

# Solar Serve News

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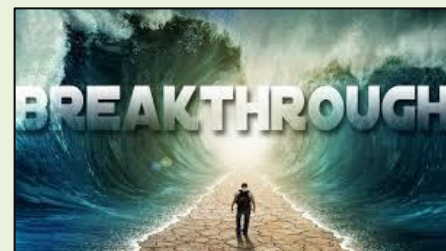


Charity  
Social Enterprise  
Training



## Dear friends,

First of all, greetings from Danang. We wish you a wonderful year where impossible things will be possible. We as Solar Serve have seen a breakthrough in the last few months, and we'd love to see that happen with you too. We encourage you to use your ability to create new things and don't give up if it is not working yet. Many years ago we started with making our solar box cookers and later on the parabolic cookers. It has been a process of learning and taking right decisions, but also being able to give up when something was not working well. It brought us to where we are now. Let us give you the latest update and see for yourself the change we went through.



## A need for change

It is good to help people with things that will benefit their lives and health. Therefore our solar equipment is wonderful to use when there is a lot of sunshine, but cannot be used during rainy season. The last few months, for example, we had the heaviest outpour of rain in the history of Danang. Streets were flooding from 0.5 m to 1.2 m. So, we were pushed for alternatives, although we are still blessed with our solar equipment. When our director Bich joined a Solar Cooker workshop in Nepal, they showed him several clean cookstoves. He became very interested, but it took him several years before he built his own model. It was a great task and after small changes it was officially recognized. After that we as Solar Serve needed to change



too if we wanted to develop. The challenge came three months ago, just after the release of our last newsletter.

## Great workers

A contract was signed between Solar Serve and KCM to make 30,000 improved cookstoves for poor areas in the northern regions of Vietnam. Our task was to manufacture them in a reasonable time. Helpful machines were bought and besides our Vietnamese workers new ones were employed. The first three workers came from the mountains, later five other minority workers joined too but they left soon. In return seven others showed up, followed by four and after two left we have now a total of 12 new minority workers and four Vietnamese. Now we are capable to produce around 150 cookstoves a day. It is wonderful to hear the sound of machines, tools, young voices and sometimes joyful singing in our factory. [The first load of cookstoves](#) were sent by ship at the end of November and the second container was fully-loaded just before Christmas. The third container will be loaded soon. All in a good spirit and well received in the north.



## Research first

We are very blessed to serve others with our stoves. It changed the way we are working. Many years we have been diligently searching to get something off the ground. Because our solar products needed special attention and could only be used in special weather conditions, there was not always a good solid ground for it. We know it was easy to become discouraged, but we kept on going and have been always happy to help the poor for their daily needs. A couple from the North heard about our project and came to our factory. They wanted to consider making the cookstoves available for people who can afford to buy them. It's a good idea but we advised them to research first the possibilities and needs, before they invest their time and money. We know that in Cambodia an agency

is very successful in selling them but it needs a special approach.

## A wonderful party

In our next newsletter we can tell you more about our change, but for now we enjoy each moment and were able to do some nice things for our workers. It was a challenge for Tho, the wife of our director to cook daily for so many workers. Suddenly she had to multiply her food supplies, but one of the workers is helping her to cook in the morning. At lunch time we all (20 total) eat together and sometimes guests are joining us. During the Christmas season Bich, our director wanted to bless all our workers with a nice shirt and a Christmas party at one of the shopping malls in Danang. We noticed that they loved chicken so we found a good place to eat together. For most of the minority workers it was the first time that they ate in a fast-food restaurant. We wanted to make an exception in eating something that they had never eaten before. They loved it and after that we all took a wonderful Christmas break. Amazingly, after several days they all came back to work again.



## Outburst of happiness

In our last letter we told you about the park they were making in front of our center. Instead of grass they paved most of the area with tiles. It is not finished yet but after we finish our work, you will find our workers doing exercises and playing football on a finished part. Maybe we can form our own Solar Serve team. Vietnamese people love football and last month the national team became champions during the AFF Suzuki Cup 2018. It caused an outburst of happiness in the country and the streets were filled with cheering supporters. It was the second time in history that Vietnam became number one. Vietnam became not only an economic tiger the last few years, but also a football tiger. Something to be aware of!

