

Solar Serve News



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Charity
Social Enterprise
Training



Dear friends,

Yes you are right, we skipped one newsletter. One of our staff, who is in charge of putting this letter together, was absent for three months. But here we are again and would like to share with you the latest developments and some interesting stories. If you have time please join us in our Solar Serve world.

Strong winds, heavy rainfall and floods

Typhoon Damrey became the second deadliest typhoon in 2017. It intensified its strength and reached its peak as a category 2. It was the strongest typhoon to strike South-Central Vietnam since 2001. Besides strong winds and heavy rainfall it resulted in severe flooding. 17,000 people were evacuated and 142 people were killed during the flood and landslides. Many houses were destroyed or heavily damaged. Typhoon Damrey made landfall a few days before the 2017 APEC Summit was held in Danang. A major clean-up was necessary in order to welcome all the major world leaders like U.S. President Donald Trump, Chinese president Xi Jinping and Russian president Vladimir Putin. Here are some pictures and a video clip. ([click](#))



Getting involved as hands or feet



We received a donation from Swiss Create, the business development branch of a Swiss Consulting Group. The purpose was to make 600 clean stoves and 50 solar lamps for the victims of typhoon Damrey and also for the victims of a severe flood. We already had 1000 stoves in our store, so we were able to help the first typhoon victims immediately in the province of Quang Ngai.

It was just the beginning of helping many others in the provinces of Quang Nam, Binh Dinh and Lam Dong, and even in the Mekong Delta. For us it was so great when Swiss Create got involved, so that we were able to help immediately. May this be an inspiration for you when hands and feet are coming together. Please contact us: bichsolarserve@gmail.com



Extending our borders



In our last letter we wrote about the two visitors from Cambodia. They liked our clean stoves and after we supplied them with 200 stoves we got a new order of 1000 stoves. So at the end of last year we were not only busy in supplying the stoves for the flood victims in Vietnam, but also the additional order from Cambodia. It was hard work but we were able to supply all the new stainless steel clean stoves in time. We were also pleased that all of our workers had a real good attitude to get the job done.



Teaching and practical training

Last year 300 of our clean stoves were provided in Laos and someone introduced the stoves to a hill tribe near the border. Furthermore, a charity organization in Myanmar invited us to teach their staff for making their own clean stoves. They opened a factory and three of our staff flew to Myanmar and did a week-long training. They had nine men and one woman as students and at the end of the week they were all able to make their own stove and received a certificate. Besides Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar we also received a request from Fiji but funds are still needed to be raised.



New machines

Because of the requests for more clean stoves we were not able to cut our material by hand anymore. We decided to buy a new cutting machine and were also forced to buy a pressing machine. We found out that the company who pressed the covers for the clean stoves used cheaper material without our permission. When we complained they refused to work with us anymore. After that we got in contact with a retired lathe machinist who had made many machines in the past. He was willing to help us in making two pressing machines for different sizes, so that we can press the clean stove covers by ourselves. It is worth the investment. We also got involved with an environmentalist who asked us to help him in building a recycling machine for plastic in order to help the local people. The machine is still being developed (photo right).



Lively Aussies in Danang

During those busy months we had an international team of young people from Wollongong, Australia visiting us. They stayed in Danang for eight weeks and were able to do a lot of charity work in the city in helping a school of handicapped children. They also provided English classes and played sports with locals. They also came to Solar Serve and helped us in our factory. It was a great service and good relationships were established. It was not only valuable for them but also for us to have some helping hands during a busy time. When they left we all missed them.





A small vertical turbine

In the past we made a small horizontal turbine in front of our center. It worked very well, but we are located near the beach, so high winds and strong typhoons caused the blades to be broken. Now we have tried to make a small vertical turbine made of an oil barrel. We placed it on the roof. Although it turns around (but very irregularly), it produces little energy if we compare it with our small horizontal turbine before. We have heard that one designer was very successful in producing them for many countries, but we are still searching for clues to make it work!

Campaign against coal stoves

In Vietnam there are still people cooking with bricks made of coal. They are producing carbon dioxide that can turn to carbon monoxide, leading to dozens of cases of coal poisoning and even deaths every year. The government wants to reduce the use of those bricks by 70 per cent this year and ban them entirely by 2020, especially in the North. Today more and more people are willing to use gas stoves. SNV has announced that they will allow residents to borrow their clean stoves for a trial instead of using their coal brick stoves. They can even buy them with a discount.



Corn cakes for sale

Hoa and Loc grew up in a poor family. They worked hard but never had any success in business. They heard about the FBT seminars in Saigon. They had to travel a long distance, but were eager to learn. Hoa is a good baker and Loc is a good seller. A lot of sweet corn grew outside their village, so during the seminars they were inspired to open a bakery for making corn cakes. The cakes were loved by children and adults. Very soon they had to employ several women in order to meet the demand during the New Year's celebrations. We are so glad that our training had a great impact in their lives and the lives of others.



Overcoming HIV/AIDS

Mr. Chien is a good example of standing up after a hopeless situation and overcoming HIV/AIDS. After he successfully finished our FBT seminar he opened a farm with 300 chickens for selling eggs. We always try to visit the students at least once after the seminars. When we went to visit him just before the New Year, the chickens started to lay their first eggs. He and his wife were very surprised and happy because they could sell the eggs for a good price. They also kept on dreaming and want to raise 2000 chickens more this year. It was so encouraging to see a student overcoming his problems.

A good example

People are not hopeless cases and we have been holding FBT seminars in one of the rehabilitation centers in the north. Bien and Loi were two of the 65 HIV patients in their community. They have been a great example of standing strong even in the midst of difficulties. During the seminars they decided to open a pigeon farm. They were very successful, but when we visited them we noticed they also started to grow mushrooms. Now they supply the nearby restaurants with their products. They have increased the quality and also focused on the needs of their customers. This is a very good example.



Finally

We want to finish this letter with a positive note. After the storm last year many branches were cut off from the trees. We decided (and not only us) to collect the branches and piled them up in front of our center. Now we have free fuel for our clean stoves and are using it daily for cooking our food. Very practical for what we stand for.

We hope you enjoyed our letter.

Greetings, Solar Serve team

Called to Serve

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