Celebrating Diversity

STORIES OF HOPE & RESILIENCE

World Education’s USAID-funded TEAM Laos Project
World Education’s USAID-funded TEAM Project had as its goal the enabling of people with disabilities, especially women and girls, to attain and maintain maximum independence to fully and equally participate in all aspects of life.

Using a comprehensive social approach to improving services and the quality of life for persons with disabilities in Lao PDR, this three-year project collaborated with national and international partners from Government and civil society, mobilizing and supporting them to create positive changes in the outcomes of healthcare-related rehabilitation and social services.

TEAM’s rights-based approach and its social model of disability is founded on respect, dignity and appreciation of diversity. The aim of this book is to celebrate that diversity by showcasing the journeys and the blossoming of some of the diverse persons with disability we have been honored to walk alongside.
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ການສະເຫຼີມສະຫຼອງຄວາມຫຼາກຫຼາຍ

ກໍານສະເຫຼີມສະຫຼອງຄວາມຫວັງແລະການກັບຄືນມາດຳລົງຊີວິດ
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Disability is a part of universal human diversity.

This knowledge motivates us to regard a person with disability not as an object of charity or a burden to be assisted, but as somebody with rights, dignity, somebody that we each respect and aim to empower.

This principle of mutual respect of our differences is key. It goes beyond mere acceptance. It is about respecting and appreciating the differences that make each individual unique, whether these are linked to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, religious or political beliefs, or functional ability. As we begin to understand each other, we can move beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual. And within our common humanity.

(Dis)Ability

The view of impairment and disability represented by the diagnostic-medical model, in which impairment is equated with disability, is not one that World Education endorses. Instead, World Education’s USAID-funded TEAM Project’s approach to working with persons with disabilities follows the social model in which impairment simply references a part of the body that is not functioning optimally. We believe that the heart of the problem is systemic by recognizing that more often the issue is a disabling society than disabled persons themselves.

So, rather than focusing on the impairment, we look to outcomes-based programs. Rather than segregation and exclusion, we work to ensure parents and professionals are trained and relationships are nurtured.

Our approach focuses on four main components: Training, Economic Empowerment, Assistive Technology, and Medical and Physical Rehabilitation. These together have allowed the TEAM project to take a comprehensive social approach to improving services and to have a positive change on the quality of life of persons with disabilities in Lao PDR.

We believe society can evolve. And that diversity should be celebrated.

– Bernard Franck, Technical Director, TEAM Project, World Education Laos
ក່ວາມຮູ້ດັ່ງນີ້ ໄດ້ກະຕຸ້็นໃຫ້ພວກເຮົາເຫັນວ່າຄົນທີ່ມີຄວາມພິການບໍ່ແມ່ນວັດຖຸສິ່ງຂອງທີ່ເຮັດເພື່ອການກຸສົນ ຫຼື ເປັນພາລະທີ່ຕ້ອງໄດ້ໃຫ້ການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອ, ຫຼືບຸກຄົນທີ່ມີສິດທິດ້ານຕ່າງໆ, ຫຼັກການຂອງການເຄົາລົບເຊິ່ງກັນ ແລະ ກັນທາງດ້ານຄວາມແຕກຕ່າງທີ່ໃຫ້ມີລົມກວ່າການຍອມຮັບ. ອັນແມ່ນການເຄົາລົບນັບຖື ແລະ ຮູ້ຄ່າເຖິງຄວາມແຕກຕ່າງທີ່ເປັນເອກະລັກຂອງແຕ່ລະບຸກຄົນ, ບໍ່ວ່າຈະກ່ຽວພັນເຖິງພາສາ, ສົນເຜົ່າ, ການຄວາມສົນໃຈທາງເພດ, ສະຖານະພາບທາງເສດຖະກິດ-ສັງຄົມ, ດານ, ການຕັ້ງເຂົ້າໃຈ, ການຍົກເວັ້ນ, ດານເທິງເຂົ້າໃຈ, ຍົງຄົມທີ່ໃຫ້ຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອ ແລະ ຄວາມສາມາດໃນການໃຊ້ງານ. ໃນຂະນະທີ່ພວກເຮົາເລີ່ມທໍາຄວາມເຂົ້າໃຈເຊິ່ງກັນ ແລະ ກັນ, ພວກເຮົາກໍ່ສາມາດຍອມຮັບແລະເບິ່ງຂ້າມຜ່ານຄວາມແຕກຕ່າງທີ່ໃຫ້ມີລົມກວ່າການຍອມຮັບ. ບໍ່ແມ່ນການເຄົາລົບນັບຖື ແລະ ຮູ້ຄ່າເຖິງຄວາມແຕກຕ່າງທີ່ເປັນເອກະລັກຂອງແຕ່ລະບຸກຄົນ.

ທັດສະນະຂອງຄວາມບົກຜ່ອງ ແລະ ຄົນພິການໂດຍຮູບແບບການບົ່ງມະຕິ-ທາງການແພດ, ທີ່ຄວາມບົກຜ່ອງແມ່ນມີຄວາມທຽບເທົ່າກັບຄົນພິການ, ເຊິ່ງບໍ່ແມ່ນຄວາມເຊື້ອຂອງອົງການເວີລ໌ດເອດຢູເຄຊັນ. ໃນທາງກົງກັນຂ້າມ, ການງານຂອງໂຄງການຂອງອົງການເວີລ໌ດເອດຢູເຄຊັນທີ່ໄດ້ຮັບການສະຫນັບສະຫນູນຈາກອົງການ USAID ຫຼືບັນຊິ່ງຮັບການສະຫນຽກພາບຊີວິດຂອງຄົນພິການຢູ່ໃນສປປ ລາວ. ພວກເຮົາມີຄວາມເຊື່ອໝັ້ນວ່າສັງຄົມສາມາດປ່ຽນແປງໄດ້ເທື່ອລາຍເລັກລະເລັກລະພັກແລະເຫັນໄດ້ເຖິງຄວາມແຕກຕ່າງທີ່ໃຫ້ມີລົມກວ່າການຍອມຮັບ.
Training ການຝຶກອົບຮົມ
TEAM’S TRAINING COMPONENT IS FOCUSED ON THE IMPROVEMENT IN KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ATTITUDE OF REHABILITATION PERSONNEL AND MEDICAL STAFF. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE HANDS THAT COMPASSIONATELY SUPPORT PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ON THEIR JOURNEYS TOWARD GREATER QUALITY OF LIFE ALSO THEMSELVES NEED GUIDANCE.

