

# Making it Work

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities  
Advocacy for Government Action Program  
Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand



**HANDICAP  
INTERNATIONAL**



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Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities  
Advocacy for Government Action Program

Implemented by

Handicap International



In Collaboration with

National Committee for Disabled and Elderly People, Lao PDR  
Lao Disabled People's Association  
Cambodian Disabled People's Organisation  
Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability



Funded by

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor  
United States Department of State



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# I. INTRODUCTION

## **Project by Handicap International**

The project “CRPD Advocacy for Government Action Program – Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand” seeks to increase the capacities of Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs) to engage in effective advocacy towards the full realization of human rights for persons with disabilities through implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Direct evidence based advocacy initiatives will be delivered by DPOs within Cambodia and Lao PDR whilst Thailand will form the regional hub for the project, a forum for networking and sourcing technical expertise. The project will use Article 21 of the CRPD: "freedom of expression, opinion and access to information" as its basis to develop evidence based advocacy leading to tangible responses from community, local and national government.

The overall objective of the project is that Disabled People’s Organizations in Cambodia and Lao PDR will have increased capacity to influence policy formulation and service delivery. The project is funded by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, United State Department of State.

## **About Handicap International**

Handicap International is an independent and impartial international non-governmental organization working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster. We work alongside people with disabilities and vulnerable populations, taking action and bearing witness in order to respond to their essential needs, improve their living conditions and promote respect for their dignity and fundamental rights. With a network of eight national associations (USA, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and UK), Handicap International, founded in 1982 and co-recipient of the Nobel Peace prize in 1997, has programs in 60 countries and acts in both emergency and development situations.



## II. MAKING IT WORK

**Making it Work (MIW)** is a methodology for documenting and promoting good practices in line with the principles of the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. It aims to contribute to making this Convention a reality, so that it can improve the lives of people with disabilities.

### Approach

The approach for the project and the production of this report was developed in line with Handicap International's Making It Work methodology. Making it Work is a global, multi-stakeholder initiative which aims towards the effective implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): [www.makingitwork-crpd.org](http://www.makingitwork-crpd.org).

Making it Work engages partners from disability, human rights and development organizations across the world to: identify and exchange good practices on key disability issues, generate evidence to improve the knowledge of practitioners and decision-makers, and inspire actions that create sustainable social and political change. Making it Work takes a unique and innovative approach to effect social and political change on disability issues. Instead of focusing on human rights violations and what is not working, Making it Work shifts stakeholders' attention to what does work and how it can be replicated or 'scaled up'. This approach is particularly effective in countries where there are limited resources. Making it Work promotes a bottom-up approach to inclusive development, where civil society actors and agencies working at field level (including DPOs) have the opportunity to influence local and national development frameworks and communicate constructive recommendations to decision-makers. Regardless of the scale or context, all Making it Work projects share four broad components:



## Multi-stakeholder

MIW uses a multi-stakeholder approach building alliances and empowering groups to work collectively to document and validate good practices and use this learning to promote change.

## Good practices

MIW is focused on identifying, documenting and analyzing good practices in order to understand how changes have taken place.

## People with disabilities

MIW aims to ensure that people with disabilities are validating what works and that DPOs play a key role in the MIW process.

## Actions for change

MIW supports actors to use good practices and recommendations to influence change and strengthen and empower DPOs to advance their advocacy work.

What does this mean concretely?

- **Working together** gathering to form a multi-stakeholder group that is committed to making changes towards inclusion of people with disabilities
- **Collecting evidence of good practice** using criteria defined by the multi-stakeholder group
- **Analyzing these practices** to understand the most significant changes, how these changes occurred and how they can be replicated or sustained
- People with disabilities and their representative organizations being central to this process, i.e. **people with disabilities validating what works**
- Using this evidence to build **actions for change** based on examples of what is working to advance the rights of people with disabilities

## Methodology

Based on the Making it Work approach, the implementation of the project has followed five key stages in the development of the current report: establishment of a multi-stakeholder advisory committee, assessment of the current situation of persons with disabilities in relation to access to information, strategy to change and defining criteria for the selection of good practices, identification and documentation of existing good practices within the local context, and actions to change.

### Stage 1: Establishing a multi stake holder process and an Advisory Committee

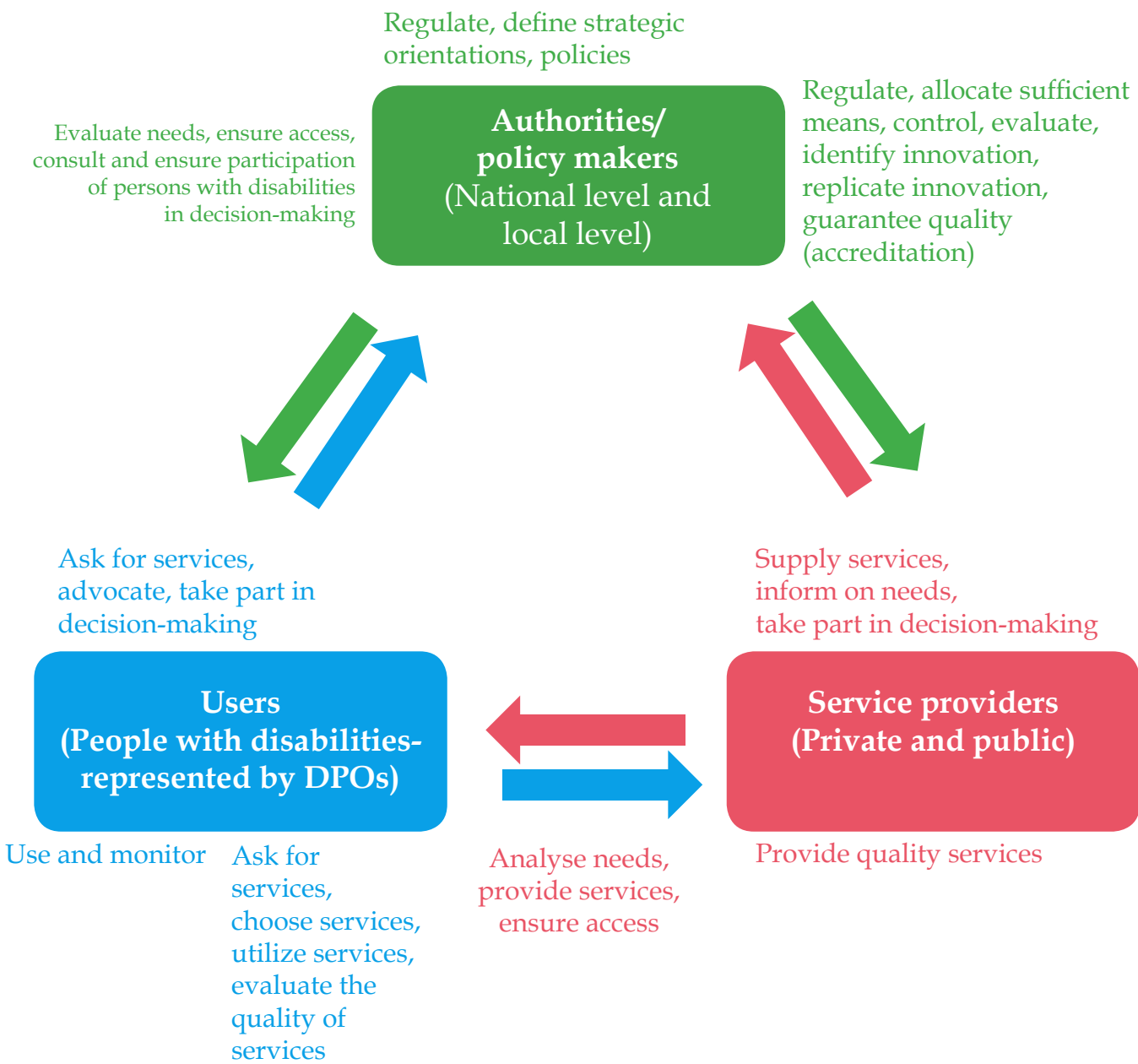
In the design, implementation and monitoring of community services, there are three key stakeholder groups which must be considered: service providers, civil society as users of services including people with disabilities and DPOs, and authorities/policy makers.

