



# COPE

## Newsletter

### September

### 2015

## COPE is...

The Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise. We are a local not for profit organisation that provides support to the Government of Laos' physical rehabilitation services throughout the country, focusing on prosthetics and orthotics (P&O) COPE also supports patients who come to the rehabilitation centers. COPE advocates for survivors of bomb accidents and people with disabilities in Laos.

#### FAST FACTS

**37%**

Of COPE-supported patients who were fitted with prosthetic devices are bomb survivors.

**4370**

Visitors to the Visitor Center during the second quarter of 2015!

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## Latest news

### COPE Connect Review

COPE commissioned a review of its outreach program by an external consultant named Stephen Parsons. The review took stock of the work carried out over the last 7 years and offered recommendations on moving forward. An excerpt of the review follows:

Since starting in 2009 COPE Connect has played a vital role in raising awareness across fifteen provinces regarding the rehabilitation services available for people with physical disabilities. This has been achieved by establishing a network of health officials at provincial and district level who assist COPE in the preparation for and delivery of clinical assessment field trips. Professional staff from the Center for Medical Rehabilitation, the various Provincial Rehabilitation Centers and the district hospitals join the field trips which deliver assessment events in locations that seek to maximize the opportunity for people with mobility impairments from even

remote villages to undergo assessment and get advice about the best course of action for them. Around three and half thousand people have received professional advice through the assessments, and many more people have gained a better understanding of the positive options available for people with disabilities.

However, many barriers remain that prevent people from rural and remote areas travelling to one of the five rehabilitation centers around the country, even after they have been assessed and invited for treatment. There are not yet systems in place within COPE Connect that provide ongoing support and referral services - field trips are only occasional events to each district and there is no coordinated follow up with patients. The time is right to move to the next phase of COPE Connect.

This phase will seek to directly address the barriers which prevent many people from accessing the fixed site services available at the five rehabilitation centers including using principles of sustainability, scalability, delivering as much service as feasible as close as possible to the intended beneficiaries, and simplifying

access to the rehabilitations centers, as well as an emphasis at all times should be on high quality service.

## COPE Services

### Lower Limb Prosthetic and Polypropylene Refresher Course

June 2015, COPE and the Center for Medical Rehabilitation, conducted a four-day training supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC),

This training helped the Prosthetic & Orthotic staff improve their technical skill and promote clinical thinking. It increased awareness in the practitioners of how to prescribe different types of socket designs, giving patients more options for their treatments, as well as improve patients' comfort, stability and functionality for their daily activities. Overall, the training aims to improve the patients' acceptance and satisfaction with the service provision from the physical rehabilitation centres.



The trainees with COPE's P&O Adviser, Mr. Kim Kunthea.

Twenty five participants attended this course: two

prosthetists and Orthotists and two bench technicians were invited from each PRCs and two staff from a non-MOH center in Ban Keun.

### COPE Connect

In July 2015, COPE Connect conducted patient clinical assessment in Vapee and Lao Ngam districts Saravan province. The team assessed 61 people. Out of them, 37 people invited to the services (male 22, female 15), 7 people referred to others acting organization (male 5, female 2) and 17 people were given health care advices and home exercises (male 12, female 5). During the field trip, the team provided 1 walking frame to a child patient.



Following heavy rains, the muddy dirt roads are very difficult, and at times impossible to drive, even with a four-wheel drive vehicle. Road conditions are a considerable obstacle for accessing physical rehabilitation services.

### Patient Story

Thong Chanhtha is 45 year old businessman and father of one

living in Houysaikhamb Village, Paklay District in Xaiyaboury Province. Thong was injured by an unexploded ordinance when he was 17 years old. As he was helping his mother in their vegetable garden, his spade hit on a bomb (cluster munitions). The explosion damaged his left leg so severely that it had to be amputated at the provincial hospital. This accident changed the course of Thong's life: his limited mobility made it impossible for him to work, go to school, or participate in the village life as much as he would have liked.

Twelve years later, Thong heard about COPE. Since then he has been equipped with a prosthetic leg, which enables him to walk without crutches and live a normal life again. Now he can work and raise his family income.