Saychai’s story

Sign language training was life-changing for Saychali Syphaxay and a significant point on his career path. After 3 months of training in Thailand under the Inclusive Education Center (IEC)-TEAM project, he was assigned to be a teacher at Vientiane Special Education School. He now communicates competently with his students and they speak of him with admiration.

ເລື່ອງຂອງ ທ້າວ. ທ້າວໄດ້ປ່ຽນແປງຊີວິດຂອງລາວ. ທ້າວໄດ້ຮັບການແຕ່ງຕັ້ງໃຫ້ເປັນຄູສອນ ຢູ່ທີ່ໂຮງຮຽນການສຶກສາພິເສດນະຄອນຫຼວງວຽງຈັນ. ທ້າວໄດ້ສາມາດສື່ສານກັບນັກຮຽນຂອງລາວໄດ້ເປັນຄູສອນ.}

KARINA PONT, A CONSULTANT FOR HI, OVERSEES THE STAFF FROM THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CLINIC AND CMR IN SIMULATING FINE MOTOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT EXERCISES (PHOTO: SAMANTHA PIKE/WEI)

 реализаций и помощи в обучении речи используются в различных областях. Например, в области образования человек с нарушением слуха может обучиться речи при помощи специальной методики, которая включает в себя обучение грамматике, фонетике и звукопроизношении. Также существуют программы, направленные на обучение речи в социальной сфере, где речь является основным инструментом коммуникации. В этих программах участвуют специалисты по речи, психологи и педагоги, которые работают вместе, чтобы обеспечить эффективное обучение речи. Также существуют программы, которые направлены на обучение речи в области здравоохранения, где речь используется как инструмент лечения и реабилитации. В таких программах участвуют специалисты по речи, психологи и врачи, которые работают вместе, чтобы обеспечить эффективное обучение речи в области здравоохранения.

Карина Понт, консультант для HI, руководит персоналом из Центра по развитию раннего детства и CMR в имитации упражнений по развитию мелкой моторики (фото: Саманта Пик/WEI)
Jovue's story

Dr. Jovue Yianouvong, from the Luang Prabang Provincial Hospital, was trained on the fundamentals of Rehabilitation Medicine for a month and participated in several workshops and 2 study tours in Thailand as part of the FMT-TEAM project. In his journey to develop himself as a future rehabilitation professional, he has been mentored and supported by Associate Professor Dr. Bouathep Phoumindr, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Medical Technology (FMT) in the University of Health Sciences.

As the only qualified doctor specializing in Rehabilitation Medicine in Lao PDR, Dr. Bouathep

is passionate about paving the way for the next generation of doctors in Rehabilitation Medicine. She believes their success is essential to meeting the growing rehabilitation needs in the country.

Dr. Jovue sees those needs every day. In his work, he aids persons who are ill or have had a physical trauma, such as strokes, some of whom are bedridden and many of whom are very poor. He trains them and their family members on how to stretch and strengthen their muscles with daily routines to improve their overall health and chances of recovery.

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ASSOC. PROF. DR. BOUATHEP ADVISES DR. JOVUE YIANOUVONG FROM THE LUANG PRABANG PROVINCIAL HOSPITAL (PHOTO: SARA ENGELHARD/WEI)

Sengdueane Phommy is a graduate of FMT with a Physical Therapy degree but was working as a masseur for tourists in Luang Prabang until the Lao Friends Hospital for Children (LFHC) hired him as a physical therapist for children. Since then he has been involved in the compassionate rehabilitation care of many inspiring cases at the hospital.

Before the training, I had very limited knowledge about rehabilitation medicine and its practice. I used to think physical therapy and rehabilitation were the same thing, but the training changed my perspective. It helped me realize physical therapy is just one component of rehabilitation. My duty is now to share this in my hospital team—Dr. Jorvue Yianouvong.

ASSOC. PROF. DR. BOUATHEP ADVISES DR. JOVUE YIANOUVONG FROM THE LUANG PRABANG PROVINCIAL HOSPITAL (PHOTO: SARA ENGELHARD/WEI)
Lah, as he is known, has gradually taken on more responsibility and developed his skills and confidence working side by side with mentor Janice Lo, a Canadian physical therapist volunteer. In addition, he spent 2 months in Thailand for Occupational Therapy (OT) training and completed a 3-day course on Hand Splint Fabrication in Vientiane under the Center for Medical Rehabilitation (CMR)-TEAM project.

In the future, Lah hopes to continue to develop his skills and gain experience from more training and will continue doing what he loves: being a physical therapist.