The diagram below shows the relationships, roles and responsibilities of each of these key stakeholder groups in the development and service delivery process.

**Making it Work** adopted **participative and multi-partnership approaches all along the project** including the creation of an Advisory Committee where the representatives of the 3 main stakeholders are: DPOs, Ministries and Professionals.

The main objectives of the National Advisory Committee are:

1. To support the process of identification, selection and final approval of the examples of good practices;
2. To support the development of policy recommendations and action planning based on lessons learned from existing good practices; and
3. To support the implementation and monitoring of development actions based on lessons learned from existing good practices and subsequent policy recommendations.





## Stage 2: Assessing the situation of Persons with Disabilities

One of the four key principles outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the principle of progressive implementation, meaning that states can implement the Convention at a gradual rate in terms of economic, social and cultural rights. This principle recognizes the reality that each development context is unique and that, especially in resource limited contexts, the full implementation of the CRPD will require gradual investment into step by step actions. Therefore, it is essential to first explore the situation of persons with disabilities in the identified target context and understand current barriers to accessing the specified service (such as access to information).

The situation assessment tool for the current project was developed to gather information about the situation of persons with disabilities in relation to access to information. During the situational assessment, the project implementation team met with a variety of service users including DPOs and community associations at both national and local levels. Focus group discussions were facilitated to explore four main question areas:

- What kind of information do you need to know?
- How do you currently receive information?
- What are the gaps that you currently face?
- Are there any examples of good practices that you have experienced in relation to accessing information?

## 3: Strategy to change, defining Criteria for the Identification of Good Practices

Information collected during the situational assessment allowed the implementation team to have a better understanding of the experiences that persons with disabilities have in various parts of the country (i.e. urban, semi-urban, rural) in relation to access to information. Through analysis of the information collected, the team was able to better understand what types of information were already accessible for persons with disabilities and what types of information were not accessible for persons with disabilities.

It was necessary to define the criteria to choose 5 good practices

- A: Criteria related to CRPD
- B: Criteria related to national context
- C: Local criteria

## **A. Criteria related to CRPD:**

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### **Article 3: General principles**

- Respect for dignity and autonomy
- Non-discrimination
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
- Equality of opportunity
- Accessibility
- Equality between men and women
- Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities

### **Article 5: Equality and non-discrimination**

### **Article 8: Awareness-raising**

### **Article 9: Accessibility**

### **Article 19: Living independently and being included in the community**

### **Article 21: Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information**

- Freedom to seek, receive and impart information
- Providing information intended for the general public to persons with different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost
- Accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means
- Recognizing and promoting the use of sign languages.

### **Article 24: Education**

### **Article 26: Habilitation and rehabilitation**

### **Article 30: Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport**

## **B. Related to National criteria/article:**

### 1. Cambodia

Cambodia adopted the Law on the Protection and Promotion on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PPRPD) in July 2009.

- **Article 32:** The Ministry in charge of Information shall, free of charge, disseminate information through state-run media to raise public awareness about disabilities and the rights of persons with disabilities in order to strengthen solidarity, understanding and compliance with the rights of the persons with disabilities.
- **Article 44:** All persons with disabilities have the right to vote or to be a candidate to be elected in accordance to the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia and applicable Election Law.
- **Article 45:** Stigmatization and discrimination against candidates with disabilities shall be prohibited.

### 2. Lao PDR

- Decree on person with disability (Final draft)  
Part II, Article 3, 10  
Part VIII, Article 28, 29 And 30
- Decree on promotion of rehabilitation of persons with disabilities (Ministry of Public Health)
- The principal tasks in sections 15, 20, 23 and 35 of the Strategy and National Action Plan 2011-2015 on Inclusive Education to be realized.
- Strategic plan of Association for the Deaf on dissemination of Sign language in Lao to government, private sectors, NGOs and Society.

## **C. Local criteria:**

Importantly the team was able to identify some key barriers that currently limit access to information for persons with disabilities (example: persons who are deaf are not able to listen to radio or television to access information about national news).

To identify good practices in reducing the existing barriers to access of information for persons with disabilities, the team considered five key criteria: availability, accessibility, affordability, adaptability, and acceptability.

### Availability

A good practice in relation to availability will have the impact of making a specific service more available for persons with disabilities. An example could include the expansion of the number of inclusive schools for children with disabilities.

### Accessibility

A good practice in relation to accessibility will have the impact of making a specific service more accessible for persons with disabilities. An example could be the adaptation of a building to be more accessible for persons with physical impairments.

### Affordability

A good practice in relation to affordability will have the impact of making a specific service available at a lower cost to either the user or the service provider. An example could be an innovation in communication technology that results in a previous service being available without cost on the internet.

### Adaptability

A good practice in relation to adaptability will have the impact of making a specific service accessible for a larger number of persons with disabilities. An example could be the design of assistive devices such as wheelchairs or crutches so that they can be adjusted to fit the height of the individual user.

### Acceptability

A good practice in relation to acceptability will have the impact of making persons with disabilities more satisfied with the experience of using an existing service. Good practices in relation to acceptability often are linked to the attitudes and perceptions of the service provider in relation to persons with disabilities.

#### Stage 4: Identification and documentation of Good Practices

To identify good practices in access to information, community focus group sessions were facilitated with persons with disabilities living in urban, semi-urban and rural areas of the country. Specific attention was given to the inclusion of persons with all impairment types as well as consideration of age and gender.

Following community focus groups, five key good practices were identified. Analysis of the identified good practices was implemented via semi-structured interviews with both service providers (i.e. DPOs, Media Organizations) and service users (i.e. persons with disabilities).

