia - Here we come!

Another event took place in Canberra, the capital of Australia. During a gathering of national leaders of mercy projects, Bich and Hans were invited to show their Solar Serve work. They shipped two parabolic cookers for display but the cookers arrived too late. With one clean cooker and lots of good will and help, they were able to make it special and met many interesting people like a couple who travelled around in a converted bus with lots of environmentally friendly equipment. Amazing! They also had a wonderful time with some friends in a nearby town. It was like heaven on earth!



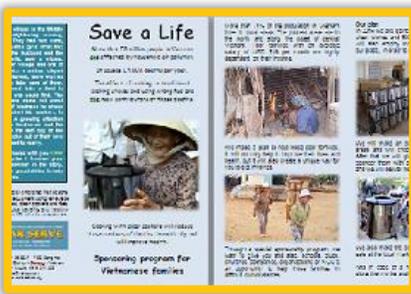
Caramel Cookie Waffles for Vietnam

A workgroup in Holland is very active in supporting our projects. A few months ago they decided to sell the original Dutch caramel cookie waffles (stroopwafels). They are very popular and lots of people made an order. The group did a lot of work to make it known. They put boxes everywhere in order for people to fill in forms and to deposit their donation. After a few weeks they collected all the orders, and together they distributed the waffles street by street. Everywhere they met smiling faces and comments afterwards how delicious they were. A great way to support a project.

Flower Arrangements for support

Don't think that the whole world is supporting us, but sometimes there are precious people who really want to help us with their skills. For example, a friend asked a nursing home for elderly people if she could have a stand for making and selling flower arrangements. She made posters and put them on the walls. After she decorated the hallway beautifully, the director complimented her. It was just before Christmas so her flower arrangements were easily sold. Even a Vietnamese woman was enthusiastic when she bought the last dragonflies. Great to have friends like her.





Get involved – New plan for 2014

In October last year we were inspired by some words of a man who worked in South Africa. He talked about multiplication. We took it serious and made a plan for 2014. Right after the Vietnamese New Year's holidays (in February) we will begin to make 7000 clean cooking stoves and 500 parabolic cookers for families with a low income in poor areas. Although we have never asked for donation, we came up with a plan for people, companies, schools, churches or organizations to be personally involved. Now they can sponsor one or more families with one of the cookers. We will choose the families and deliver the cooker(s). A certificate with the name of the sponsor will be given to the family and a picture will be taken for the sponsor. We will send you more details soon.

Preparation time

Our plan requires a lot of preparation. We still have time till the middle of February. We need more workers and lots of space to work and store. Last month all Solar Serve workers came together and decided which clean stove should be made. Some changes were made and the final model was chosen. It included also a cover which needed to be made with a special mold. Instead of buying expensive equipment, we found a company in Danang. They are able to make the mold and will manufacture the covers for us. This will save us a lot of time.



Christmas in Solar Serve

Although Christmas is not an official holiday in Vietnam we gave all workers a day off, after we had some exciting celebrations. Christmas is not real if we do not understand the meaning. So we explained it first to our workers, followed by an exchange game, where others could take away your gift. The day before Christmas we had a wonderful lunch, prepared by Tho and her sister Mai and before we all left for home, everyone received a Christmas box with all kinds of goodies. On New Year's Day we had a day off. Vietnamese New Year's celebrations will start on Jan.31st.



Pizza in parabol

Someone in Japan had bought a parabolic cooker from us last year. He loved it so much that he made a video and posted it on [Youtube](http://www.youtube.com). He was able to boil water fast and to bake a pizza. The man wrote: *'This is my parabolic solar cooker. It has a 1.3 meter radius and a 25 to 30 centimeter focal point. My test showed that on a clear day in the middle of January in southern Japan this parabolic solar cooker will boil water in about 5 minutes and cook delicious crunchy pizza in about 7 to 10 minutes. I am very happy with the first tests'*. Great to watch a video report like this!

Ability test

We did an ability test with our staff. It helped them to understand if they were doing the right things. For example, if you do not like to organize, it can be very frustrating when you have to be a manager, while someone else with the ability can do it with great pleasure. The test was not an extensive test with hundreds of questions. We used only 31 selected questions. It was very nice to see the outcome. Most of our staff were confirmed in what they were doing. Now they can be honest about their abilities and do not have to feel guilty when they say 'no'.



Finally

- Thanh our accountant came back from Hanoi. He presented our work at a GreenID conference with approximately 400 participants.
- Vu came back to work with us after six weeks absence. He helped his father, who grows special plants in preparation for the Vietnamese New Year. Some other workers will return too after the Vietnamese holidays.
- Phuong is our new worker. He was a former construction worker and now works full time for Solar Serve.



Greetings,
Solar Serve team

Called to Serve

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