



COPE Newsletter

January 2013

Latest News at COPE

COPE Concert 2012

was a rocking success with over **\$10,000** being raised to continue COPE's work in providing rehabilitation services to survivors of bomb accidents and other people with disabilities.

Held on Saturday 8 December, a fantastic lineup of popular Lao acts including Cells, Aluna, Pull-T Club, Tuxedo, DJ Lex and DJ Leng as well as dance sensation Lao Bang Fai helped the crowd celebrate COPE's 15th birthday!

A special performance by Vientiane College students was a terrific opener to the night as they educated the audience on why cluster munitions need to be banned and told of how their perceptions of people with disabilities had been altered after having been at the COPE Visitor Centre.

Impromptu performances from community members, involvement of the audience in the Gangnam Style dance and a fantastic show from students from the Blind School band made the night even more unique.

To mark its 15th birthday Seraph Productions presented a short film about COPE's work, which was followed by a two metre line of delicious birthday cake donated by JOMA Bakeries.

COPE would like to sincerely thank platinum sponsors Vientiane College and MMG LXML Sepon, and other sponsors Beer Lao, Phu Bia Mining, The Pizza Company, Swensens, Paisai, Salana Boutique Hotel, McDonald Steed McGrath Lawyers, Gaupa Lao Construction, ALS Global (Minerals Division), Joma Bakery Café, Gecko Wines, Khop Chai Deu, Institut Français du Laos, Nudle Takeaway, L'Atmosphere and Berliner Baer German Restaurant for their generosity.



COPE is

The Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise, or COPE, is a local not for profit organisation that provides orthotic, prosthetic, rehabilitation and advocacy services for survivors of bomb accidents and people with disabilities in Laos.

In this edition

- ✓ Meet staff member Sengthong
- ✓ Check out stories from our FUNdraisers
- ✓ Meet survivor Mr Khampan
- ✓ What's COPE up to?
- ✓ NEW - Passionate people stories



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What's on at the Visitor Centre?

It's busy season right now so that means we are meeting a lot of new friends!

- Our cinema cave has recently been renovated so now it looks even more like a cave inside (it's super dark!).
- We just received a large order of T-shirts! So if you need a new one, come on in!

We've also had quite a few large donations recently - check out our FUNdraisers page to read about the generous people who are about to receive a bucket load of good karma!



Where you can find us:



Staff profile - 10 quick questions with: Seng



One: Name

Sengthong Soukhathammavong
But you can call me Seng.

Two: What is your role at COPE?

I am the Outreach Coordinator for the COPE Connect project.

I am responsible for managing COPE Connect which is an outreach program designed to ensure people are aware of the services and support available to them, and that helps people in receiving the treatment they need.

I establish networks with provincial health departments, district health offices, district hospitals, and village and community health workers. In establishing the networks, COPE Connect is training people to identify different disabilities and physical problems, particularly where mobility devices or rehabilitation services could help the individual.

The aim of the network is to identify people who need physical rehabilitation or mobility devices and refer them to COPE for assessment.

Once the network has been established a medical team, which includes a doctor, prosthetist/orthotist and district hospital staff, invites people to the district hospital for assessment. At this time, the medical team assesses whether COPE and the CMR are able to help each individual. For those who cannot afford it, COPE covers the costs associated with transportation to the assessment. This helps to overcome one of the primary barriers restricting access to treatment.

Three: When did you start at COPE? Early 2008

Four: What is your favourite thing about your job?

Travelling and meeting with local people, and being able to help them.

Five: Most memorable moment working for COPE?

Last year I went with the PRC team to conduct the patient assessment in Dakcheiung district in Sekong province. We did the assessment at one of the health centres. The health centre is located at the top range of the mountain. There was no electricity. We had to stay there over night. It was so cold and windy that night. I

could not sleep in the health centre room as it was just too cold. I put on two layers of thick clothes and moved to sleep in the car. Inside the car I felt the car shaking because of the wind. I've never been that cold in my life! It was worth it though because the next morning I got to meet some really nice locals.

Six: What is your favourite time of the year? Winter - we have warm weather here in Laos, it's not too hot and not too cold.

Seven: Favourite food?

Traditional Lao food such as Laap which is a spicy salad.

Eight: Place you most want to visit in the world?

Dubai because it's completely different to Laos.

Nine: Tell us about your family:

My wife and I have two children, my daughter is 12 and my son is 9.

Ten: Finish this sentence:

"Never trust..." yourself after too many Beer Lao!



FAST FACTS



85%

Of our 2012 prosthetic patients were male

1190

Prosthetic and Orthotic devices were manufactured and provided to patients during 2012.



Mr Khampan practices walking at the COPE rehabilitation centre in Vientiane

Patient story: Mr Khampan

Mr Khampan is a regular around the COPE Centre so we had a bit of a chat with him to find out his story.

How are you today?

