

Solar Serve News



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Charity
Social Enterprise
Training



Dear friends,

Thousands of cooking stoves were piled up in our center. What a relief when we received the news that the people in the north got permission to hand out the stoves in rural areas. Immediately we were able to ship several containers full with cooking stoves to Haiphong. We were also happy that the main sponsor from Korea did not hold back after this delay and helped us financially so we were able to pay our workers, buy the right material and purchase new equipment. It worked out very well. What a blessing!



Showing thankfulness

A few weeks ago we received a call from someone in Hoa Binh, a province 80 km south of Hanoi. Most of the 30,000 cooking stoves were distributed to the poor population in this area (picture Hoa Binh). He introduced himself as a spokesman of the people, to thank us for the great cooking stoves that people are now using. They are very happy with it. They no longer have to use their primitive cooking stoves. These stoves have been damaging their health. It was so encouraging for us to know that this project helped many poor people.

What's next?

The end of this project comes closer. Last week we shipped the 8th container to Haiphong (750 km) and it will be transported on the road to Hoa Binh. Now we are working hard for the last shift, then a total of 9 containers have been sent. We do not yet know what will happen next. This whole experience of making these stoves in a short time was great. It has given us good insight about what we can handle. We believe that this cooking stove is a good product for people in rural areas. It also helped that the stoves are officially approved and certified by SNV.



How did it all start?



A Korean company was looking for a project in order to receive credits from their government if they helped people in another country with green products. A CEO of a company in Hanoi worked as a mediator and after that everything was settled very fast. We had to adjust our equipment and capacity, but we were able to accomplish their request. Maybe it gives you a suggestion to do the same. We are willing to make more of these green stoves. This is our goal, but it needs courage from your side. We are ready for it. Please contact our director Mr.Bich (pronunciation: Bic) if you need any information: Mr. Bich Tan Nguyen, Mb: +84 919 511 552 Email: bichsolarserve@gmail.com

How does it work?

We manufacture the cooking stoves at our center in Danang. After three to four weeks we are able to ship a full container with more than 3000 cooking stoves to your place. It is recommended that you should work together with the local women's union at your place to distribute the stoves. The organization in the north has been giving away our stoves for free. This is up to each organization. We are responsible to make the stoves and transport them to the place for distribution. Here are some pictures sent to us how the people receive their stoves in the north:





Changing our name

We have been using Solar Serve as our name for more than 19 years. But we often have to explain that our cooking stoves do not work on solar energy as our name suggests. We are still making green products but at the moment not using solar energy as our main source. To keep our green vision wide open we need to change our name in order not to limit ourselves. We came up with a suitable name, but it still needs to be officially approved. Hopefully in our next letter we can tell you our new name and logo. After that we will start changing our website, logo, papers and folders, etc.



We are learning

Small investments mean a lot for us, like purchasing our new cutting machine. We made a roof outside our center, so our cutting-material is protected from bad weather. We move the heavy rolls with a tripod crane into a rotator. Several workers are needed to cut the material. One day we found out that we were cutting the wrong material for a part that needed 100% free of iron. It was easy to check up by a magnet, but somehow we assumed that we used the right material. So we are still learning from our mistakes, but instead of looking backwards we decided to move on in order to accomplish our goal.

A wonderful Conference

During the 5th anniversary of FBT we organized a business developing conference in Danang. More than 200 people showed up. It was a time to connect, share experiences, and learn new things. Consultant Mario Brühlmann from Switzerland gave us some new ideas and many stories were shared by locals. They shared their successes but also their failures. The next day a workshop was organized to equip twenty mentors and trainers. We received positive feedback from people who attended the conference or workshop. We are so glad for the impact of this course around the whole country. Here are some pictures:



More than 200 participants



Consultant Mario



Mr. Phi, Mr. Mario and Mr. Bich



Beekeeper selling honey



Raising pigeons



Success with peanut oil



Selling coffee machines



Running a new restaurant



Success in mentoring mentors



Lunch at the hotel



Eating and networking



Mouth advertisement is a key

One leader in the Mekong Delta, recommended our course to others and 70 people showed up. We did not expect this and we ran out of manuals. Another leader was very hesitant, but finally allowed us to teach around 10 people in his area. At the end of the day participants became so excited that the following day 25 people showed up. The leader noticed the excitement and apologized for holding back. We hope through our course we can create trust in what we are doing. Last month we were invited to a business conference in Danang and we could help some people by giving them simple but important solutions.

Still keeping contact

Two former workers (foto: 2009) came to visit us. Nui moved to Dubai when he left Solar Serve. Now he is back and wants to set up his own company. Loc, the other worker got married and is trying to find his future in collecting honey from the forest. There are many people doing this, so his question was how he could do better. Another former worker came into trouble and when we visited him he was on the edge of giving up physically. It was sad because a number of years ago he was a bright man with a good future. We should not forget these workers who have been serving us in the past.



Foreign support

We are not going around for support, but there are some individuals in other countries who have dedicated their lives in helping us here in Vietnam. Their goal is to make our work known to others. They show our equipment and also attend many flea markets in order to sell second-hand goods. We are very surprised that after a whole day of hard working in the rain or cold weather their profit is less than a spontaneous given donation. We have deep respect for those individuals who are willing to sacrifice their time, even when the result is less than the effort.



Finally,

That was all for now. Keep in touch with us and again thank you for standing with us.

Greetings,

Solar Serve team



Called to Serve

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