I want to help Lao people, especially children in Luang Prabang who are in need and suffer from their health issues, to have a better quality of life.
- Sengdeuane Phommy

ເລື່ອງຂອງ ແສງເດືອນ ພົມມີ (ຫຼ້າ) ໄດ້ຈົບການສຶກສາດ້ານກາຍຍະພາບ ເປັນການຈົບການກໍາລຸງຄ່າຍ ແລະ ທ່າຍຕ້ອງການກໍາລຸງຄ່າຍ ເຊິ່ງໄດ້ເຮັດວຽກເປັນໝໍນວດ ໃຫ້ອົງການເຮັດແບ່ງເຄື່ອງຄໍ້າຊຸຂໍ້ມືຢູ່ໃນໄລຍະການຝຶກອົບຮົມທີ່ຈັດໂດຍ CMR ຂອງການຕັ້ງແຕ່ນັ້ນມາລາວມາເປັນນັກກາຍະພາບບໍາບັດສໍາລັບເດັກນ້ອຍ. ນອກຈາກນັ້ນ, ລາວໄດ້ໃຊ້ເວລາ ສອງເດືອນໃນປະເທດໄທເພື່ອເຂົ້າຮ່ວມຝຶກອົບຮົມດ້ານກິດຈະກໍາບໍາບັດ (OT) ແລະ ເຮັດໃຫ້ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າແລະສາມັດຊື່ຄວາມຮັບຜິດຊອບທີ່ໄດ້ສ້າງແຮງບັນດານໃຈຂອງລາວຂອງນີ້. ໃນອະນາຄົດ, ຫຼ້າ ຫວັງວ່າຈະສືບຕໍ່ພັດທະນາທັກສະຂອງຕົນເອງ ແລະ ເພີ່ມປະສົບການຈາກການຝຶກອົບຮົມໃຫ້ຫຼາຍຂຶ້ນ ແລະຈະສືບຕໍ່ເຮັດໃນສິ່ງທີ່ລາວຮັກຄື: ການເປັນນັກກາຍະພາບບໍາບັດ.
Helping people find their voice

After a month of speech therapy training in Thailand as part of the CMR-TEAM project, Nurse Vieng Xaiyasin has been applying her new skills and knowledge in her work.

Recently, after Catholic Relief Services (CRS), also a TEAM sub-recipient, enabled 8 people to undergo cleft palate surgery in Vientiane, she used her knowledge and skills and some of the materials she had designed after the training to help the CRS patients improve their speech and went the extra mile to help even when the patients returned home.

Nurse Vieng has received refresher training and follow-up monitoring by the lecturers from Thailand, and continues to use them as sources of inspiration and knowledge when she has a difficult case or needs some advice and support.

Two years after graduating, Vientiane-based Wongkham Seepanya, a paediatric physical therapist at the Center for Medical Rehabilitation (CMR), underwent 2 months of Occupational Therapy training in Thailand, supported by TEAM. Excited at the chance to extend her skills and knowledge through the training, she returned with a new outlook on her profession and an
MS. WONGKHAM SEEPANYA ASSISTS MOUAY (HER PATIENT) TO GET DRESSED. MOUAY COULD NOT DRESS Herself BEFORE AS SHE HAS CEREBRAL PALSY (CP). BUT, WITH THE HELP OF WONGKHAM, SHE IS NOW CAPABLE OF DOING SO.

I became a physical therapist because I love working with children. When I see children with impairment, I want to be able to help them function more effectively.- Wongkham

I only knew about physical therapy before the training. Now I understand why occupational therapy is also essential for rehabilitation. Before, I only helped my patients with stretching and exercising their muscles, but now I can assist with their daily routines and activities essential for life, such as dressing and using tools to eat or drink,” she explains.

“I became a physical therapist because I love working with children. When I see children with impairment, I want to be able to help them function more effectively.” - Wongkham

“I became a physical therapist because I love working with children. When I see children with impairment, I want to be able to help them function more effectively.” - Wongkham
Economic Empowerment

刹那主权经济权

权力掌握在手中
ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE IS THE TEAM PROJECT’S ASPIRATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITY AND THEIR FAMILIES. IN THE CONTEXT OF AN OFTEN-DISABLING SOCIETY, WE FOCUS ON HOW THEY CAN GENERATE INCOME, AND WE PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR THEIR PATH TOWARDS SELF-SUFFICIENCY SO THEY ARE ABLE TO AFFORD THE ADDITIONAL COSTS RELATED TO THE DISABILITY AND IMPROVE THEIR STANDARD OF LIVING.
Towards competence with confidence

“The Lao Disabled Women’s Development Centre (LDWDC) in Vientiane is a place where we build, support and train the capacity of people with disabilities. They will not only improve their skills but also their livelihoods,” explains the Centre’s Director, Chanhpheng Sivila. “This will help disabled people think and make decisions for themselves.”

The vocational training in sewing, weaving and paper crafts that the Centre offers is supplemented with English, maths, computing skills, sign language, life skills and financial literacy as part of a 6-month program for women with disability from provincial areas.

Touy Xaysongkham dreams of opening her own sewing shop when she gets back to Houaphanh Province. What will certainly contribute to the 23-year-old’s future success is the self-confidence she has gained through participating in activities to which she had not previously been exposed. She feels strengthened too by the friendship and solidarity that have come with the realization that she is not alone in her disability.

Rather than starting their own businesses, many of Touy’s fellow students plan to look for employment after their course. Their confidence comes not only from knowing they have been taught the right life skills, but also how to apply for a job and to conduct themselves in the work place.

The best part is meeting friends also living with an impairment - some have disabilities much more severe than mine. It inspires me to see them face challenges every day and still not give up. - Touy Xaysongkham
Two women who have made their dream a reality after attending the 6-month LDWDC vocational training course are Sieng Luengkham and Bounmy Silavong.

Sieng is a 22-year old Khmu woman from Xieng Khouang Province. Because she has Pott Disease, a form of tuberculosis that affects the spine, walking has always been difficult for her.

After her training, she returned home and started her own sewing business. People from her neighborhood come to her for shirts, skirts, and student nametags on school uniforms. Though the shop is still small, it is the fulfillment of a childhood dream, and she has ambitions for future expansion.