#### Stage 5: Actions to change

- In the step of “strategy to change” 10 priorities were identified; 10 needed changes with 10 good practices were used as evidence on which to base our advocacy.
- These actions to change are introduced in the section “recommendation” of each good practice we present in this document.

The evidence based advocacy is a process where these five steps are in a cycle.

The advocacy strategy is a permanent collaborative cycle where experience of main stakeholders is shared to improve the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities.

### III. DISABILITY AS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol was adopted on 13 December 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, and was opened for signature on 30 March 2007.

There were 82 signatories to the Convention, 44 signatories to the Optional Protocol, and 1 ratification of the Convention. This is the highest number of signatories in history to a UN Convention on its opening day. It is the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the 21st century and is the first human rights convention to be open for signature by regional integration organizations. The Convention entered into force on 3 May 2008.

**“Article 21 - Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information  
States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice, as defined in article 2 of the present Convention, including by:**

- a) Providing information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost;**
- b) Accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions;**
- c) Urging private entities that provide services to the general public, including through the Internet, to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities;**
- d) Encouraging the mass media, including providers of information through the Internet, to make their services accessible to persons with disabilities;**
- e) Recognizing and promoting the use of sign languages.”**

## IV. ABBREVIATIONS

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| ABC    | Association of Blind in Cambodia                      |
| APCD   | Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability         |
| AFD    | Association for the Deaf in Lao PDR                   |
| CBR    | Community-Based Rehabilitation                        |
| CDPO   | Cambodian Disabled People's Organisation              |
| DDP    | Deaf Development Program                              |
| DPO    | Disabled People's Organization                        |
| DRET   | Disability Rights and Equality Training               |
| HI     | Handicap International                                |
| IEC    | Information, Education and Communication              |
| LAB    | Lao Association of the Blind                          |
| KT     | Krousar Thmey   |
| LDPA   | Lao Disabled People's Association                     |
| NCDE   | National Committee for Disabled and Elderly People    |
| NCDP   | National Centre of Disabled Persons                   |
| NEC    | National Election Committee                           |
| NECTEC | National Electronics and Computer Technology Center   |
| NGO    | Non-Governmental Organization                         |
| NRC    | National Rehabilitation Center                        |
| MIW    | Making It Work  |
| SHG    | Self-Help Group                                       |
| TAB    | Thailand Association of the Blind                     |
| TVK    | National Television of Kampuchea                      |
| CRPD   | Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities |

## V. Supporters for Documentation



Association for the Deaf, Lao PDR



Lao Association of the Blind

## VI. GOOD PRACTICES

### Cases in Cambodia



#### Inclusion of Sign Language Interpretation in TV Programs

In the past many persons who were deaf and hard of hearing in Cambodia had limited access to public information. Nowadays, they have more access to information through the inclusion of sign language interpretation in some TV programs.

Among 10 TV channels currently running in Cambodia, 2 TV channels, namely the National Television of Cambodia (TVK) and Bayon Television (Bayon TV), have provided sign language interpretation in some programs broadcasted nationwide.

TVK started to include sign language interpretation from January 2006, following the directive from the Ministry of Information of Cambodia to provide accessible information for persons with disabilities, deaf persons in particular. Sign language interpretation is available for weekly news programs, and summary news programs of the year. Furthermore, sign language interpretation is also included in sponsored telecasts such as coverage of the national election and roundtable discussions on hot issues and concerns.



A sign language interpretation in a news program by Bayon TV

Since early 2008 sign language interpretation has been included in some TV programs by Bayon TV. It mainly covers news about activities by government and non-governmental organizations, as well as some special events. It is available 4 times a day on weekdays and Saturdays, and twice a day on Sundays.

Both TVK and Bayon TV have collaborated with the Deaf Development Program and Krousar Thmey, which both have expertise on sign language interpretation for TV programs.

Mr. Yart Vila, a deaf student studying at the Deaf Development Program said, **“My sign language teacher let me know that nowadays TVK and Bayon TV provide sign language interpretation in some TV programs. I can learn about the current issues and concerns in our society. Watching TV is more interesting to me.”**

**“I got to know that 2 channels have sign language interpretation in their programs. I watch their TV programs. I wish other TV channels could also include sign language interpretation, especially in sports news such as football and boxing. I would like to have Khmer subtitles in all movies,”** said Mr. Sok Kor, a deaf student studying at Krousar Thmey.



Ms. Vong Channe, a deaf teacher at Krousar Thmey, said **“At my school, I saw the TV programs with sign language interpretation for the first time. The first channel I watched was national and international news with sign language interpretation at TVK some years ago. I was able to understand what really happened, including traffic accidents, flood and other disasters, elections and ministerial meetings. Without sign language interpretation, I could not understand anything but the pictures on the screen. Now I understand what is happening in our society.” “At this moment, I watch Bayon TV more often. I rarely watch TVK because their news program is around 10 P.M. at night, which is too late for me. I hope that sign language interpretation will be included in all other TV programs,”** said Channe.



Ms. Vong Channe from Krousar Thmey sharing the impact of TV programs with sign language

Mr. Eng Riththy, Master of Ceremony of the Bayon Radio and Television Network, said **“Bayon TV has provided sign language interpretation in our national and international news programs to reach out to persons with disabilities and also raise awareness among people in general. It is according to the government policy on the provision of access to information.”** He also said, **“Bayon TV can be a good model for other TV channels. We are happy to support awareness raising on the need of persons with hearing impairment who need access to information.”**



Mr. Eng Riththy from Bayon TV explaining the inclusion of sign language interpretation

As a matter of fact, the Government of Cambodia adopted the Law on the Protection and the Promotion on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in July 2009. According to Article 32, **“The Ministry in charge of Information shall, free of charge, disseminate information through state-run media to raise public awareness about disabilities and the rights of persons with disabilities in order to strengthen solidarity, understanding and compliance with the rights of persons with disabilities. The private media networks shall have special promotion items contributing actively to the above activities.”**

Such policy helped provide opportunities for media to consider the importance of accessible information for everyone, including persons with diverse disabilities in Cambodia. At the same time, one challenge in Cambodia is to increase the number of trained sign language interpreters in response to the demand from media.

It is a wish of many persons who are deaf and hard of hearing in Cambodia that the other 8 TV channels will opt to include sign language interpretation in their programs in collaboration with deaf-related organizations.

Channe said, **“If we have more opportunities to access information, we, deaf persons can do more.”**

**The action to change following this good practice is:** 

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- Meeting with the Ministry of Information to issue the Prakas (Declaration) on inclusion of sign language for all TV channels.



## Sign Language Training Program for Deaf Persons

For the past 10 years 2 leading organizations in relation to deaf topics in Cambodia, namely Krousar Thmey and the Deaf Development Program, have closely collaborated to set up the sign language training programs for deaf persons in Cambodia.

