From your LDPA President

“Welcome to 2012! Last year we achieved a great deal thanks to our close relationship with the Government of Lao PDR and our project partners. This year we look forward to building on outcomes achieved last year and to promoting and protecting disability rights in new ways. We are also looking forward to building a stronger LDPA and we will seek out new opportunities that will enable us to do this. Wherever you are in Lao PDR, I would like to personally thank you for your support in 2011 and wish you good luck for 2012” - Mr Bounvien Louangyot.

UNICEF project ends

Last month a significant LDPA project with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) came to an end. The project began in January 2009 and its objective was to promote and protect the rights of disabled children in Lao PDR. Staff from LDPA Head Office and Provincial Branch Secretaries worked with community networks called Child Protection Network’s in four provinces (Oudomxay, Savannakhet, Champasak and Vientiane Provinces). Activities were implemented to raise awareness of disability and foster the inclusion of children with disability into mainstream society. The LDPA also worked with several key Government Ministries at provincial and national levels to improve the Government’s understanding of disability and human rights. The project was a success and children were delighted to receive educational kits containing uniforms, backpacks and stationery during the project. The LDPA would like to thank UNICEF for its support and assistance.

New LDPA website and Facebook page

The LDPA has a new website! You can check it out at www.ldpa.org.la. We are also now on Facebook. Type “The Lao Disabled People’s Association” into the Facebook search page found at www.facebook.com or follow the link on the “Contact Us” page of the LDPA website. We invite you to share your ideas and stories and we welcome your comments and suggestions. We look forward to hearing from you!

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LDPA strengthens disability rights and advocacy work

On 9 December 2011, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Government of Lao PDR (represented by the National Coordinating Office for Disabled People) and HIB was signed during an official ceremony at the LDPA Head Office in Vientiane Capital. The $413,573 USD project will be implemented by the LDPA over 33 months and is funded by the Belgian Government and European Union (EU). Project activities will be implemented in Vientiane Capital, Vientiane, Savannakhet and Champasak Provinces. The LDPA will work to collect and analyse data on disability in Lao PDR making it possible to provide useful information to authorities for the formulation of their policies and actions. We will also support national authorities in the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD), design action plans to promote the inclusion of people with disability in community life, and offer training and support to development organisations to foster inclusion of people with disability. Ms Anne Rouve Khiev, Country Director of HIB said: “HIB is pleased to support the LDPA and be part of this project. We are looking forward to working with the LDPA and helping improve the lives of people with disability in Lao PDR”.

Children in Champasak Province receive UNICEF project educational kits
Meet a member – Ms Bouakham Sengdara

How long have you been an LDPA member? I have been a member of the LDPA since the LDPA first began.

Where do you live? I live in Vientiane Capital but I grew up in Xiengkhouang Province.

What is your disability? When I was 7 years old I was caught in a bomb raid (part of United States’ bombing campaign of Lao PDR during the war). I lost my legs and part of my arm. I now have 2 prosthetic limbs.

Do you work, if so what work do you do? I have my own handicraft business. I have a small shop at my house in Ban Dondok and have business operations in Saravan Province. With the support of the German Agency for International Development (GIZ), I am looking to expand my business to Sekong and Attapeu Provinces.

What is your favourite activity? I enjoy making handicrafts (especially fabric toy elephants) and training other people with disabilities how to make things so they can support themselves. I am always looking for new ideas and new opportunities.

What are your hopes for the future? I would love to have a small factory making clothes and employing people with disabilities, empowering them and giving them skills so they can be independent.

We would like to thank Ms Bouakham for sharing her story with us.

Sporting event brings LDPA members together

This month is an exciting time for LDPA members all across the country. On 20 and 21 January, members from every province will join together in Luang Prabang for the first ever national sporting event for people with disability. Funded by Asian Development for Disabled People (ADDP), the two day event will see around 200 people with disability participate in a range of sports and recreational activities, social and other networking opportunities. There will also be non-competitive sporting demonstrations for all involved to enjoy. In the lead up to this event the LDPA has been working with the Ministry of Education and Sport to select two representatives from each province to compete. Mr Bounvien Louangyot, LDPA President invites all members to join together to celebrate this occasion. "It is a significant milestone for people with disability in Lao PDR and I wish everyone the best on the day", he said.

Looking after the blind and visually impaired

Since its establishment in 2007, the Lao Blind Association (LAB) has been looking after the blind and visually impaired in Lao PDR. Membership exceeds 450 and this is increasing. Headquartered in Vientiane Capital, the LAB has branches in Savannakhet and Luang Prabang with plans to create new branches in Xiengkhouang and Champasak in the near future. Each branch provides LAB members with a support network and the opportunity to learn new skills such as massage and handicraft production. With these skills members have set up successful businesses across the country. If you are in Vientiane Capital, you can visit the training centre in Ban Hongkaikeo for a traditional Lao blind massage by one of the students. In the future, the LAA is looking to offer further vocational training courses including one in animal husbandry. For more information about the LAB, please call 021 414 949 or email lab.laos@yahoo.com.

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