Bounmy, who has not been able to stand or walk since a childhood fall from a rice terrace, graduated from the LDWDC training program with the skills and knowledge to set up a paper crafting business. Although her first intention had been to learn to sew, her financial literacy training and a savvy assessment of the marketplace prompted her to switch. Returning home after the course, she sold 7 baskets, showing her decision had been the right one.

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The students benefit greatly from this opportunity in terms of both technical and life skills development. The job readiness training is very helpful for them when they complete an internship in a factory, company, or store. They can use what they learned from the training and apply that knowledge to their work. - Lapkeo Somchanmavong, LDPA Project Coordinator

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NACK, AN LDWDC TRAINEE, SHOWS HER INCREDIBLE WEAVING TALENT AT HER HOME IN HOUAPHANH PROVINCE (PHOTO: MONTTHONG LUANGSIDA/WEI)

NACK, AN LDWDC TRAINEE, SHOWS HER INCREDIBLE WEAVING TALENT AT HER HOME IN HOUAPHANH PROVINCE (PHOTO: MONTTHONG LUANGSIDA/WEI)
Taen’s story

Ever since a tree-cutting accident when he was 10 years old, Taen has had difficulty walking, though he can do so without an assistive device. An experienced cat fish raiser with dreams of becoming entirely self-sufficient, he has had help from Lao Disabled People’s Association (LDPA) in expanding his business.

In addition to receiving food and drugs for his fish, Taen also attended a financial literacy course, where he was shown how to write down his expenses and income systematically to determine his profit. With that awareness of costs, he is looking at affordable alternatives for fish food and fingerling production.

I learned that to make a business sustainable, you should not spend more than what you earn. - Taen
In the past, I could not produce enough to satisfy all customers, but now I have expanded my business by creating a second pond where I raise the fingerlings received from the project. In the future, I wish to produce fingerlings myself. This will save me a lot of money. Hopefully it will be enough to make a living on my own. — Taen

In October, I'm able to sell fingerlings to customers who have bought them from me before. I can afford this because I bought a second pond in the village. By expanding my business, I have been able to raise a lot of fingerlings. I'm hoping it will be enough to make a living on my own. — Phoukhong Lattanaphongxai

My life is better than before. I now have my own income that I earn myself without asking my parents. I can eat what I want to eat; I can buy what I want to buy. I also support my parents and siblings. — Phoukhong Lattanaphongxai

A year later, an in-kind grant from the Handicap International-TEAM Project provided the impetus that he needed. With the tire pump, 10 bottles of engine oil, 10 tire rims, 5 tires, and a machine and tools to patch tire punctures, he set up his own motorbike repair shop.

That shop has been very successful. Phoukhong receives about 2 or 3 customers per day, and uses the profits to buy more supplies and to help support his family.

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Vilad's Story

Vilad Thongvilay has scoliosis, a condition in which the spine twists and curves to the side, so he uses a home-made cane to help him walk more comfortably. More importantly, Vilad loves cutting hair. Having taught himself at the age of 10, the 49-year-old now has his own barber shop in Vientiane Capital.

With LDPA’s support as well as his own investment, Vilad was able to expand and improve his business by adding new equipment such as hair clippers, mirrors and most importantly, a proper barber chair. This helped him add more value to the services he provided that potentially increased the number of customers knowing that they would be able to get their hair cut while sitting on a good, comfortable chair.

Learning how to raise healthy livestock

Simply being given livestock does not guarantee success. An important step in the journey towards maintaining a successful flock or herd is to know how to keep the animals healthy so they can grow strong for sale and breeding. Before providing in-kind grants to community members, Quality of Life Association and local government counterparts provide essential training in animal raising, which includes learning and practicing how to vaccinate livestock against disease.

ຮຽນຮູ້ວິທີລ້ຽງໄກ່ໃຫ້ມີສຸຂະພາບດີ

ພຽງແຕ່ໄດ້ຮັບສັດລ້ຽງບໍ່ໄດ້ຮັບປະກັນວ່າຈະປະສົບຄວາມສໍາເລັດ.ບາດກ້າວທີ່ສໍາຄັນໃນການໄປສູ່ການຮັກສາຝູງສັດລ້ຽງໃຫ້ປະສົບຜົນສໍາເລັດຄື ຮູ້ວິທີການຮັກສາສຸຂະພາບຂອງສັດເພື່ອໃຫ້ພວກມັນເຕີບໃຫຍ່ຢ່າງມີສຸຂະພາບທີ່ແຂງແຮງເພື່ອຂາຍແລະ ລ້ຽງໄວ້ເພື່ອຂະຫຍາຍພັນ.ກ່ອນທີ່ຈະສະໜອງທຶນຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອໃຫ້ແກ່ສະມາຊິກຊຸມຊົນ,QLAແລະ ຄູ່ຮວ່ມງານທີ່ເປັສກັນທ້ອງຖິ່ນໄດ້ຈັດການຝຶກອົບຮົມທີ່ຈໍາເປັນໃນການລ້ຽງສັດ ເຊິ່ງລວມທັງການຮຽນຮູ້ແລະຝຶກວິທີສັກຢາປ້ອງກັນພະຍາດໃຫ້ສັດ.

ຮຽນຮູ້ວິທີລ້ຽງຢ່າງໄກ່ໃຫ້ມີສຸຂະພາບດີ

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Bouathong Sisouphanh is the mother of 4 children, 3 of whom suffer from cerebral palsy. In addition to giving her information about the educational rights of persons with disabilities, Aid Children with Disability Association (ACDA) provided her with training in chicken rearing. By expanding her chicken coop, she will be able to earn more income for her family.