Prior to these developments, the situation was different for deaf persons in Cambodia. Deaf persons could not communicate with their family and other people in the same community well, as there were no sign language training programs in Cambodia. Persons who were deaf and those hearing did not have a way to communicate with each other, except for improvised hand and body gestures. The deaf persons' social life was limited and they usually experienced discrimination and were not treated well by other people.

With the basic sign language training programs by the two organizations, self-esteem of deaf persons was increased. Their social life became more interesting as they learned new things and became involved in social life, including online social networking sites.

**Ms. Khoun Raksmeay, a deaf student at Krousar Thmey, said "I attended the first class when I was 11 years old and stopped. Now I'm 22 years old and still attending school in Grade 12. I'm so glad because now I can communicate with my classmates and other people. I can say that my life has changed. I can understand sign language and learn English and Khmer Literature. I can communicate with my friends. I attended short skills training in Krousar Thmey."**

**"Now I can access information on education, health care, community development and the elections. In the future, I would like to become a teacher so that I can earn income for my family," Raksmeay added.**

According to Ms. Kheng Nat, a deaf student at the Deaf Development Program, **"I felt very happy when I got a training opportunity. My knowledge increased and now I can read and write. I have got a lot of good friends."**

**"At this moment, I can access a variety of information. I have never felt discrimination while studying at the Deaf Development Program. I am willing to participate in our society with friends," Nat said.**



Ms. Kheng Nat expressing her gratitude for the training opportunity by the Deaf Development Program

In line with the commitment of Krousar Thmey and the Deaf Development Program, both organizations have been working hard to expand the sign language training program in other rural areas in Cambodia. At the same time, both organizations are in the development process of a sign language book covering around 17,000 sign language words, which could be considered as the standardized sign language in Cambodia.

On the other hand, several difficulties remain. A cornerstone of development discussions is the implementation of the sign language training program by Krousar Thmey and the Deaf Development Program.

Mr. Charles Dittmeier, the Maryknoll Project Director of the Deaf Development Program, said, **“According to our estimate, there are at least 50,000 deaf persons in Cambodia. However, so far both Krousar Thmey and the Deaf Development Program have reached only 3% of them. Some parents do not allow their deaf children to live independently for fear of being exploited. There are many other things that both organizations need to do.”**

Mr. Herve Roqueplan, the General Director of Krousar Thmey, said, **“There is a limited number of training materials. There is a lack of master sign language trainers in Cambodia.”**

Deaf persons in Cambodia are eager to have more access to information as now they are fully aware that their lives can be more fruitful. Both Krousar Thmey and the Deaf Development Program will continue to move up a gear for the betterment of the deaf community in Cambodia.

**The action to change following this good practice is:** 

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- Collaborating with Krousar Thmey and the Deaf Development Program to increase the deaf students in sign language training by looking for funding from donors, information sharing by groups and organizations of persons with disabilities and relevant partners.



A class room at the Krousar Thmey school



## Ballot Template for Persons with Visual Impairments to Vote in the Election

According to the available data before 2006, there were around 14 million people in Cambodia, in which 0.38% or 53,200 people were persons with visual impairment. However, the estimated number of persons with visual impairment who could register and vote in the national election was 188 people.

In 2006, the Disability and Election Working (DEW) Group was established by the Cambodian Disabled People’s Organization (CDPO). In partnership with local Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs) from several provinces, the CDPO supported active involvement of persons with disabilities for voting in elections at both the national and local level in Cambodia.

Initially the guideline on the electoral process was developed by the DEW Group, taking into consideration that persons with diverse disabilities had a variety of challenges in voting. The National Election Committee (NEC) in Cambodia agreed to have a monthly meeting with the representatives from the DEW Group to discuss the issues, concerns and potential solutions.

Mr. Ngin Saorath, the Executive Director of CDPO, said, **“Through our network, we got to know a good practice in Bangladesh. The ballot templates were provided for persons with visual impairment there, which increased the number of their voting in both the national and local elections.”**



Sample ballot template used by persons with visual impairment in the election

The ballot template is a customized election ballot paper especially designed for persons with visual impairment. By clarifying the names of candidates via slots in the ballot, persons with visual impairment can access information and vote independently.

With support from several international funding agencies, NEC in collaboration with CDPO and local DPOs produced 16,000 ballot templates in 24 provinces for the Commune Council Election in 2007 and the National Election in 2008.



Mr. Ny Kuok showing the sample ballot template

Moreover, with support from the Government of Cambodia, 9,000 ballot templates were produced by NEC for the Council Election in 2012 and the National Election in 2013. The ballot boxes were donated with the support of the Government of Japan.

Mr. Ny Kuok, a person who became blind after an accident, said, **“I was surprised to use the ballot template with support from the chief at the polling station. I was able to access information, and vote secretly and independently without assistance. It encourages blind persons to fully participate in the election.”**

**“I recalled that my wife discouraged me to go to the polling station because she thought that it would be difficult for me to vote. I explained to her that the ballot template for a blind person like me would allow us to vote independently. My wife now understands. This has changed my life,”** Kuok said.

As Kuok can exercise the right to vote by himself, he and his neighbor went to the polling station to vote using the ballot template in the National Election in 2013.

Ms. Chen Kreat, a person with visual impairment in Kampong Speu province, said, **“I went to vote in the Commune Council Election in 2012 with assistance from my brother. In 2013 I learned about the ballot template from one of the DPO leaders. I was encouraged to go to the polling station to vote. The officer in charge gave me a ballot template and assisted me to a private room where I casted my vote.”**

**“It was a good experience for me as I voted by myself. I was so happy having a chance to choose the right political party. I really feel that I fully participated in the election process,”** Kreat added.

While utilizing the ballot templates for persons with visual impairments in voting, there were several challenges identified in practice. For example, the ballot templates were not always available due to a lack of communication and arrangement between the chief of commune or village and persons with visual impairment. Some data on the number of persons with visual impairment who were eligible for voting were not always accurate. In collaboration with the NEC, CDPO and other DPOs strive to share their expertise to make the voting process smooth.

Mr. Sokolac Tipor, the Deputy Secretary of NEC, said, **“Persons with disabilities did not have a chance to participate in the election. Generally speaking, persons with visual impairment can exercise their right to vote with the ballot templates.”**

In addition to the ballot templates, NEC developed an election guidebook on how to use the ballot templates and how to support persons with visual impairment on the election days.

NEC regularly invites representatives from the disability sector to participate in meetings to get recommendations in supporting persons with disabilities in the election process. NEC plans to provide a mobile ballot box for persons with severe disabilities to vote. In collaboration with commune and village chiefs, NEC plans to promote the ballot templates through a campaign.

This practice reflects the real meaning of freedom of access to information, which gives persons with visual impairment a sense of dignity.

**The action to change following this good practice is:**

- Organizing a national workshop to share good practices on access to election information and raise awareness among relevant stakeholders (TV, Journalists, NGOs, Donors, DPOs).



