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Solar Serve News

Dear friends,

Let's start a little bit different. A middle-aged man came to visit us. In the Vietnamese war he lost his arm during a bomb explosion. It was hard for him to grow up especially when he was young and full of energy. He finally left Vietnam and ended up in Europe. After many years he was able to forgive and wanted to visit his country again. He had to face the wounds of the past but was very courageous and very serious in showing forgiveness. He even offered to help us a few days with one of our designs. It was great to see him working at our center with a passion to help. Very touching!



Moving forward

We also felt a lot of passion from you when we helped many low-income families with your sponsored cookers. We started in Kon Tum, a province which lies at the central highlands, home of several minorities like Ba Na, Brau, Gie Triêng, Jarai, Ro Mam and Xo Dang. The reception was warm and the people were very happy with your stoves and parabolic cookers. It became so successful that one of the leaders came to our center and ordered 100 more clean cookstoves for poor families with money he had raised by himself. After the mountains we moved to a leper colony and provided a number of clean cookstoves and parabolic cookers sponsored by you. We took pictures and sent them to the sponsors!



Three days, three villages and one district

Finally we had a three-day event in three villages surrounding Hoi An city. We worked together with the local authorities and were able to provide 100 families with one parabola each (for cooking when there is sunshine) together with a clean cookstove (cooking during other weather conditions). A great combination. During the introduction, our staff worked hard by putting the four parts of the parabolic cookers together and they were also helping with the cooking demonstrations and the distribution. They were very happy when the cookers were well received. It was very touching when a handicapped man stood up in a meeting and said that he had never seen such a valuable help from the outside. Most of the cookers were sponsored by a recycling shop in Holland. For a [videoclip](#) please visit our Youtube channel. Here are some pictures too:





Weather, place, economy and motivation

In the year 2007 we provided many parabolic cookers for families at a poor village near Marble Mountains. It was reported in many newspapers because the cookers were used very well. Sadly after a few years the local authorities decided to build a new road through the village, so people had to move and some of them stopped using their parabolic cooker. Sometimes their new houses had no space for cooking and often they were compensated so well that they could afford gas or electricity, instead of using free solar energy. The success of our projects is so depending on the weather, the place, the economy and the motivations of the people. We have to face this every time and it needs perseverance to make it to work. The parabolic cooker is a great cooking tool and used all over the world. Even at our center we have been using it for years and if the sky becomes cloudy our new clean cookstove is a great alternative.



Getting up early

A few years ago Quan became one of our specialized workers for a short time when we installed many solar panels on the rooftop of a school. Two months ago we received a wedding invitation. Attending his wedding dinner was not a problem for most of us, but to join his wedding ceremony at a church at five o'clock in the morning was another story. Each country or people group has different custom and traditions. In Danang, the ceremony took place during one of the early church services. It was very interesting when he arrived on his own motorbike with his beautiful bride sitting behind him in her white wedding dress. The ceremony was part of the service, so it was very short, but it was a blessing when these two young people gave their vows to each other in front of a church. It was a big day for them!

Sleeping spray

Thang has been working with us for several years. He lives with his parents in a small house close to our center. Recently they became an agency for selling prepaid phone cards. They all sleep in the same room and even the dog sleeps with them. When they woke up one morning, they discovered that thieves had been in their home. They used spray to keep them and the dog sleeping. The family lost a lot of personal items and prepaid cards. The police were called to investigate the theft, but till now without results. Our worker Thang and his family have been processing this loss well. It keeps us alert that we need to be aware at our center too and always need protection.

Go with the flow

It is not always easy to keep workers at a company when they are searching for better salaries. To have a commitment or being happy at their job is sometimes less important. This is life in Vietnam and we have to live with it (for now). Contracts are easily broken and suddenly many companies lose workers. This year we also have seen people coming and going. When we trained them, they suddenly left. At the moment Tai (22 yrs - photo) a young man with hearing loss from Quang Ngai joined us. Much to our surprise he is the son of man who was a former schoolmate of our director. When we were building our new storehouse, Oanh, the brother of Thang offered to work for us temporarily. We are still waiting for the return of mister Hai, while other workers left us permanently. We were happy when Tuan came back after being absent for a while. So we are still learning to adapt to these circumstances and 'to go with the flow'.



Frustrations

It's not always easy to live in a foreign country. This is for everyone who is staying abroad. Sometimes we meet foreigners in Vietnam who are not happy. Often it is a matter of willingness to adapt to a new culture with new behavior codes and habits. They often begin with lots of energy, teaching the locals how they should change. But they will recognize soon that their ideas and behaviors are often contrary to the local thinking. Instead of having a humble attitude of serving and being a guest, it becomes a tidal wave of misunderstandings and ends up in frustration. It is good to be teachable and adopt the good things first. If this is not possible, we should learn to forgive and be patient. For everything there is a time!



Being stopped

Oanh is our part-time worker. We asked him to help us with the construction of the roof, windows and gate of our new storehouse. He was able to set time aside for us. He worked very precisely. Heavy steel bars and pipes were ordered and very soon they were fixed at the foundation of storehouse. Everything went well till two government officials visited us. They told us that we needed permission for building a storehouse like this. A new law was just implemented. We (and many other people) did not know this. First they wanted to fine us, but when we agreed to stop building and that we were willing to apply for a permit, they dropped the charge. It

took us one month to get this permit, but now we are working hard to finish the rooftop. (Photo: Our new storehouse - 8.2m x 21.5m - partly seen from our center)

Practical steps

We can take practical steps when we face difficulties. The son of one of our staff had some relationship problems with his teacher. Instead of cursing her, he decided to bless her daily. He did this for several months. During his exams this teacher was also present. She walked down the hallway and suddenly she found 10,000 VN dong. She asked everyone, but no one claimed to be the owner. Finally, without any reason, she walked straight to the son of our staff and gave him the bill. What a surprise that she had picked him out of all other students. A great result after he took practical steps to bless her daily. Surely a good example to follow!



Awareness and training



The last few years we have been helping local authorities to understand the purpose of social enterprises. While in other countries social enterprises have been supported by their governments, in Vietnam it is still at a beginning stage and a lot of misunderstandings need to be solved. In one of the last meetings in Danang, our director was able to give an account of his own experiences as a social entrepreneur. Later that month around 30 people who were involved in social enterprises were trained in coaching and 7 of them flew a few days later to Hanoi to be equipped in training family businesses. Great to see the awareness and the desire to be trained!

Latest news

On Wednesday October 1st our director Nguyen Tan Bich received the Energy Globe Award 2014 for Vietnam from Mr. Stephan Spazier. Attache Commercial of the Austria Embassy in Thailand during the Austria – Vietnam Business forum in Ho Chi Minh city. With more than 160 participating countries and over 1000 project submissions annually the Energy Globe Award is today's most prestigious environmental prize worldwide. It distinguishes projects regionally, nationally and globally that safeguard resources such as energy or develop renewable or emission-free sources.



Next time more news about our Moringa tree project (height: 3.5m already), a solar still project, visitors and valuable help from support groups. You have to wait three months more. If you still want to help a family please visit our website, but for now thanks for your love and interest,

Greetings,
Solar Serve team

Called to Serve

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