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## USAID Okard ໂອກາດ

→ **Strengthening Ties: USAID Okard's Support for Multisectoral Collaboration between Lao and Vietnamese Governments** ←



The Lao delegation from the Ministry of Social and Labor Welfare (MoLSW) and Ministry of Health (MoH) had an incredible opportunity to participate in a regional learning exchange visit for rehabilitation practices and disability inclusion in Vietnam from February 23 to March 5, 2023. With the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and World Education in partnership with Humanity and Inclusion through the USAID Okard project, the delegation consisted of more than 16 government officials from various departments. Mr. Xaikhham Phannalath, Deputy Director General of the Secretariat of the National Committee for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD), expressed his gratitude to the United States and partners for their continued support to improve the well-being of persons

with disabilities. He said “The visit with the Ministry of Health made me realize the importance of rehabilitation in daily living activities for persons with disabilities, which is crucial for their social participation and inclusion. Vietnam's use of data collection and ID cards to facilitate access to services impressed us, and we believe increased participation of persons with disabilities will make Laos more inclusive and leave no one behind.”

Additionally, during their visit, the delegation learned about data collection and registration of persons with disabilities and issuing and using of disability ID cards for determination and provision of benefits for persons with disabilities from the Vietnam Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), Department of Social Protection/National Committee on Persons with Disabilities. They also had the opportunity to meet with the Vietnam Government inter-ministerial committee on persons with disabilities and the NCPD of the MOLISA, and Vietnam Federation on Disability to engage and empower Organizations of Persons with Disabilities to have a representative and advocacy role.

The visit left the Lao delegation feeling motivated and inspired to improve the rehabilitation and social protection systems in Lao PDR. They plan to organize a “Pause and Reflect Workshop” to consider how the learnings from the Vietnam practices can be used to adjust and improve rehabilitation and social protection systems in Lao PDR, as well as enhance and promote the involvement of persons with disabilities in policy development. With more participation of persons with disabilities, Lao PDR will become more inclusive and ensure no one is left behind. The success of this visit is a testament to the power of collaboration and the dedication of individuals and organizations working towards a more inclusive world.

Photo series 1: The Lao delegation and their Vietnamese counterparts exchanged valuable knowledge and experiences - Photo credit: Souliya Ounavong - USAID Okard Liaison and Communication Officer