Mr. Sokolac Tipor explaining how to use the ballot template



## Access to Information through Verbal Communication for Persons with Disabilities

In Cambodia there were many victims of war that left them with disabilities. Persons with disabilities, especially those in rural areas, were mostly confined to their houses, having limited access or no access to information.

In 2008 self-help groups in Siem Reap Province were established with support from Handicap International Cambodia and other partners. Leaders with disabilities were mobilized to conduct training on networking and skills to deliver public information to local people.

People in rural areas in Cambodia, with or without disabilities, did not have TV, radio, internet and telephone. The newly established self-help groups helped many persons with disabilities access information.

Mr. Rin Zang, a blind person in Siem Reap Province said, **“I was neglected by my family and society. I felt hopeless. I have been happy since I joined the self-help group. I could increase my knowledge and learned things around me. Now local people respect and support me in my community. Also, I got to learn that persons with disabilities could avail free health care services at the health center. I am happy to receive such information from the self-help group leaders and village leaders.”**

**“I experienced being ridiculed in public and was ignored by people. But after joining the self-help group, I am happy to learn that there are many persons with disabilities who participate in social activities to raise awareness. Through the self-help group I have gained more information and knowledge on the rights of persons with disabilities. Now I feel no discrimination as many people respect me as a person,”** said Ms. Pen Yorn, a person with speech impairment in Siem Reap Province.

Building networks between the local authorities and self-help group leaders could assist in the dissemination of public information, including disability matters.

The self-help group in Chhouk Rath Village, Siem Reap Province, played a vital role in advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities. Facilitated by the self-help group, persons with disabilities and their family members, village chiefs, leaders of each sector and other local stakeholders developed a good communication and networking system. Volunteers who were willing to support information dissemination of public services were mobilized to help persons with disabilities in their villagers.

Mr. Vong Srauch, the Chhouk Rath Village Chief, said, **“In our village, we have a solidarity group meeting. Representatives from various sectors and the self-help group join the meetings to talk about community matters. The self-help group meetings are held every 2 weeks while the solidarity group meetings are held once a month.”**

Regular meetings were arranged primarily to evaluate and monitor activities and to promote public awareness on services and general information available in the community.

**Mr. Srauch added, “Leaders with disabilities are invited to join the general meeting of the solidarity group in our community. It is considered a venue to promote awareness on disability rights, concerns and issues. There are many ways of disseminating public information to each person in the community. Leaders with disabilities let us know about communication and networking from the perspective of disability. Local mobile phones have been used to communicate with the self-help groups’ leaders and solidarity group to secure access to information.”**

By conducting house-to-house visits and using accessible communication the self-help groups in Siem Reap Province facilitated the process of sharing information on public services between the village heads and local persons with disabilities. They know the issues and concerns since they are persons with disabilities. The self-help groups are essential in responding to the needs of access to information among local persons with diverse disabilities living in the same community.

**The action to change following this good practice is:**

- Conducting focal point training for access to public service information through communication.



Mrs. Pen Yorn sharing her experience with self-help group members



Mr. Vong Srauch explaining the good practice on access to information



## Promotion of Accessible Information, Education and Communication Materials

Years ago information, education and communication (IEC) materials were not available and accessible for all. Many persons with disabilities, including persons with hearing and visual impairment, had no way to gain comprehensive information that was vital to their capacity building.

If information were given in a written form on a piece of paper, persons with visual impairment could not read it. Persons with hearing impairment, on the other hand, would have difficulties understanding the messages through verbal communication. There are persons with diverse disabilities who have different concerns on IEC materials, while others without disabilities may take it for granted that there are no issues.

Therefore, it is important for anyone, regardless of disability, to consider the importance of accessible IEC materials such as visual illustrations, drawings and charts, sign language interpretation, Braille, and other assistive materials.

Not many people are aware of how accessible IEC materials can help persons with diverse disabilities, particularly those in rural areas. Easy-to-understand drawings and charts can catch attention from persons with diverse disabilities, especially children with disabilities. In a similar manner, Braille and audio materials can help persons with visual impairment capture what is going on around them.

According to a survey in 2009 by Handicap International Cambodia, persons with disabilities, specifically those with visual and hearing impairment, and those with intellectual disabilities had limited access to information. There have been several positive actions to support access to IEC materials in Cambodia.

Since 2011 Handicap International Cambodia has produced simplified IEC materials for local community trainers to enhance the understanding among persons with disabilities about gender-based violence, reproductive health, birth spacing and HIV/AIDS prevention.

Dr. Vivath Chou, the Program Manager of Rehabilitation of Handicap International Cambodia, said, **“Our training materials are designed according to the needs of the target communities. Colorful, easy-to-understand illustrations and drawings were utilized to make complex issues understandable. In our training program, these materials were helpful especially for women with hearing impairment.”**

Several IEC materials have been produced by the Cambodian Disabled People’s Organisation (CDPO) for awareness-raising about disability issues and concerns, including access to information.



“Access to Local Awareness Raising” produced by Handicap International Cambodia



IEC material used in training by Handicap International Cambodia



Ms. Simon Chakriya, a mother of a person with intellectual disabilities, said, **“CDPO and Handicap International Cambodia give me opportunities to participate in trainings and provide accessible IEC materials for my son with autism. With pictures and captions, he can understand me more clearly. My son is always happy to participate in social activities with my support.”**



Ms. Simon Chakriya describing what the drawings mean

Krousar Thmey in partnership with Handicap International Cambodia developed educational books in Braille and audio for blind persons in 2004. Training manuals in Braille were developed for teachers. Sign language books were produced for deaf students in 2012. To assist the rapid educational development of blind and deaf students, MP3 recorders and video clips were also provided in class.

**“I was so glad when I saw the sign language book for students who are from grade 1 to grade 6. I can read and write letters now. I learned how to live with integrity. I was hoping that every picture, book and leaflet would include sign language interpretation and/or captions, so that all of us, deaf persons would understand what they mean better,”** said Ms. Hieng Dalen, a deaf student at Krousar Thmey.

In 2007, the Association of Blind in Cambodia (ABC) in collaboration with the Mekong Data Organization in Vietnam produced some audio CD instructional materials on how a blind person can walk and attend to household chores independently. The audio CD included agricultural skills.

Ms. Tep Sophorn, a person with visual impairment at ABC, said, **“I was very happy when I received accessible IEC materials from ABC. It helped boost my knowledge, skills and also gave me the opportunity to participate in meetings and trainings in the community. I felt proud of other persons with visual impairment at ABC who helped me gain access to information. I would like to encourage the Government of Cambodia to kindly consider accessible IEC materials in our education system, so that teachers at schools could use accessible IEC materials as their learning tools in the classroom.”**

In line with the principles of Article 21 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, simplified IEC materials have been effective. Considering the development status of Cambodia, IEC materials could give a long-term impact to the community’s development as a whole.

