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Solar Serve News

Dear friends,

How are you? You had a good summer break? Sorry, but we want to keep this introduction short because there are lots of things to tell you. Take a cup of coffee or tea and come into the world of Solar Serve Vietnam. Enjoy it!

Invitation

We received an invitation from SCI to attend the International Solar Cookers Conference in Spain. We, Bich (director) and Hans (advisor), decided to register. As a Vietnamese citizen Bich had to go through lots of paperwork before he finally got his visa and other required documents. We traveled for more than two and a half days from Quang Ngai, Danang, Hanoi, Bangkok, Amsterdam and Malaga, before we finally arrived in Granada.



Presentations

We prepared several power point presentations in case we had to show our project to the public. Everything was well stored in the laptop and on cd's. Our last transport was the local bus in Granada. After a few stops the bus became crowded. Although we kept our eyes on the bags, we think that a thief took the opportunity to steal our laptop. The owner of our guesthouse called several times the police but all in vain. We also lost our airplane tickets but Bich had a copy of the flights, which saved us a lot of trouble in calling the airlines.

A creative stand

Although we lost a lot of information, we were still able to have a stand during the conference. We managed with maps, flags, folders, one small size solar cooker and one mini-cooker to create a very simple Solar Serve stand. Enough to share our work, dreams and visions.

200 experts

More than 200 experts in solar cooking, water treatment and food processing from government, business, health, education, mercy ministry, humanitarian and communication sectors participated in the conference. They came from all over the world. It was co-sponsored by Solar Cookers International (SCI) and hosted by staff and volunteers of Terra Foundation from Spain.



Presentations

For three days almost eighty people presented their ten minutes power point presentations. Questions could be asked and in the afternoon we broke up in discussion groups. We discussed strategies how we could develop solar cookers in the future and how we could work better together. During the gatherings two resolutions were drafted and approved. One highlighting the many health benefits and uses of solar cookers, and the other one in urging international policy makers for the participation of solar cooker programs in international environment treaties.

Solar meals

During the breaks the participants showed their solar cooker models and shared new ideas. Every day on the roof of the conference hall solar meals for lunch were cooked by volunteers and on the fourth day all participants cooked with their own solar cookers for the public outside a scientific museum. Many devices were used for cooking, from simple box and panel solar cookers to large parabolic cookers.

Solar technologies

On the fifth day an excursion was organized to Europe's largest center for concentrating solar technologies in Almeria. This trip concluded a successful and very stimulating conference. We took lots of new ideas with us and hope to use them in the very near future.



Raglai minority

In our last newsletter we told you briefly about Phanrang. It was a little bit difficult to get permission but finally we were allowed to help the Raglai minority people. We organized workshops for them and supplied 100 box cookers and 30 parabolics. The environment day (5th June) is always a good opportunity to bring people together. 70 Raglai people cooked with fifty box cookers and twelve parabolic cookers. A lot of fish, beef, vegetables, rice and curry were cooked for many people. After one hour the dishes were already been cooked and served in the meeting room, where local authorities, guests and participants were waiting. After a wonderful time of eating together, the Raglai people received their first solar cookers. They were very thankful and we were pleased to have the opportunity to serve the poor and needy.



Factory

We are still trying to develop the new factory. So far 28 parabolic cookers have been sold, mostly through people who gave donations to help the poor. This is an excellent way for individuals and overseas Vietnamese to help their relatives in Vietnam. If they are willing to pay fifty dollar and a few dollars for transport, we are able to deliver the parabolic cookers to their families, relatives or other needy people in Vietnam. The factory in Tam Ky has officially permission to sell the parabolic cookers. We don't get local people to buy the parabolics. The people in Tam Ky are very interested, but they seem to miss the understanding that it also good for them. Lien, the director of the factory needs wisdom to make it run well. A big challenge if you know that nobody in Solar Serve have the 'business' ability to do this, but we all can learn, you think so?

New ideas

After the conference we had many new ideas for example building new box cookers with more reflectors, very simple tracking mechanism to follow the direction of the sun and new table parabolic cooker, but what do you think about the following ideas?

Briquettes

Fuel briquettes are small, thick, hard, round or square discs or blocks uses as fuel. This biomass energy could be an alternative fuel when people are not able to use their solar cookers due to rain or other weather conditions. We have been making different kind of briquettes, which can be made of sugar cane, rice straw and sawdust, coconut hulls, etc. The raw material is compressed by a simple hand-made machine and dried out in the sun. They can be used as substitute for wood or coal and a source of income for local people by making and selling them. The briquettes will produce less CO₂, which helps halting global warming and preventing deforestation. (Photo: Mr Mai holding the first hand-made briquettes.)



Solar Community Kitchen

Another idea is the community solar cooker, which is designed for cooking inside a kitchen. A large shallow parabolic reflector of approximately 10 square meters reflects sunlight into an opening of a kitchen wall. A small reflector is placed in the wall opening, which reflects the concentrated rays to the bottom of a cooking pot in the kitchen. It has an automatic tracking mechanism to follow the direction of the sun. The focus needs to be set early in the morning. It is possible to cook for 50-60 persons. But more community cookers can be installed for one kitchen in order to cook more food for more people and to produce lots of hot water. (Photo: Community kitchen in India)

More ideas

For the future we are also interested in a solar steam system to cook for more than 1000 people. This design is already used in India. They have installed many parabolic reflectors on roofs of schools, hospitals and other community centers. They produced solar steam by focusing the sun rays on long pipes filled with water. This requires more technical skills and qualified staff. A wonderful system for large communities or institutions.

Dreams

Don't you get excited about all the 'solar' possibilities? Although we are a small group, it will not hold us back to have dreams for the future. We really need more Vietnamese staff who are willing, active and creative in their thinking and work. Please remember us as we 'solar' step forward day by day in the Sun.

Greetings,
Solar Serve Team

Called To Serve

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