I am so grateful for the training because now my family can create a stable income from selling some of our chickens when we need money to support extra costs and medicine for my children. My children even help me feed and take care of the chickens while I am away. - Bouathong Sisouphanh

BOUATHONG AND HER WELL-FED CHICKENS (PHOTO: VONGVICHIT PHONNALATH/ACDA)
Assistive Technologies

อมตะในทางด้าน
ビューหลายขณะทาง
MR. NOUKEO, A BROOM MAKER FROM KHAMMOUANE, HAS BEEN DEAF IN BOTH EARS SINCE HE WAS YOUNG. HE PARTICULARLY VALUES HIS HEARING AID FROM CRS WHEN HE ATTENDS VILLAGE MEETINGS OR TALKS TO LARGER GROUPS OF PEOPLE (PHOTO: MONTHHONG LUANGSIDA/WEI)

SOME PEOPLE NEED ASSISTANCE TO MOVE, COMMUNICATE OR TO INTERACT WITH OTHERS. CONVINCED THAT THESE PEOPLE TOO DESERVE FULL PARTICIPATION, DIGNITY AND RESPECT, TEAM PROVIDES ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES THAT ENABLE PERSONS WITH IMPAIRMENT TO ACHIEVE OPTIMAL FUNCTIONAL ABILITY AND TO PURSUE THEIR PASSIONS.

ເຈົ້າເຈົ້າເຂົ້າຮ່ວມປະຊຸມບ້ານບ່ອອງບ່ອອງເພື່ອກັບຄົນຄົນອື່ນ ເຊິ່ງສົມບິນໃນການຊວຍການ ເພື່ອຕິດຕໍ່ສື່ສານ ເພື່ອຄົ້ນຄວ້າ ແລະ ເພື່ອສາມາດຖານທີ່ກັບຄົນອື່ນ (ຮູບພາບໂດຍ: ມົນທອງ ຫຼວງສີດາ/WEI)
Lee’s story

Lee Her is an independent-minded, quick-learning 12-year-old with lots of friends. She also has a form of cerebral palsy that means she cannot walk independently.

Though she can feed, bathe and dress herself, and can get to the toilet by crawling, she cannot travel to school by herself, as it is too far. Her mother had been carrying the 28kg child, but it was a struggle up a steep hill so typical of Luang Prabang Province. The provision of a wheelchair by LFHC has not only given great relief to Lee’s mother, whose own health was suffering, but lends greater functional ability and dignity to Lee as she journeys towards adulthood.

Bounhome’s story

Bounhome loves reading. Five years ago, at the age of 12, a football accident left him visually impaired. Now at a secondary school in Vientiane, and having learned Braille in 9 months, he has access to Braille books provided by the Lao Braille Association for the Blind (LAB) as part of their TEAM sub-grant that aims to improve access to information for the blind and partially sighted (BPS) by increasing the availability of information in Braille.

In the past, blind and partially sighted people in Laos like Bounhome did not have the opportunity to read good literature, including traditional Lao stories or international stories in Lao language. That all changed in December 2015, when LAB received a new Braille embosser and Braille
I am so glad to have access to the Braille books. It is more comfortable than ever to read and study because my friend used to read the lessons out to me, but it wasn't really effective, so now if I don't understand the story, especially the foreign ones, I can borrow the book to read at home and learn by myself. - Bounhome

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translation software from World Education's USAID-funded TEAM Project. Now he and many others have access not only to textbooks but to material they can read for enjoyment and relaxation.

Buonhome enjoys a Braille story book
(Photograph: Umar Naseer/WEI)

Buonhome enjoys a Braille story book
(Photograph: Umar Naseer/WEI)
Dancing without limits

Khanthaly Xaypaserth, a 29-year old from Sekong Province, is a paper crafting teacher at LDWDC, but it’s dancing that’s her passion. Now with the new sports wheelchairs from the TEAM project at LDWDC, she can dance whenever she wants to.

I love dancing. I always enjoy every time when I dance with the wheelchair because I get a chance to entertain the audience and dance with my friends. - Khanthaly Xaypaserth

ການຟ້ອນທີ່ບໍ່ມີຂໍ້ຈຳກັດ

ຂັນທະລີ ໄຊປະເສີດ ຮັກໃນການຟ້ອນ. ລາວມີອາຍຸ 29 ປີ ແລະມີຄວາມຮູບຮ່າງ ທີ່ໄດ້ຮັບໂດຍໄດ້ເຮັດໃໝ່ຂອງສອນຫັດຖະກຳເຈ້ຍຢູ່ LDWDC, ປະຈຸບັນ ຂ້ອຍມີຄວາມຮູບຮ່າງທຽມໝັກຟ້ອນໄດ້ໃນການຟ້ອນ ທີ່ນີ້ໃນທາງດ້ານລໍ້ເລື່ອນທີມໄດ້ມອບໃຫ້ສູນ LDWDC, ປະຈຸບັນນີ້ລາວສາມາດມີສ່ວນຮ່ວມໃນການຟ້ອນໄດ້ໃນທຸກໆຄັ້ງທີ່ມີກິດຈະກຳ.

Sounthone’s story

Sounthone Sayvongsa is an optimistic and friendly young man who has had difficulty controlling movements of his entire body since he got cerebral palsy at the age of three. His father previously made a wooden chair for him with 4 recycled ball bearings as wheels, but it was now old and too small. Imported wheelchairs that had been donated were not suitable for his home environment on stilts.

Even with involuntary and shaky movements, Sounthone is impressively dexterous – he can use
a cellphone and write with his foot – but there was room for improvement in his comfort and mobility. That’s where Quality of Life Association (QLA) stepped in, commissioning a local carpenter in the village to create a larger replica of his father’s wooden chair with 4 multidirectional wheels for improved mobility.

Ku’s story

An Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) accident in Huaphanh Province in 2016 cost 17-year-old Ku Zong his leg.