**The actions to change following this good practice are:**

- Developing the guideline on accessible IEC materials
- Organizing consultative meetings on how to use the guideline
- Conducting workshops to present the IEC guideline and follow-up actions

## Cases in Lao PDR



### Disability Rights and Equality Training for Lao Journalists' Association

A lack of proper knowledge regarding disability often leads to misinterpretation of the image of persons with disabilities. Taking into account that they are one of the major contributors in sharing timely information in society, **“Journalists’ role is particularly important in Lao PDR for changing negative perceptions and attitudes towards persons with disabilities,”** said Ms. Caroline Guerin, Rights and Inclusion Advisor, Handicap International Lao PDR.

In Lao PDR there have been a variety of domestic and international non-governmental organizations working on disability and development. However, there has been no specific approach to raise awareness on disability among media people in the past. In other words, there was no access to proper information on disability from the media viewpoint.



Session of Disability Rights and Equality Training

It was the year 2009 when the Disability Rights and Equality Training (DRET) was introduced in Lao PDR, based on the partnership between the Lao Disabled People’s Association (LDPA) and Handicap International. In 2012, the DRET was arranged for in total 50 journalists and the Lao Journalists’ Association was the primary target for participants. The main objective of DRET was to enhance understanding among journalists about disability, and to change their perception towards persons with disabilities in a positive way. The master trainers, who were from the Disability Rights Promotion Unit of LDPA, gained skills and experiences on DRET in advance with support from Handicap International.

**“Around 60 percent of journalists in Lao PDR responded that they just got to know the social perspective of disability which should be applied in media activities,”** said Mr. Sengsuly Phimmason, the DRET trainer.

**“I learned many things about disability through DRET. It helped me change many negative views and understand the situation and feelings of persons with disabilities. I am going to correct the terms I use in addressing persons with disabilities according to their rights,”** said Ms. Phitsamai Souvannalat, the Khaosan Pathet Lao (KPL)’s reporter.

In the past, Mr. Bounhome Souvannalat, a reporter of the Lao Trade Union newspaper, never understood and considered the needs and plight of persons with

disabilities. **“I thought of them as persons who could never be leaders. In my view they were burdens to our society in a hopeless situation. But the training let me know how I should perceive persons with disabilities. I learned that they have their own capabilities. They can look after themselves and do things like other people.”**

Other DRET participants responded that they would apply what they learned from the training to their work, especially when writing about news on disability. These participants realized that highlighting positive aspects of persons with disabilities could help the general public understand the value of persons with disabilities.

It is essential for Lao journalists to be more sensitive in the way that media portrays persons with disabilities in their media coverage, including newspapers, TV, radio and other publications.

Following up the positive movement, LDPA in partnership with Handicap International plans to continue trainings on media and disability as **“More effort is needed to raise the country’s awareness of the critical issue of disability, particularly the rights of persons with disabilities,”** said Mr. Bounviene Luang Ngot, the Executive President of LDPA.

Another significant outcome is to extend DRET at the district levels in Lao PDR in 2014-2015, with support from the Government of Belgium. It is expected that this practice will widen the scope of different stakeholders for our society.

Mr. Kham Oune Thongsouk, the DRET trainer believes, **“This is a good practice that we would like to continue in the future. As a result of past activities, there is a plan to increase the number of master trainers for this activity, which is a clear indicator that our commitment to create positive changes will be more sustainable.”**

**The action to change following this good practice is:** 

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- Conducting DRET and Media training to Journalists in the Vientiane Capital, Vientiane Province, Savanakheth Province and Champasack Province.



Simulation activities by training participants



Training participants from the Lao Journalists Association



## Basic Sign Language Training for Health Professionals at Hospital

Regardless of disability most of us go to a hospital if we need medical treatment. Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing also hope to visit hospitals to get proper treatment by a doctor as necessary.

Most persons who are deaf or hard of hearing in Lao PDR would rather go to a pharmacy in their neighborhood directly instead of going to the hospital. Persons who are deaf and hard of hearing are likely to wait for a long time at the hospital, and do not get substantial treatment.

**“Due to a lack of knowledge and know-how in using the Lao sign language, most health professionals cannot communicate with us. Only about 3 percent of deaf persons in Vientiane were able to access hospital services in the past,”** said Mr. Bounterm Chantalivong, the President of the Association for the Deaf (AFD) in Lao PDR.

As a self-help organization that promotes the rights of persons who are deaf or hard of hearing in Lao PDR, AFD has conducted various activities, including the promotion of Lao sign language, in line with the principle of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. According to Article 21 Access to Information, it was critical for AFD to respond to the needs of its members in terms of availing proper and prompt medical services.



Mr. Bounterm Chantalivong providing the Basic Sign Language training program

With support from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), the Australian Embassy in Lao PDR and Lao-Thai Artists, the five-day **“Lao Basic Sign Language Training for Health Professionals”** was organized in 2011 at the Lao Disabled People’s Association (LDPA) building. Initially 2 representatives each from 9 major hospitals in Vientiane, who were doctors, nurses and other medical staff, were invited for this training. The training focused on deaf culture in Lao PDR, in addition to basic sign language skills.

**“I was happy to attend the training because it helped me understand deaf culture and learn how to use basic sign language. Now I am willing to communicate with deaf persons whenever they visit our hospital for medical check-ups including prenatal care,”** said Dr. Hatsanoukone Phommachack, a doctor of the Vaccine Unit in the Mother and Child Health Hospital.

Ms. Pakob Damlongsit, an OB-GYN nurse at the Mother and Child Health Hospital, said **“After the training other hospital colleagues call me whenever deaf persons come to our hospital, as they assume that I can communicate with them. I understand the situation of deaf patients more than before. I am eager to share with others the deaf persons’ concerns, especially access to proper communication within the hospital. I would like to share my knowledge on basic sign language with other colleagues who were unable to attend the training.”**

The Lao Basic Sign Language Training for Health Professionals not only provided opportunities for health professionals to learn basic sign language, but also raised awareness about the importance of non-verbal communication.

In addition to sign language training, AFD has been striving to revise the *“First Lao Sign Language and Culture Booklet”* published in 2011, to provide more opportunities for health professionals and other stakeholders to access information related to deafness.



A nurse communicating with a deaf person

**“Nowadays, around 15 percent of deaf persons in Vientiane can access medical services in the targeted 9 major hospitals in Vientiane as a result of the training. This increased percentage can tell us how effective our basic sign language training was. Such training should be continued for its replication in rural places in Lao PDR,”** said Mr. Chantalivong.

**The action to change following this good practice is:**

- Conducting sign language training to 50 government officials and non-profit associations.



2 health professionals from 9 hospitals attending the sign language training



## Hand Me and Hand Talk: A Smartphone Application and Online Learning Tool

**“I wanted to develop something that could bridge the communication gap between persons who are deaf and those who are hearing,”** said Mr. Phoutharkone Kounavong, who used to be a computer science student of the National University of Laos.

