



Success Story: Building the Rehabilitation System in Laos through Skill Development Opportunities for Core Trainers



At some point in life, you may need rehabilitation to improve functioning due to illness, injury, or the effects of aging. In Lao PDR, the lack of trained rehabilitation workers at different levels of the health system, especially primary health care, means too often people don't access rehabilitation services and as a consequence develop complications that may lead to permanent disabilities. The Ministry of Health National Rehabilitation Strategy (2018-2025) intends to

increase the number of healthcare professionals that can professionally deliver and swiftly support rehabilitation interventions at all levels of the healthcare system.

The USAID Okard project, implemented by World Education, Inc., in partnership with Humanity & Inclusion, supports the Center for Medical Rehabilitation (CMR) in Vientiane to establish and equip a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Training Facility on Rehabilitation for Health Professionals with the purpose of increasing the availability of rehabilitation services at primary health care facilities.

Three doctors, three nurses, six physiotherapists, and one prosthetist & orthotist selected by CMR from central hospitals received pedagogical and training skills to become competent core trainers from the Lao National University. From August-September 2022, they participated in an intensive technical training program on rehabilitation interventions at the Department of Rehabilitation, Faculty of Medicine, Chiang Mai University, Thailand.

Equipped with their new pedagogical and rehabilitation training skills, the 13 core trainers are now working with USAID Okard to develop in-service training materials on essential rehabilitation interventions, and are highly motivated to start training 150 doctors and nurses at primary healthcare nationwide on essential rehabilitation interventions.

This project increases the availability of rehabilitation services where people live and contribute to reduce disability.

“Through the training sessions in Laos and in Chiang Mai University that I have attended, I have the capacity and especially training skills to train doctors and nurses at the local health facilities, I am more than ready to be a trainer for them and later on people in the community level can access rehabilitation services when they need.”

- Dr. Oulay Lounnavanholy, USAID Okard core trainer

Photos 1-2: 13 core trainers in house training at the CPDTF

Photos 2-3: 13 core trainers in Chiang Mai University, Thailand



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Success Story: Deputy Minister of Health supports the National Rehabilitation Committee



On 1 September 2022, Dr. Sanong Thongsana, Deputy Minister of Health, chaired the National Rehabilitation Committee Meeting conducted by the Department of Health and Rehabilitation (DHR) with the support of USAID Okard. The focus of the National Rehabilitation Committee was to discuss how to increase availability and quality access to assistive products for people that experience difficulties in functioning. DHR, the Center Medical of Rehabilitation (CMR), representatives from MOH departments, central and provincial hospital management, the University of Health Sciences, and participants discussed the need for a clear policy, a prioritized list of assistive products, and an effective system to provide them.

DHR and CMR had the opportunity to share their rehabilitation work plans for 2022-2023 highlighting the important activities to strengthen the health system on rehabilitation. Speaking at the event, Dr. Phaly Sipanya from Savannakhet Provincial Health Department raised the important need to increase the number and capacity of health professionals working on rehabilitation, and Dr. Khamko Chomlath, CMR Deputy Director, shared how the CMR Continued Professional Development Facility supported by USAID Okard will be delivering training on essential rehabilitation interventions to health professionals from primary health care facilities so access to rehabilitation can be increased. Dr. Naly Khaminsou Deputy Director of the Faculty of Medical Technology (FMT), University of Health Sciences (UHS) shared the concern of the low number of applications for undergraduate rehabilitation programs and the need to build capacity of lecturers to ensure quality training programs. Ideas and potential solutions were shared with the USAID Okard technical staff, reinforcing the need to consider a long term vision for expansion of human resources on rehabilitation

Dr. Sanong Thongsana's enthusiasm to learn about rehabilitation was evidenced by his decision to stay for the whole meeting rather than just remain for opening remarks once he started to listen to the presentations and discussions. He actively engaged with all the participants, empowering Ministry of Health staff to raise important issues and encouraging them to find solutions that translate into actions for the continued health system strengthening on rehabilitation. This is a critical issue to support the health of the population through the provision of assistive products, training health professionals on rehabilitation, and equipping health facilities with human resources and necessary infrastructure.

USAID Okard, funded by USAID and implemented by World Education, Inc., in partnership with Humanity & Inclusion, improves access to quality rehabilitation and economic opportunities for persons with disabilities, and supports design and implementation of disabilities inclusive policy.

Photo 1: Dr. Sanong Thongsana, Deputy Minister of Health giving a speech at the National Rehabilitation Committee Meeting

Photo 2: Group photo of rehabilitation actors at the National Rehabilitation Committee Meeting