“One morning I went out to our crop plantation about 600m away from my home. We planned on extending the plantation area to include more sweetcorn. When I was clearing the land, my hoe hit a piece of metal, and there was an immediate huge explosion. That was the last thing I remember.”

Despite visits to a hospital across the border in Vietnam and a local traditional healer, Ku’s leg became increasingly infected, and he had to have it amputated at a hospital in Vientiane. A month later, with the support of CMR and Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise (COPE), he received a prosthetic limb and learned to walk again with the help of the rehabilitation staff.

LEFT: SOUNTHONE IN HIS LARGER CHAIR WITH NEW WHEELS FOR INCREASED COMFORT AND MOBILITY IN HIS HOME. RIGHT: THE ORIGINAL CHAIR (PHOTO: QLA)

KU, PLEASED WITH HIS NEW LEG (PHOTO: KHAMCHAN PHETSOUNPHAN/COPE)

ມີສາມາດໃຫ້ເພີ່ມຄວາມສະດວກສະບາຍຂອງລາວ ແລະ ຄວາມຍາກໃນການຄວບຄ່ວນການເຄື່ອນໄຫວຂອງຮ່າງກາຍທັງໝົດເນື່ອງຈາກລາວເປັນພິການທາງສະໝອງມາ.

ເລື່ອງຂອງ ສຸນທອນ

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I didn't know that the new leg would enable me to walk again and now I can walk freely to school. Thank you! I truly appreciate this. - Ku Zong

ຂ້ອຍບໍ່ຄິດບໍຝັນວ່າຂາໃໝ່ຈະສາມາດຊ່ວຍໃຫ້ຂ້ອຍຢ່າງໄດ້ອີກຄັ້ງ ແລະ ຕອນນີ້ຂ້ອຍກໍ່ສາມາດຢ່າງໄປໂຮງຮຽນໄດ້ຢ່າງສະບາຍ. ຂອບໃຈຫຼາຍໆ!
- ກູ່ຊົງ
Vinyu's story

Vinyu Vongsutthi is a young boy with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and often struggles to interact with others and to express his needs in words. But that doesn't mean he doesn't know what he wants. A new app, launched in September 2016 by the Association for Autism (AfA) is changing all that.

Lao Autism Talks is a Lao-language mobile application that assists Vinyu and people like him to communicate using a picture-based system. Users can customise the dictionary by selecting from the 1,500-word image library. For young children with autism, this app offers the opportunity to give voice to their ideas, needs and wants as their vocabulary grows from single words to using sentences.
The power of sport

Physical and mental strength, skill, endurance, teamwork... These universal characteristics of committed sportsmen and -women are evident in abundance in Laos’s thriving wheelchair basketball (WB) community.

Asian Development with Disabled Persons (ADDP) and Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR), 2 Japanese NGOs that support social independence of persons with disabilities (PWD), believe that the power of sport is a key instrument in empowering such people. Together through the TEAM project, they have contributed significantly to the growth of wheelchair basketball in Vientiane and the development of WB in 5 provinces.

By observing a way of life not previously known to them, WB players can be inspired to become agents of change themselves and to achieve dreams they had previously thought impossible. In fact, the stories of the lives of so many of these talented, committed players – many of whom had no knowledge of the sport at all before the coaching and training – is so inspiring that a film was made about some of them.

We believe that wheelchair basketball showcases the World Education’s TEAM project spirit wonderfully, and we hope to continue to display the skills of the Lao players to a wider audience. - Colette McIverney, Country Director, World Education.
Wheelchair basketball is really hard, and you guys are incredible athletes - I find it really inspiring. - Rena Bitter, US Ambassador to Laos

The film We All Can featured 2 persons with disabilities not only displaying their incredible skills as strong and inspiring athletes, but also the emotional support and empowerment that result when people support each other. The players showcased in the film prove their physical and mental strength and capabilities, and show what is possible when you work hard to achieve your dreams.

As if to highlight that, it was the newly created Champasak team from southern Laos that emerged victorious in March 2017 at the first National Wheelchair Basketball Tournament, narrowly beating the well-established Vientiane hosts 34-33 in an exhilarating final. In addition, over 20 women players from 5 provinces demonstrated their emerging talent at a historic one-week women’s WB camp held in Vientiane.

Now the dream is to see Lao WB players at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics!
I am so proud to be part of this movie. I believe that everyone who watches it will be inspired and believe that they can do whatever they want to do. I hope after watching this movie, there will be more chances for PwDs to participate more in society, not only in sport but also in education and jobs because we can all do the same as everyone else. - Douangchay Southammavong (female lead in the film).

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Medical & Physical Rehabilitation

ການປົກປົກມົ່ງກັບກາງຄຳຄວາມສາມາດ และ ອງກາຍ
TEAM WORKS TO TRANSFORM THE LIVES OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY. WHETHER THAT BE COMPLETE REHABILITATION OR IT BE MITIGATING THE RISK OF LONG-TERM DISABILITY THROUGH MATERIAL OR PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT, THE GOAL IS ALWAYS TO ACHIEVE OPTIMAL FUNCTIONING.

Sinong’s story

Sinong, a farmer from Xebangfai District, Khammouane has been losing his sight gradually for the last 10 years. When he was assessed by the provincial hospital eye specialist, he could not see further than 50 cm, had limited independence, and could not read or work in the fields.
With the support of the CRS-TEAM project, Sinong was able to have life-changing cataract surgery in November 2016. Since the surgery he can see better and now he can read, move around in the village more independently without assistance, and importantly for his family, he can now contribute to the household income by working in the fields.