Kounavong never imagined how he could come out of his simple wish to communicate with deaf persons. **“I used to be frustrated when a deaf person would approach me and ask me the time, for example. I didn't know how to do sign language.”** A Lao film *“At the Horizon”* made such an impact on him, and he started thinking of ways how to bridge the communication gap between persons who are deaf and those who are hearing.

Kounavong began designing a smartphone app for his thesis. He first went to the Center of Medical Rehabilitation to gather materials, which in turn referred him to the Association for the Deaf (AFD) in Lao PDR. **“What is the history of sign language in Lao PDR? What technologies can help persons who are deaf and hard of hearing in Lao PDR?”** He learned a lot from the inputs of the AFD staff, as well as a two-month sign language course offered by AFD.

Kounavong developed Hand Me, an Android smartphone application that offers Lao Sign Language videos. **“It can be accessed even offline, once downloaded. While not everybody in Laos owns smartphones, I look forward to the time when low-cost smartphones will be more available. More people will surely be able to access and download the Hand Me application,”** Kounavong said.

Complementing Hand Me is Hand Talk, a website created by the Lao IT Development Co. Ltd. that expands Hand Me’s features in several ways. As a part-time IT support employee of the Lao IT Development Co. Ltd., Kounavong explored the idea of sponsorship with the company. As a result the company extended support to develop a website, Hand Talk, that would create synergy with the features of Hand Me, while Hand Talk could be available for those without smartphones.

Mr. Thanongsack Souksavat, the Chief Executive Officer of the Lao IT Development Co. Ltd. said, **“The Hand Talk website is one of the communication tools that aims to raise awareness on sign language for deaf persons and the public. It is meant to mobilize and improve communication between persons who are deaf and those who are hearing.”** **“Both Hand Me and Hand Talk are very useful in emergencies, such as accidents. These tools effectively reduce the communication gaps between persons who are deaf and those who are hearing. All they have to do is to access the videos and everybody can learn sign language,”** said Souksavat.



Mr. Thanongsack Souksavat,  
the Executive Director of Lao IT  
Development Limited

AFD provided technical support, including sign language vocabularies and video demonstrations. The AFD staff monitored the quality and appropriateness of the training videos. **“We are actively promoting Hand Me and Hand Talk to all our members, as well as to the public, as these are important tools to raise awareness about the deaf perspective,”** said Mr. Bounterm Chantalivong, the President of AFD in Lao PDR.



Ms. Phanita Maiphone browsing the Hand Talk website.

Ms. Nit Chittivong, database officer of the Linking Employers with Employees with Disability (LEED) Project of the Lao Disabled People’s Association (LDPA), uses Hand Talk when communicating with colleagues at work. **“What I like best about the website, as well as the phone application, is the easy-to-use videos that offer a variety of easy-to-learn words and phrases. The website really helped me communicate well with members of the deaf community.”**

At present Hand Me offers 300 words, while Hand Talk has 500 words. About 35 more videos are currently being filmed. Ongoing improvements to the application and website are being done, and future plans include the addition of other languages, including French and English.

According to Kounavong, **“Perhaps the greatest impact of these two technologies, Hand Me and Hand Talk, is the ties and partnerships among the Lao IT Development Co. Ltd. as a local business enterprise, and AFD as an organization of persons who are deaf in Lao PDR. This joint effort is a good model in Lao PDR, and can pave a way for more disability-inclusive business practices in our future.”**

The actions to change following this good practice are:

- Improving the quality of this website and users uploading video or Lao Sign language vocabularies to the website on their own.
- Improving the application for Android system and Smartphone tablet.
- Conducting training for AFD staff on website management.
- Promoting the website ([www.handtalklao.org](http://www.handtalklao.org)) and application in the community.



“Hand Me” downloadable for free



## Development Process of the Audio Program for Persons with Visual Impairments

Due to a lack of opportunities persons with visual impairment in Lao PDR have been facing challenges in developing their full potential as productive members of society.

Recognizing their needs, the Lao Association of the Blind (LAB) was officially established in 2007 with an aim to provide more opportunities for persons with visual impairment in Lao PDR. In line with the evolution of the concept on disability, LAB strives to empower persons with visual impairment in Lao PDR in partnership with domestic and international partners, including the Thailand Association of the Blind (TAB).

In Thailand, TAB has played an important role in the development of the audio program designed for persons with visual impairment in collaboration with the Government of Thailand through the National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC). The audio program known as the Thai-based free screen-reader, is useful in navigating blind users in computer and mobile systems. This screen reader is considered to be one of the assistive devices that help not only blind persons, but also other persons with visual impairment who wish to gain full access to information available on the internet.

**“The audio program is very popular among blind users in Thailand. Many of us cannot buy expensive programs available on the internet,”** said Mr. Monthian Buntan, former President of TAB.

Dr. Issavara Sirirungruang, lecturer at Mahidol University, said **“By installing the audio program in our phones, we can use the internet and check emails. When the program was tested, many of us downloaded the program for our personal use. The audio program has been used in many ways, including reading e-books and accessing a variety of information.”**

In 2012, the Government of Lao PDR through the Ministry of Post, Telecommunication and Communication started to develop an audio program for persons with visual impairment in a Lao version in cooperation with NECTEC. At the initial stage, it was as an international cooperation project by both governments.

With support from TAB, LAB became actively involved in the process of the audio program development in Lao PDR. LAB followed the good practice of TAB, considering its members could not avail the pricey commercial software of the same kind.

**“The audio program in the Lao version is to support persons with visual impairment in Lao PDR to easily access information on the internet, to communicate with other people by using emails, and to enjoy social networking. There is a need to develop the audio program in the Lao version, so that many of us in Lao PDR will benefit from it,”** said Ms. Kongkeo Tounalom, the President of LAB.



LAB's involvement in the development process of the audio program in the Lao version is significant. Ms. Tounalom said, **"It is great that the Ministry of Post, Telecommunication and Communication and LAB have been collaborating for one goal: to provide persons with visual impairment an opportunity to independently access electronic information via computers and smart phones. Our participation is essential in the development process since we will be the users."**

The production of the audio program in the Lao version is expected to be finished soon. In the near future more persons with visual impairment in Lao PDR will be able to access information by the audio program.

**"LAB believes that this program will certainly help us as it will provide access to information in a more tangible way, which will lead to more opportunities for persons with visual impairment. For example, the audio program is expected to be endorsed by the Ministry of Education and Sports and utilized at schools,"** said Ms. Tounalom.



Ms. Kongkeo Tounalom sharing the blind perspective

The actions to change following this good practice are:

- Developing a sound program (audio program) into a Lao version.
- Promoting the use of the sound program in Lao language in the community, especially at blind schools.



