



# Lao PDR: Inclusive Communities

## IMPROVING ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH SERVICES AND CREATING MORE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

### THE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES PROJECT:

In May 2015, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and World Education signed an agreement for a two-year Disability Awareness & Assistance award, Inclusive Communities (IC). IC's goal is to improve access to quality health services, create more inclusive communities and provide economic opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and their families while specifically addressing and targeting the needs of women and girls and promoting their full integration into society within two districts in the Province of Khammouane, Lao PDR. Working closely with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES), the IC project is reaching over 55,5000 beneficiaries in the two covered districts through three main interventions: medical screenings & services, community-based rehabilitation and inclusive education.

### Medical Screenings & Services

Improved access to quality health and social services not only helps to identify persons with disabilities at an early age allowing for early intervention, it also improves their overall health, independence and wellbeing. To this end, CRS has instructed **424 Village Education Development Committee (VEDC) members** on how to screen community residents for potential impairments as

QUICKFACTS	
Project Type	Disability Awareness & Assistance
Funder/funding	World Education/USAID, \$400,000
Project location	Khammouane Province, Lao PDR
# of people served	55,511
Timeframe	2015-2017
Partners	Ministry of Education and Sports Ministry of Health Lao Disabled Peoples Association Center for Medical Rehabilitation

well as provide specialized screening by medical professionals. This subsequently allows CRS to provide effective assistive devices such as eyeglasses, hearing aids and mobility devices as well as coaching and instruction for their proper use and care.



faith. action. results.

Furthermore, disabled persons needing **corrective surgery, prosthetics, and orthotics**, or advanced medical treatment receive referrals to regional and specialized hospitals.



VEDC member to drink water using a prosthetic device during Community Based Rehabilitation training. *Photo: Bart Verweij*

### Inclusive Education (IE)

According to the National Education Sector Plan 2010 – 2015, only 4% of children with disabilities are enrolled in school and those who are in school have teachers who lack the knowledge and skills to assist the child learn and develop fully. CRS, in partnership with MOES, is training a core group of government staff and teachers on classroom strategies, management, and lesson plans for IE; the role of village leaders and parents in IE; and how to build community support for IE. CRS also developed a **hands-on training for Individual Education Plans (IEP)** and with MOES staff, will roll this training out to over 200 teachers and principals across 43 schools in order to help them better meet the educational needs of children with disabilities.

### Community Based Rehabilitation

CRS has developed an innovative training based on interactive techniques geared towards raising awareness about disabilities and helping people understand how to support people with disabilities in their communities. The three-day Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) training targets VEDCs, health professionals, and schoolteachers. Participants are trained on numerous aspects of disability prevention and identification, maternal child health promotion and access to health services. Jointly facilitated by the Lao Disabled People's Association CBR allows for **extensive training on behavior change/awareness skills** using various mediums such as role playing, dissecting social norms, exposure to a multitude of assistive devices, and self-awareness through understanding of what it is like to have a disability. CBR training allows participants to become more aware of challenges faced by persons with disabilities which enables overall community support.

### PROJECT IMPACT

The IC Project is positively impacting the lives of people with disabilities, their families and community members in two districts of Khammouane Province by improving access to quality health services and encouraging more inclusive communities for persons with disabilities and their families.

Using improved screening techniques for impairment identification **a total of 55,511 residents across 112 target villages were screened and 769 persons with disabilities** received further comprehensive medical screenings for impairment identification. Additionally, CRS is working with **20 doctors and nurses** from regional and specialized hospitals to build their capacity in screening techniques for vision, hearing and physical impairments. Throughout the project CRS will provide 900 disabled persons with access to comprehensive medical screening for impairment identification and distribute 250 appropriate assistive devices and instructions on proper care and use to persons with disabilities.

In regards to creating more inclusive environments, CRS has instructed **269 VEDC members and 24 health professionals** on how to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in the home, school, and community as well as conducted **93 awareness-raising events** for a total of 3,280 men and 2,898 women in **45 communities**. In addition, these communities developed and implemented **action plans** to address barriers to



CRS project supported cataract surgery at Khammouane Provincial Hospital. *Photo: Bernie F. Chaves*

inclusion.

Altogether, CRS will train over **430 VEDC members** to improve community environments for people with disabilities. CRS will also provide 43 schools with **Teacher Resource Toolkits** to help 200 teachers implement disability education lessons so that learners with visual, hearing, sensory, physical impairments and developmental delays can fully participate in school lessons/activities and achieve optimal learning capabilities.

