

Peer to peer support in Xieng Khouang and Savannakhet for Community Based Inclusive Development (CBID) case management



Photo 1: Bualai during her peer support session with her case in Xieng Khouang - Photo credit: Vanglee Payeslee



Photo 2: Keo during her peer support session with her case in Savannakhet - Photo credit: Vanglee Payeslee

Persons with disabilities are likely to experience psychosocial issues, such as stress, anxiety and depression, when experiencing difficulties in functioning and dependency on caregivers. Likewise, caregivers can also experience similar psychosocial issues due to stress and burden of providing care in the absence of social services support. Psychosocial support is an important and essential intervention to support persons with disabilities and their caregivers.

Peer to peer support is one type of intervention as part of community Mental Health Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) for the CBID pilot project. Peer supporters are experts by experience and are able to relate to, connect with and support individuals who are going through challenges in a unique way because of their own lived experiences and through this process building personal capacity of that individual so they can effectively advocate for their own needs and empower them to take control of their lives.

Initially, CBID Facilitators have been trained on peer to peer support concepts and approaches learning how informal support provided by peers can contribute to case management interventions visiting persons with disabilities and exchanging experiences, building skills and confidence while increasing mental health and wellbeing. The training explored important concepts such as self-empowerment and resilience, and considered 'do no harm' principles to understand the scope of peer to peer support, and criteria to identify potential peer supporters from target communities.

Following the training, CBID Facilitators from QLA and ARMI selected eighteen (18) people suitable for the role of peer supporter to provide psychosocial support to other community members. Training was provided to selected peer supporters to develop skills on effective communication, storytelling, developing collaborative and caring and relationships, and basics on crisis interventions, plus practicing scenarios to prepare them for work in the community so they could effectively engage with other persons with disabilities and community members during home visits to share their stories, to support, inspire and build resilience.



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Ms. Boulai from Xieng Khouang and Ms. Keo from Savannakhet have been selected to be peer supporters. Boulai is a CBID beneficiary who has difficulties walking. She received a walking frame and income generation activity (IGA) support to increase her income. In her new role as a peer supporter, Boulai has started visiting individuals to share how her health condition affected her mobility and mental health and how she has overcome these challenges. Boulai is doing a really good job to build confidence and self esteem with others that have difficulties with mobility by talking about similar life situations.

“This is really a good experience for me to be a peer supporter, I am glad that I was trained to understand the concept of peer support, and now being able to provide help to my community and to people who are facing similar situations as I am having disability and is good to be able to talk about it with another person with disability.” - Boulai, USAID Okard - CBID beneficiary and peer supporter.

Keo, also a CBID beneficiary, has difficulties in seeing and through case management has received a white cane to help her move around and support to start a new income generation activity. Now, being a peer supporter, she is using compassionate communication to talk with other peers, share her life experiences and letting her peers know that they are not the only ones who face the difficulties in life and there is always help and support available.

“If someone could talk about the life of people with disabilities and how to overcome barriers in life, that person would be me. Being a blind person is hard and it took a lot of time for me to adjust my life as well. As my new role of peer supporter, it is a great opportunity for me to share with life experiences, listen to others and find the solution to help them to overcome any obstacles and to remind that they are not the only one and it is good to have someone that they can talk about their experiences with.” - Keo, USAID Okard - CBID beneficiary and peer supporter.

The CBID team will continue to provide support and training to peer supporters as needed. The first encounters providing peer to peer support have been really empowering, impressive and peer supporters have applied knowledge and skills from training to use skills empathy and active listening while exchanging experiences to encourage and support persons with disabilities. Peer supporters are experts based on their lived experiences and will be a great asset supporting disability inclusion in their communities.

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.



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