

Decent Work for People with Disabilities

Inclusion of People with Disabilities In Lao People's Democratic Republic



International Labour Organization



FACT SHEET

Women and men with disabilities can and want to be productive members of society. In both developed and developing countries, promoting more inclusive societies and employment opportunities for people with disabilities requires improved access to basic education, vocational training relevant to labour market needs and jobs suited to their skills, interests and abilities, with adaptations as needed. Many societies are also recognizing the need to dismantle other barriers - making the physical environment more accessible, providing information in a variety of formats, and challenging attitudes and mistaken assumptions about people with disabilities.

Current Situation

With the exception of people disabled as a result of unexploded ordnance (UXO) explosions, there is no reliable information on the number of people with disabilities in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR). Estimates by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) suggest that 8 per cent of the national population is likely to be disabled¹. Applying this estimate to the 2005 population census for Lao PDR (approximately 5 million) would indicate that there may be some 400,000 disabled people in the country.

Many disabled people in Lao PDR, as in most developing countries in the world, live in poverty, have limited opportunities for accessing education, health, suitable housing and employment opportunities.

¹ UNESCAP: "Disability at a glance, a profile of 28 countries and areas in Asia and the Pacific", 2006, <http://www.unescap.org/esid/psis/disability/publications/glance/disability%20at%20a%20glance.pdf>, (accessed on 6 July 2009), p 28.

Governmental support for people with disabilities

The Government of Lao PDR has adopted a number of laws and policies pertaining to people with disabilities, including their right to decent and productive work and access to basic services. The main ones are listed below.

- **The Constitution of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, 1991 (amended in 2003).** Under the Constitution all citizens are equal before the law. This can be interpreted as meaning that people with disabilities have the same rights as other citizens.
- **Prime Ministerial Decree No. 178/1993 On a Social Security Scheme for Government Workers,** provides for rehabilitation as well as pensions for this group.
- **Prime Ministerial Decree No. 138/1995 Compulsory Education Act,** makes attendance at and completion of primary school obligatory for all. Schools throughout the country are obliged to accept children with disabilities.
- **Prime Ministerial Decree No. 18/1995 On Appointing The National Commission for Disabled Persons,** establishes a cross-ministerial body, the National Committee for Disabled Persons (NCDP), to act as the national focal point on disability matters and to advise the Government on policy, programmes and service provision relating to disability.
- **Decree on Social Security Scheme for Corporate Employees, 2000,** regulates allowances for work accidents and professional diseases and long-term allowances for permanent losses of working ability.
- **The Labour Code, 2006 (originally the Act Concerning Labour 1994),** provides for workers disabled as a result of industrial accidents. Article 26 requires labour units, defined as production, business units or service of all social-economic sectors, to give priority to 'disabled or handicapped workers' in accordance with their capabilities and skills and at the same salary.
- **The Current sixth 5-year National Economic and Social Development Plan (2006-2010),** covers employment creation; stimulating the investment environment; strengthening social dialogue; improving social security and expanding social protection; promoting safety and health, including HIV/AIDS workplace policy; safe labour migration; and, lifting Lao PDR off the list of least-developed countries by 2020.

A Draft Decree on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been prepared and is pending government approval. This draft law underpins the rights of people with disabilities to equal access and opportunity in training and employment, and in other related areas.

Key ministries involved in activities for people with disabilities

Responsibility for disability-related policies and services lies with several ministries, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, with its Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Ministry of Public

Health, and the Ministry of Education. The NCDP, chaired by a representative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, coordinates efforts to promote the full participation of disabled Laotians.

Community-based Rehabilitation (CBR) is a strategy within community development for the rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities and social integration of all people with disabilities and their families, using existing structures within the community. It aims to ensure that people with disabilities are able to maximise their physical and mental abilities, have access to regular services and opportunities, and achieve full integration within their communities and societies. CBR was introduced in 1993 in two provinces in Lao PDR.

Key international standards on disability and their status

- International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention Concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation, 1958, (No. 111). Status: ratified, June 2008.
- ILO Convention Concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons), 1983, (No. 159). Status: not yet ratified.
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and Optional Protocol. Status: ratified UN Convention, 25 September 2009. Optional Protocol has not been signed, or ratified.

Lao PDR also works to achieve targets set in the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and Pacific. Both form regional policy guidelines for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, which has been extended to 2012.

Organizations of persons with disabilities

- The Lao National Disabled Peoples' Association (LNDPA)
- Lao Disabled Women's Development Centre (LDWDC)
- Lao Association of the Blind

Organizations for persons with disabilities

- POWER - COPE
- World Concern
- World Vision
- Leprosy Group
- Prosthetic and Orthotic Worldwide Education and Relief (UK)
- Handicap International Belgium
- Netherlands Salvation for Leprosy

- Save the Children Fund - UK
- The Leprosy Mission International
- The Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres of Thailand
- The Lao Association for Handicapped Women and Children
- Landmine Victims Assistance

The role of the ILO

The primary goal of the ILO today is to promote opportunities for everyone, including people with disabilities, to obtain decent and productive work, based on the principles of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. The ILO works to achieve its goals of decent work for all through promoting labour standards, advocacy, knowledge building and technical cooperation services and partnerships, both within the ILO and externally. The Lao PDR Decent Work Country Programme establishes the framework for delivery of ILO action.

In Lao PDR, a current ILO technical cooperation project on disability is “Promoting Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities through a Disability Inclusion Support Service” (INCLUDE).

The project builds capacity at regional and national levels to effectively support the full participation of women entrepreneurs with disabilities in entrepreneurship development activities conducted under the ILO’s Women’s Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality (WEDGE) programme. INCLUDE also involves advocacy and awareness-raising activities to promote decent work for persons with disabilities.

The way forward

Productive and decent work enables people with disabilities to realize their aspirations, improve their living conditions and participate more actively in society.

Ensuring a disability perspective in all aspects of policy and labour legislation, effective implementation and enforcement of existing disability laws and policies and providing for equal employment opportunities and training are among the factors that contribute to the reduction of poverty and to the social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities in Lao PDR.

Further information:

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