Advocacy campaign by the Lao Association of the Blind



## Disseminating Information on Public Services in Rural Villages

One of the remarkable achievements by Handicap International is a sustainable Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Project in collaboration with the Center for Medical Rehabilitation in 4 pilot villages, Vientiane Province, Lao PDR.

Mr. Boun Pey, a resident in Noy Village, said, **“Many parents learned how to take care of their children with disabilities and applied the lessons they acquired from the CBR Project.”**

**“When my parents participated in the CBR training, they got to know new information and knowledge and applied them into my life. After that I could manage to walk to school with support from friends in the same village,”** said Ms. Nou Her, a woman with disabilities in Phonkham Neua Village.



Mr. Boun Pe living in Noy village

These villages successfully benefited from the CBR Project. As a matter of fact, persons with disabilities, their family members and other village people gained more opportunities to access information, with support from the local authorities at the village, district and provincial level.

For example, the village heads use audio speakers to disseminate public information, so that everyone within the same village can be informed. In rural villages this simple way of spreading information is effective, considering the fact that there are many people who have limited educational opportunities, or difficulties reading and writing Lao language. By receiving the announcement publicly more people in the village can obtain the updates on what is going on around them.

At the same time the district and provincial authorities in Vientiane Province encouraged the village heads to continue the CBR activities by officially endorsing such grassroots efforts. This is one of the important aspects in Lao PDR from the perspective of sustainability.

Mr. Sisamer Inthavongsa, "Support to Disabled People's Organization" Project Manager of Handicap International, said, **“Verbal communication through audio equipment such as loud speakers has been**



Mr. Sisamer Inthavongsa at the Handicap International

**applicable in securing access to information and disseminating public information among villagers. At the same time, the house-to-house visit as an interpersonal communication system has been effective especially for persons with visual impairment, persons who are deaf and hard of hearing, and persons with intellectual disabilities. Other information sharing methods such as a bulletin board in a public area have been useful as well.”**

As a result of increasing opportunities to access information for persons with disabilities and their family members, people in the same villages nowadays have a positive understanding of disability.

**“Persons with disabilities did not actively participate in cultural events such as festivals and wedding parties in the past. Therefore, we started to invite persons with disabilities and their families to attend the village’s general meetings. While they participated in discussions, the process helped us understand their situation,”** said Mr. Khamkeo Khamsavong, the Village Party Secretary in Phonkham Neua Village.

The CBR activities in the villages are being carried out until now as a part of the villages’ regular activities. Local authorities continue to organize monthly meetings, which enable people in the villages to access information on public services.

**“The most significant factor is to establish local networks among the provincial, district and commune/village authorities and other people in the community for providing a variety of opportunities to access information on public services. The CBR Project facilitated local authorities to set up appropriate approaches to share public information with people in the village, including persons with disabilities and their family members. Another lesson learned from the CBR Project is to involve the local authorities in the process of planning, implementation and monitoring, to continue capacity-building training that enhance stakeholders’ skills and knowledge on disability and development, and to utilize practical approaches for people who would like to access information within their own villages,”** said Inthavongsa.

**The actions to change following this good practice are:**

- Developing the information booklet about main services
- Organizing training for the village authorities
- Using of loud-speaker, home visit and sign board for information dissemination
- Promoting the use of the information booklet among village volunteers and workers.



Public services by village authorities

## VII. CONCLUSION

Through the “Making it Work” approach, it was possible to identify in both Cambodia and Lao PDR some promising good practices in access to information for persons with disabilities. Each one of them has illustrated the need for the involvement of various stakeholders from civil society, as well as the public and private sectors, all putting their efforts together to bring a change to the lives of persons with disabilities.

The good practices that have been presented are not only evidence on which Disabled People’s Organizations can base their advocacy work, but they have already influenced some actions for change in the two countries to be implemented in the coming months. A potential for regional exchange and opportunities to learn from each other’s experiences has also emerged from the recent regional workshop organized in Phnom Penh on 21-23 January 2014.

These good practices can be taken for further replication by actors in the region. Some key recommendations for replication will include:

- The importance of involving various stakeholders in the conception and implementation of the good practice namely decision makers, service providers and users, and the need to give time for building a relationship between those actors. The readiness and willingness of these actors are keys to success;
- The importance of involving persons with disabilities in the design and implementation;
- If the practice is developed by an international organization, the importance to give a leading role to local actors for good ownership and sustainability of the action;
- The importance to check relevance of the good practice if it is applied in a different context; and
- The need to remember that access to information for persons with disabilities may require technical adaptation but is also very much about attitudes.

## VIII. OTHER PROJECT PARTNERS

### National Committee for Disabled and Elderly People, Lao PDR



The National Committee for Disabled People (NCDP) was set up by the Prime Minister Decree in 1995. It is a high level inter-ministerial body in charge of the overall coordination of the disability sector in the country. It has remained very inactive for many years. Following the ratification of the CRPD in 2009, the Decree No. 61/PM was issued to reinforce the role of NCDP. Article 2 of the Decree defines NCDP as “a government organization, assisting the government and prime minister to coordinate with the ministries, line agencies and local authorities on protection, governance, rehabilitation, supporting and development of people with disabilities throughout the country.” NCDP has representatives at the provincial and district level, but the organization is not truly functional yet at either level. The National Coordination Office of NCDP is under the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. Based on the Decree 232/PM in September 2013, NCDP was renamed as "National Committee for Disabled and Elderly People (NCDE)."

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### Lao Disabled People's Association



Established in 2001, the Lao Disabled People's Association (LDPA) is a membership-based organization for persons with disabilities advocating disability rights and providing services to members based on their needs. LDPA has been officially recognized as a non-profit association in Lao PDR. LDPA has over 16,000 members from across the country, seeking to represent the interests of all persons with disabilities within Lao PDR, irrespective of their membership status. LDPA works on the national and provincial level mainly. The head office is located in Vientiane Capital, LDPA works in partnership with several organizations.

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## Cambodian Disabled People's Organisation



The Cambodian Disabled People's Organisation was established in 1994 as a movement of Cambodian persons with disabilities. CDPO is a membership based, non-governmental organization, representing persons with disabilities in Cambodia and working towards becoming "The voice of persons with disabilities in Cambodia". CDPO has differentiated itself from other Cambodian disability organisations by building a national network of member Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs)/Women with Disability Forum (WWDF). CDPO does not provide goods or rehabilitation services but rather represents DPOs/WWDF nationally and advocates for their rights and interests as well as helping to build their rights awareness and capacity towards achieving a life with dignity for persons with disabilities.

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## Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability



The Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD) is a regional center on disability and development. APCD was established in Bangkok, Thailand as a legacy of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 1993-2002, with the joint collaboration of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Government of Thailand and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Government of Japan. In cooperation with more than 30 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, APCD has been managed by the APCD Foundation under the Patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) identified APCD as the regional center on disability and development through the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real", 2013-2022.

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# Making it Work

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities  
Advocacy for Government Action Program  
Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand

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