## Wrong material delivered.

One of our new machines was constantly broken. The round plates had to be pressed into lids. We found out that the company who provided us the stainless sheets had been tricking us. If they had a shortage of a certain thickness, the workers added thicker sheets between the other good ones, pretending they were all of the same thickness. By pressing the mold into a thick sheet, it was hard to get the lid out of the mold with the machine. Finally it damaged the strength of the machine and it stopped working. Now we are weighing the sheets one by one but we also warned the director of the company. Even after he promised to keep an eye on his workers, we are still checking it up by ourselves. This is the way you have to do this with many other things too.



## Visitors from Holland

We were blessed with four visitors from Holland. For many years they have been standing behind our work and now they wanted to see personally what we were doing. One of our staff took them on a tour through the northern part of Vietnam and finally they came for a week to Danang. They were very happy when they visited our center, because this was the main goal of their trip. They were welcomed and given a tour and noticed that everything was in order and maintained clean. They asked many questions and showed interest in what we were doing and were amazed with our new challenge. After joining us for lunch they left, but came back after a few days. They had more fellowship with our workers and had a wonderful barbecue on the roof of our new building. Their visit to our center was certainly a highlight and we all enjoyed each other.

## Presentations for support



One of the four visitors is a good photographer and often spends hours in the woods taking pictures of birds. The result is very beautiful bird pictures that teach us the ways of nature. His wife puts everything together and finds backgrounds and behaviors of the birds. It takes some time, but finally she made a PowerPoint presentation with practical applications of what we can learn from the birds. Now she travels around to show her presentation to clubs and communities, in order to make people aware of another world they sometimes forgot. We often get so occupied with the business of life, that we forget the beauty of nature. She also wants to help us, so when she received any financial support during her presentations, she donates it to our work. We are so blessed with her generosity and her love to bring people back to basics of nature.



**Delicious ‘stroopwafels’**

There are other people who find creative ways to show their support for our work. A group of volunteers found a company who sells the famous and delicious Dutch syrup waffles (stroopwafels). They are not only loved by the local people but also worldwide. Even an American airline used them as a gift during their flights. The waffles company gave them a special discount if they bought them in large quantities. So they are going around with lists to individuals, clubs, organizations, churches, communities and asked them to make an order. A few weeks later they gather the lists and buy the waffles from the company. After that all the volunteers come together for distributing the hundreds of waffles to individuals and clubs and organizations. The profit will be donated for our work. What a great initiative!

**FBT conference in May**

The end of last year we concluded four FBT seminars successfully in Nha Trang, Quang Nam, Hanoi and in a drug rehabilitation center outside Ha Noi. It has changed people’s lives and there are already reports of several breakthroughs in small businesses. We want to share with you two stories below. We also want you to know that a Developing Family Businesses Conference is in the making and will be held in Danang on May 1<sup>st</sup> for all the FBT participants of the last three years. We will have as guest speaker the well-known business consultant Mario Brühlmann. This will be a great opportunity to hear how their businesses have been changed. It will be a great encouragement and stimulation for others who are still searching for what is best.



**A dream came true**

Nhu Quynh was raised by her father in a poor family. Her mother passed away when she was very young. She loved to take photos and had a dream to be a photographer one day. She started a business, but had no success. She wanted to give up, but when she joined our FBT seminars she understood that marketing was very important and applied it to her business. This became the big change in her business. More customers came to her shop and asked her to take wedding pictures and also during government events. Now she can even employ more workers in her business. She is very happy that her dream finally came true.

**Begin Small and Grow**

Mr.Giang (photo: center) studied more than three years in Singapore, so he spoke English very well. He returned to Vietnam and lived with his wife and children in his hometown Nha Trang. At first it was very difficult to find a job for him and his wife. After attending our seminars they learned to observe the needs of their area. Mr.Giang began to understand that there were many foreigners living around his place who needed to communicate with the local people. So, Giang and his wife started Vietnamese language classes for foreigners. After a few months many customers joined their classes to study Vietnamese. He started first in a coffee shop, but now they have opened a full language center.



**Finally,**

It was a long letter again. We hope you did not mind. There are so many things happening. Please stand with us again, especially with our workers when they are making so many cleanstoves this time, but also for the dreams we still want to accomplish. It is good to know that for everything is a time.

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)