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Creating a Disability-Inclusive Society

Key points:

- **2009 Lao government signed UNCRPD**
- **2014 Lao government issued Disability Decree setting out rights of people with disabilities**
- **Lao government, development partners and DPO's working together to create a disability-inclusive society**

In working towards creating a disability-inclusive society in the Lao PDR, the efforts of government, development partners and Disabled People's Organisations (DPO's) are directed towards disability rights protection, increased opportunities, improved access to services, removal of barriers, provision of information and changing societal attitudes.

Coordinating bodies: Responsibility for disability-related policies and services lies with Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Public Health and Ministry of Education and Sports. The National Committee for Disabled Persons co-ordinates disability policy and programs.

Development partners: International organisations (multinational and bilateral) and International Non-governmental Organisations (INGOs) make a significant contribution to improving inclusion of disabled people in the Lao PDR. Initiatives focus on disability rights

awareness, inclusive education, vocational training, income generation, community based rehabilitation, UXO clearance, and inclusion in sporting, recreational and cultural activities.

DPO's: Lao Disabled People's Association (LDPA) is the umbrella organisation for DPO's. LDPA works closely with relevant Ministries to raise awareness of disability and advocate for disability rights and the implementation into law of the 2014 Disability Decree.

UNCRPD: Article 9 Accessibility states that people with disabilities have the same rights as non-disabled people to access all aspects of society including the physical environment, transportation, information and communications, and other facilities and services provided to the (non-disabled) public.

Lao Disability Decree: protects and promotes the rights of people with disabilities in areas that affect their everyday lives: access to healthcare, inclusive education, vocational training and employment and specify entitlements to lower or zero fees to use these services.

Whilst the government of the Lao PDR signed the UNCRPD in 2009 and issued the Decree on the Rights of People with Disabilities in 2014, neither carries the force of law and the Lao PDR is yet to become a fully inclusive society.