Baeng’s story

Baeng Teoansouliya was born with a cleft palate. For 15 years, not only did food emerge from his nose when he ate, but his speech impediment caused him to be teased by the other school children. Unsurprisingly he felt self-conscious and dropped out of school.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) identified Baeng as eligible for treatment under their CRS-TEAM Project ‘Inclusive Communities’, which made a hugely positive impact on his life. After surgery and appropriate speech rehabilitation, he was able to eat and drink without any problems and within 6 weeks had resumed his studies.

I am so happy about this opportunity my son received. From now on, he will be happier and braver in talking with friends. I want to see my son go back to school again. - Baeng’s father

ໃໝ່ຂອງ ລັດສະໜັບສະໜູນຈາກເມືອງເຊບັ້ງໄຟ ແຂວງຄໍາມວນ, ໄດ້ກ່ອນການຜ່າຕັດ  ທ່ານໝໍ ສົມບັດ  ໄດ້ ປະ ເມີນ ເບິ່ງ ສະພາບ ຂອງ ສີນົງ  (ຮູບພາບໂດຍ: CRS)

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ຂ້ອຍດີໃຈກັບໂອກາດທີ່ລູກຊາຍຂອງຂ້ອຍໄດ້ຮັບຫຼາຍ. ແຕ່ນີ້ເປັນຕົ້ນໄປ, ລາວຈະມີຄວາມສຸກຫຼາຍຂື້ນກວ່າເກົ່າ ແລະ ກ້າຫານໃນການໂອ້ລົມກັບໝູ່ເພື່ອນ. ຂ້ອຍຕ້ອງການເຫັນລູກຊາ�能ອກຮຽນໜັງສືອີກຄັ້ງໜຶ່ງ. - ພໍ່ຂອງ ແບ່ງ
Vin's story

Clever, cute and incredibly mischievous, 8-year old Vin Duangmany is a ray of sunshine in his family. Observing him ask everyone to play football with him, it's hard to imagine that this young boy was barely able to walk until a year ago. Vin was affected by the polio virus when he was 4 months old. As a result, the muscles in his legs became very weak, which eventually led to paralysis and delay in mobility development. When he took his first steps, at the age of 3, he walked with his toes dragging on the floor, and he was moving with a lot of pain and difficulty, unable to play with the other kids.

His mother heard about COPE and CMR services and took him to the Phonsavan Provincial Rehabilitation Center (PRC) in Xieng Khouang Province when he was 7. With the appropriate orthotic and physiotherapy treatments, it was possible to support his weak muscles and train him to walk better, and even run!
Houachai's story

Houachai Yang is a 6-year-old from Xieng Khouang Province who became paralyzed in both her hands and legs after severe flu and fever when she was around 4 months old. She had never walked.

In November 2015, Quality of Life Association referred her to the physiotherapist of the provincial hospital who taught her and her parents how to exercise her limbs at home, and provided a walking frame she could use in and around the home. Twice more she saw the physiotherapist, who added new exercises to do at home, and since then she has greatly improved her functional ability. By QLA’s next visit, she was walking with the frame, and went on to begin attending school less than a year later.
Comprehensive and compassionate care at LFHC

Twelve-year-old Maijua Wa was admitted to the Lao Friends Hospital for Children (LFHC) with chronic burn wounds from a gas explosion 5 months earlier. Her family had been following the advice of a traditional healer, but the wounds were not healing.

By the time she entered the hospital, she was severely malnourished and extremely deconditioned. Over several months, she received comprehensive, complementary and compassionate medical treatment and physical rehabilitation from the whole LFHC team. She required intensive medical and wound care from doctors and nurses, and also underwent a skin graft operation. During this time, she received daily physical therapy, including games for gradual strengthening, range of motion exercises, mobilization, conditioning, and gait training with parallel bars and then crutches from the rehabilitation team. She also received daily school lessons and recreational activities with a child life therapist, and began learning to read, write and speak Lao. With the aid of a nutritionist, she steadily gained weight.

Maijua can now move around safely with crutches, has dramatically improved her range of motion and functional ability, and her wounds and skin grafts are healing well.
Soudalath’s story

Soudalath first arrived at the Childhood Development Clinic (CDC) at the Children’s Hospital in Vientiane when she was just under a year old. Suffering from microcephalus and gross- and fine-motor skills delays, she could not roll, crawl, sit, stand, or grasp objects by herself. She was also unable to speak and was not receptive to verbal communication from her family, who were concerned about her difficulties in mobility as well as her problems with communicating and expressing interest in toys and objects.

The CDC team, with the support of Handicap International (HI), taught her parents games and exercises to help strengthen her muscles in order to complete small tasks like sitting up, rolling from side to side, and crawling by using objects they had access to at home, such as simple toys and pillows. They focused on improving her fine motor skills by giving her soft objects to squeeze and taught her parents how to promote her language development with speech therapy techniques, like practicing making vowel sounds with her.

A year later, her gross motor and fine motor skills had improved – she could grasp objects...
CDC staff helped Soudalath strengthen her muscles by providing soft objects for her to use (PHOTO: HI).

We are happy that Soudalath's abilities have improved and feel more confident we can continue to help her to progress. - Soudalath's parents

and transfer them from hand to hand, and she could roll from side to side and control her head. She was still not speaking, so the CDC team again taught her parents some speech therapy techniques and supported the purchase of a standing frame to help improve her posture and stability.

Since then, she has begun crawling, can sit without support and has improved her ability to pull herself up and stand with some support.

She still has speech delays, but her parents continue to use the techniques they have learned from the CDC.

Soudalath's parents are happy that the CDC has helped her improve her abilities and feel more confident they can continue to help her progress. - Soudalath's parents

*We are happy that Soudalath's abilities have improved and feel more confident we can continue to help her to progress. - Soudalath's parents*

CDC STAFF HELPED SOUDALATH STRENGTHEN HER MUSCLES BY PROVIDING SOFT OBJECTS FOR HER TO USE (PHOTO: HI)

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Knowing you are not alone

When Ternchai Vongsoutthi attended a training by AfA on how to use the Lao Autism Talks app, he did not realize the effect that meeting other parents of children with autism would have on him. AfA believe that bringing parents of children with autism together gives them a chance to support and learn from each other.

