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Success Story

Breaking Barriers with Association for Autism (AFA): Spreading Awareness of Disability Laws

In an effort to promote greater understanding and inclusion of persons with disabilities, the USAID Okard team joined forces with several key organizations to spread awareness of the National Disability Law in two districts of Laos. From August 2022 to May 2023, Xayphouthong District (XPT) in Savannakhet Province and Kham District (KH) in Xieng Khouang Province were the focus of a community-level dissemination campaign led by the National Committee for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD), Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, the Organization of Persons with Disabilities, and Humanity and Inclusion Laos and facilitated by the Association for Autism (AFA).

Participants included a variety of people from the community from persons with disabilities and their caregivers, local governance officers, chief of villages, women's union members, village security guard, self help groups with a total of 664 people (253 female). During the Disability Laws Dissemination sessions, presenters from the NCPD, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, the Organization of Persons with Disabilities, and Humanity and Inclusion Laos and facilitated by the AFA carefully explained each law and decree and used friendly language to ensure that participants received and understood the disabilities law, rights, and benefits for persons with disabilities.

It was remarkable to see the dedication and hard work that went into ensuring that the National Disability Law dissemination was not only informative, but also easy to understand. Despite the complexity of the topic and the need to cover 90 separate decrees, the presenters went above and beyond to test their understanding and break down the information into digestible pieces for the participants. This was especially important for the 47th decree of Disability Laws that was written by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and certified and approved by the Lao National Assembly on the 10th December, 2018, which covered a wide range of topics from the definition of persons with disabilities to access to healthcare, education, and employment. By establishing this connection between the law and real-life practice, the presenters were able to create a more meaningful and impactful learning experience for everyone involved.

Additionally, the inclusion of a representative from OPDs with real-life experience as a person with disabilities was a successful approach for the dissemination of the National Disability Law. By sharing their personal experiences, knowledge, and skills on disability inclusion, the dissemination sessions did not only add a unique perspective, but also inspire and empower

participants. The conversations that ensued between the participants and presenters were not only meaningful but also created a sense of community and understanding.

The Disability Law dissemination did not only provide knowledge to participants on the legal framework but also provided communication materials that catered to different types of disabilities such as braille language, Lao sign language, and discussing current practices of (or lack of) and generating ideas to create more inclusive education environments for all. By highlighting government policies and information channels, the activity provided a comprehensive understanding of the support available to persons with disabilities. This sparked meaningful dialogue among the participants who were keen to understand how they could access inclusive education, reduce expenses on public transportation, and more. With representatives from NCPD on hand to provide clear guidance and answer questions, the campaign left participants feeling empowered and informed about their rights and the support available to them.



Photo 1: Representative of OPDs during the session of Disability Law Dissemination in Kham District, Xieng Khouang Province - Photo credit: Souliya Vongxay, AFA project manager.

Photo 2: Representative of NCPD during the session of Disability Law Dissemination in Xayphouthong District, Savannakhet - Photo credit: Souliya Vongxay, AFA project manager.