

Solar Serve News

April / May / June 2019 No.58



Charity
Social Enterprise
Training



Dear friends,

If you have visited our Solar Serve center recently, maybe 'full house' came to your mind. It is not that we are fully occupied with staff or workers, but our place is filled with thousands of cooking stoves. We are recently not able to send new containers full of cooking stoves to the north. The agency that is responsible to distribute them to the poor has been stopped by the authorities. The reason is unclear but we are hopeful that it will be resolved soon. We are still making new stoves, although our place is now packed (full house) waiting to be sent to the north. Please stand with us that bureaucracy will not hinder us from helping the poor in the north.



Packed with stoves

The last container with thousands of cooking stoves was sent to the north almost two and half months ago. It took our staff and workers several hours to fill the container which was parked in front of our center. It was supposed to rain that day according to weather forecasts, but they were wrong. We needed dry weather so that the carton boxes we packed our stoves in would not be wet and possibly destroyed during the transport. Because Danang has a large port, it is easy to send these containers by sea. As we told you, now we are waiting for permission to send more containers.

New cutting machine

In the meantime this delay gives us more time to accomplish our task. In five months' time we accomplished 20.000 stoves already. Our workers have been working very hard, but sometimes we are tricked by companies who do not deliver the right material (as we told you in our last letter) They told us that this would not happen again, so we gave them some grace to change their services. After a while it happened again and now we are forced to buy our own machines. We needed a good cutting machine. We found a company who needed to buy a heavier cutting machine for their products, and offered us to sell their much lighter cutting machine which is very suitable for our cookstoves. It is a good branch from Japan and it is still in very good condition. We are very happy with it.



A new vehicle

Another requirement was the need of a vehicle. Several years ago we sold our truck, because it became very difficult to pass the requirements of the government. Today we are expanding our work, spreading FBT courses all over the country and want to serve our guests properly. So, we have been searching for a proper vehicle and found a seven seater, the same brand as we have been looking for 15 years ago, but at that time it was more important for us to have a truck. Now we can easily ask another company to transport our material, so that we avoid difficulties with checkup truck requirements. Our new vehicle will

not been used for transporting material, but only for the needs we already explained.

Preparations in full swing

In our last letter we mentioned about the FBT conference on May 1st. The preparations are already in full swing. Invitations were sent and we expect around 200 participants from all over Vietnam. The program has been set and will be filled with testimonies of successful small family business owners, who have participated in the FBT course in the last five years. It will be exciting to hear their reports but also the teaching of Mario Brühlman, the consultant from Switzerland, who is the brain of this FBT course. Mister Bich and Phi adjusted it into a Vietnamese setting and have been successfully teaching it for the last five years throughout Vietnam. It will be a one day event, but followed up with a day of training for some leaders.



A great idea

The park opposite of our center is now open for the public. It is a nice place for children to play, young people to come together and also a place for doing exercises. Sadly there is not much space for playing football, which is a favorite sport of our workers. But they came up with a great idea to use a piece of land beside our center. This land belongs to several people who are not selling it, in order to boost up the price. Our workers decided to change it like a football field. They worked hard one evening to remove the weeds and many stones. Only sandy soil remained, because our place is near the sea and built on dunes. Our director bought a good ball and you can see them playing football almost every night. It is great to see young people using their energy. It is not a problem for the owners till they decide to build something on it. This is a great solution.



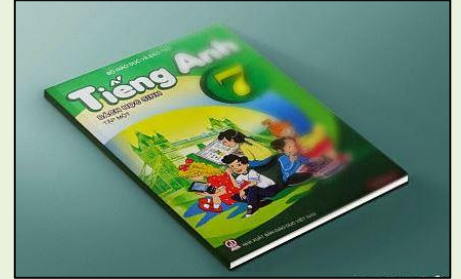
An international excursion

Last month we welcomed 35 students from an American University who are studying topics like the environment and other green topics. Not all of them came from America, so it became an international visit. They arrived in a large bus and our director took them upstairs for an introduction and later for a tour. They stayed for about one hour and it was organized by a government agency in Danang. They took lots of pictures and were very interested. Even though we are not making high technical products, but the simplicity was for them sometimes an eye opener. Especially when we showed them the parabolic cooker and the effect of burning paper in a few seconds, and also our clean

cooker which can save many lives. We are very open for more excursions like this.

Surprise finding

The children of our director came running into our office. They didn't care about the meeting because they found a picture of their father and one of our staff in an official text book. We have been on TV and in many newspapers during the past years, but this was very special. This textbook is used in all schools in Vietnam for grade 7 (for 12-13 year olds) to learn English. These schools had not come to this chapter yet, so the son of our director had not studied and seen it. But when his sister was trying to help him with his English, she found it by accident. We have not been in an official government-published lesson book yet, so we were very happy that we are now able to reach young pupils in schools throughout Vietnam with our green ideas.



Teaching in a poor province

The last few months we have been teaching FBT courses in several places throughout Vietnam. For example, we were invited to a poor province nearly 500 km north of Danang. The teachers had to travel with a sleepingbus which lasted about 12 hours. The people were very poor and sometimes uneducated. It was quite a challenge to teach them the basic principles of a family business. They were willing to change and it was great to give them hands and feet to come out of their poverty mentality. Later we moved to a place nearly 750 km south of Danang to teach another course. Other places are considering it, but holding back



because they do not understand the impact it has on their communities.

Finally,

Keep in touch with us and thank you for standing with us.

Greetings,

Solar Serve team



Called to Serve

More information:

www.vietnamsolarserve.org/ or write to: solarserve@yahoo.com