On August 10<sup>th</sup> 2015, Thong was fitted with his fifth prosthesis at the Center for Medical Rehabilitation because his previous one was broken. The cost of his device as well as his transport and food while receiving treatment was covered by COPE. As he thanked everyone at the Center for Medical Rehabilitation for their support, Thong said that COPE's project is vital to help more people with disabilities to move on.

## What's going on at the Visitor Center?

### COPE VC guest visit

During the third quarter of 2015 we have been pleased to welcome a number of special guests and visitors to the centre including:

Mr Richard Andrews, Assistant Secretary and Mr Anthony Apsden, Director from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. They toured the exhibition to learn more about COPE-supported services to help people with disabilities and to better understand the ongoing affects of unexploded ordnance on the Lao people.



The Embassy of Canada in Vientiane's newly appointed Canadian resident diplomat, Ms. Lee-Anne Hermann, Chargé d' Affaires, and Mr. Patrice Cousineau, Political/Economic Counsellor from the Embassy of Canada in Bangkok. They toured the center to learn about the physical rehabilitation services available to people with disabilities in Laos as well as the UXO situation. Thank you very much to the Canadian Government for its support and

wishes Ms. Hermann all the best in her new role.



Ms Beth Paige, incoming Mission Director for the USAID Regional Development Mission for Asia, and her delegation toured the exhibition as well as the Center for Medical Rehabilitation's prosthetic and orthotic clinic. Thank you very much for the visit and for the ongoing support from USAID to COPE.



### First August Celebration

COPE joined the celebrations for the 5th year anniversary of the Entry into Force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions on 1st August 2015. The Lao government organized a major meeting and sporting activities in line with the worldwide theme to promote universal ratification and accession to the Convention on Cluster Munitions as part of the anniversary of the Entry into Force. The meeting was held at Lao Plaza Hotel, on Friday, 31st of July 2015. Representatives from UXO operators, both humanitarian and commercial

companies, and other involved in Victim Assistance participated in both the meeting and UXO exhibition to showcase the organizations achievements.



The Football & Petanque Friendship Tournament, a full day sport activities was also held that day at Saphavisa Stadium, Polytechnic College to raise awareness about the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Teams representing a range of different organization and government departments joined this event. More than 200 people participated in this event.

### First review conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions - Dubrovnik, Croatia - September 7 to 11, 2015

Soksai Sengvongkham, COPE Visitor Center Manager, was invited to attend the First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions hosted by the Government of Croatia in Dubrovnik. The conference was organized by the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC), a global civil society coalition working to protect civilians from the effects of cluster munitions. Participants included representatives from signatory states, observer states, United Nations agencies, international and regional organizations and civil society.



“It was the first time I participated in an international conference” said Soksai “I am very grateful for the opportunity I was given to learn from the CMC team and other campaigners. Together with other delegates from various countries, I delivered a statement in the plenary room to update participants on the universalization of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, in particular the success and challenges on victim assistance. I also joined a group discussion on the impact of the convention on people’s lives and livelihoods, during which I was able to present COPE’s support to UXO victims in Lao PDR. It is really crucial that all governments ratify the CCM -to date ratified by only 98 countries- to ban the use of cluster munitions and provide more supports to the suffering countries on victim assistance and clearing the UXO.”

## COPE STAFF

### Procurement & Logistic Officer

Mr Sisouphanh Phonpraseath started working with COPE in August 2015 as Procurement & Logistic Officer. He has a wide experience with a variety of companies and government offices with extensive experience in IT, procurement and logistic.



“I like working for COPE because it is a new field for me. I like it as it is a challenging job where I am experiencing more. Also the working environment at COPE is very friendly!”

### Farewell & Thank You!

Farewell to our Venkatakannan Packirisamy, COPE’s Rehabilitation Advisor for over one year, and , Lena Eskeland who was both an interim Program Manager and Program Consultant during her two years with COPE.



Both contributed to the development of COPE as an organization and were instrumental in setting the course for COPE’s future support to the physical rehabilitation sector in Laos. We wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors!

Many thanks to our supporters...



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And special thanks to all the individuals, visitors and local businesses who generously support us throughout the year!

Connect with us



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