I never knew that there were other parents in Savannakhet who have a child who is autistic, who have difficulties communicating with them. It made me feel relieved that I am not the only one who has this problem. Everyone here today shares a common goal - to see their child improve and develop - Ternchai Vongsoutthi

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The goal of our project was ambitious: To enable people with disabilities, especially women and girls, to attain and maintain maximum independence to fully and equally participate in all aspects of life.

The stories in this book are stories of hope and resilience, and they illustrate the contribution that World Education’s USAID-funded TEAM Project has made toward the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities to access improved services and to enjoy the same quality of life as others in the Lao PDR.

Certainly much of our focus has been on the four components that make up our TEAM acronym – Training, Economic Empowerment, Assistive Technology, and Medical and Physical Rehabilitation – but we have always been adamant that, while some services of the project were healthcare focused, the overall goal was to improve the quality of life and enhance social participation of persons with disabilities.

From the outset, we embraced a social model of disability, where disability is understood as the result of an interaction between persons living with impairment and the environment of society in which they are too often excluded from participation by systemic physical, organizational, and attitudinal barriers.

TEAM, in its role as intermediary between USAID and local organizations, awarded sub-grants to local Disabled People’s Organizations, Non Profit Associations, Government ministries and departments (in-kind support), and international NGOs to implement projects with a specific focus and target beneficiaries. Each project addressed at least one of the four TEAM components in a comprehensive, socially-focused approach.

Over $2,800,000 in funding was awarded to 15 organizations over the three years of the project.

In addition to this financial support, the TEAM project also strived to add value that would significantly outlast the life-span of the project through:

» Capacity building: organizational assessments, training, coaching and feedback in the field

» Sector co-ordination: initiating synergies through working groups, task forces, and information sharing platforms such as WhatsApp

» Institutional support: leadership, research projects and support to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.
What did we achieve?

More than 2,800 individuals trained, including over 300 rehabilitation service personnel (doctors, nurses, physical therapists and occupational therapists)

More than 1,400 people participating in increased economic self-sufficiency

Over 1,000 people receiving assistive health technology

More than 2,500 people receiving health-related rehabilitation services and over 3,000 people medically screened for detection of impairment

Though these numbers do not tell the full story, they are indicators of our collaborative effort. Yes, Together Everyone Achieves More!
Thank you, TEAM Sub-recipients

ອອນໄຊບາດອົງການນີ້ໄດ້ຮັບຄວາມຫຍໍ້ຍ່ອຍຈາກໂຄງການທີມ

Aid Children with Disability Association (ACDA)
ມະສາກອນຊໍວຍເຫຼືອທີມມະຫາສັນດາ

Asian Development with Disabled Persons (ADDP Japan)
ອົງການຄົນພິການອາຊີເພື່ອການພັດທະນາ

Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR Japan)
ສະມາຄົມຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອ ແລະ ສົງເຄາະ ແຫ່ງປະເທດຍີ່ປຸ່ນ

Association for Autism (AfA)
ສະມາຄົມເພື່່່ອຄົນໂອທິສຕິກລາວ

Catholic Relief Services (CRS)
ໂຄງການຮ່ວມມືດ້ານອົງຄະທຽມ-ເຄື່່ອງຄໍ້າຊູ

Center of Medical Rehabilitation (CMR)
ຄະນະເຕັກນິກການແພດ

Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise (COPE)
ໂຮງໝໍ ເພື່ອນລາວສໍາລັບເດັກນ້ອຍ

Handicap International (HI)
ອົງການບັນເທົາທຸກກາໂຕລິກ ປະຈໍາ ລາວ

Inclusive Education Center (IEC)
ສູນສຶກສາຮຽນຮ່ວມ

Lao Association for the Blind (LAB)
ສະມາຄົມຄົນພິການຕາລາວ

Lao Disabled People’s Association (LDPA)
ສະມາຄົມຄົນພິການແຫ່ງຊາດລາວ

Lao Disabled Women’s Development Centre (LDWDC)
ສູນພັດທະນາແມ່ຍິງພິການລາວ

Lao Friends Hospital for Children (LFHC)
ໂຮງໝໍ ເພື່ອນລາວສໍາລັບເດັກນ້ອຍ

Quality of Life Association (QLA)
ສູນການແພດຟື້ນຟູໜ້າທີ່ການ
TEAM has had great success in promoting greater opportunity for conflict survivors and other persons with disabilities and strengthening local entities. TEAM's collaborative approach has fostered a robust network of stakeholders committed to enhancing inclusion in Lao PDR and is key to its achievements.

- Cara L. Thanassi, Deputy Chief, Empowerment and Inclusion Division, USAID/DCHA/DRG
Click the links for videos:

ADDP Japan wheelchair basketball training by WEI
AfA Launches app to assist people with limited speech by WEI
Autism Acceptance and Signs of Autism by Moukdaly Keophonexay
IEC Saychai Success by WEI
IEC Sign Language Training by WEI
Lao Autism Talks app by Misouda Heuangsookhoun
LDPA Work Readiness and Job Seeking Skills Training by WEI
LDWDC Wheelchair Dancing by Australia Plus
“Let’s Communicate Using AAC” Training by WEI
Openness and Access to Information for BPS people in Laos by WEI
Rehabilitation Key for Health in the 21st Century by WHO
TEAM Laos Capacity Building by WEI
The First National Wheelchair Basketball Tournament in Laos! by WEI
Vin’s story by COPE
“We All Can!” Wheelchair Basketball Short Film by Lao New Wave Cinema