Very well thank you! Smiley today, always a smiley day when I am here at COPE.

Tell us about yourself?

I am 65 years old and I come from Nadi Village in Nasaithong District which is in Vientiane. I have four children.

Can you tell us about your accident?

I was in a car accident, my leg was injured so badly that it needed to be amputated.

On the day of my accident I was driving my motorbike home from my friend's house when a car sped past me and knocked me off my bike. I was taken to hospital where I stayed for two weeks.

Unfortunately my leg was too badly damaged to be saved. A friend and my doctor told me about COPE so I came to see you.

What did you like to do before the accident?

I was a farmer before my accident, I really enjoyed my work. Before, I used to enjoy cycling and would go fishing at night with my friends. I would also have to work very hard as my family is not very well off.

The future for Khampan

COPE provided Khampan with a prosthetic leg so he could be as active as possible. He says COPE changed his life after the accident when he thought he would no longer be able to participate in ordinary day to day activities.

He is very happy, and thankful that he can walk again and gives thanks to COPE and its supporters.



We <3 COPE Fundraisers

As we look back on all the amazing support we have had, 2012 was certainly a year for giving. We want to acknowledge all of the amazing people who have shown COPE their support across the past year.

In particular we must mention a few very special people that have surprised us with outstanding generosity and commitment to COPE.

Thank you, thank you, THANK YOU to:

George Serras who raised AUD\$15,000 – read his story [here](#).

Nadine Yazbek who raised \$11,000 - read her story [here](#).

World Challenge Group who bought 26 legs! (total \$1,950)

Many thanks also go to all the travel groups who come to

visit including Contiki, Intrepid, Stray, Travel Indochina, Overseas Adventure Travel, Explore Worldwide, Vieng Champa, OAT and Exotissimo just to name a few – they have collectively have donated a few hundred legs across the year!



The World Challenge Group outside the COPE Visitor Centre

COPE Services updates

Our Prosthetics and Orthotics (P&O), Occupational Therapy (OT) and COPE Connect project teams have been working together to create some new educational materials. The materials will be used in our Provincial Rehabilitation Centres (PRC) and the surrounding villages to educate people on what COPE can do for them. Often, people are not aware of the services we offer, and many will not seek our services as they are unsure about how it all works. A poster and comic book with easy to understand language and images is being used to address this problem.

COPE's Occupational Therapy team are looking at holding a 3 day course on Adult OT and Stroke Management in February for staff from COPE's PRCs. Our mentors will train local staff in theory and techniques for treating Adult OT patients who have suffered from a stroke.

What is stroke?

The World Health Organization (WHO) says: “a stroke is caused by the interruption of the blood supply to the brain. This cuts off the supply of oxygen and nutrients, causing damage to the brain tissue” (WHO, 1978). It is also commonly referred to as a “Brain attack.”

Occupational therapists play a key role in a person's recovery as they help and support a person who has had a stroke return to daily life and their activities such as dressing, bathing, undertaking household duties and leisure activities.

If you've ever tried tying your shoelaces or putting on a shirt with one hand, you may realize how difficult this can be! OTs can help by providing adaptive aids to make these things easier.

Passionate people

We recently discovered a story about a young woman with a passion. Meet Sioned Betts. She came to the COPE Visitor Centre while travelling with her fiancé on a gap year in 2008 and was so inspired by COPE's prosthetics and orthotics work that she decided to take it on as a career. Check out her interview below! --

What did you think of the COPE Visitor Centre?

The visitor centre was extremely informative and had a great selection of displays with lots of hands-on exhibits. Trying out the wheelchair propelled by a lever and also being able to 'try on' a prosthetic leg were both fun but also made me realise how hard it must be for people who have to learn new ways of doing things after having an amputation.

What was it that made you decide to pursue study in P&O?

I was just amazed by the work that was being done at COPE. I remember realising that I'd never really thought about where prosthetic limbs came from and all of a sudden a new career path was opening up in front of my eyes. I had always wanted to have a job that helped people; discovering P&O was like having an epiphany. When I returned to England several months later, I decided to apply for the P&O course offered at Strathclyde University. I was accepted on the course and am now in my third year of study. Moving to Scotland has been life changing for the two of us, I couldn't be here without my fiancé who has been extremely supportive of my new passion.

What are your thoughts on Laos, the war and the resulting need for P&O?

Laos is such a lovely country and the people are so warm and welcoming. It is very sad that the lush countryside is still littered with unexploded cluster bombs left over from the US/Vietnam War. I was shocked to learn that Laos is the most bombed nation per capita and it disgusted me that cluster bombs had been used on a country that wasn't even part of the war. Discovering that some people collect and try to disarm the bombs for their scrap metal value made me feel completely useless and I just wanted to help in some way. There is an ever increasing need for P&O, sadly largely to do with wars all over the world.

What do you hope to achieve when you have finished studying?

When I graduate I would like to work in the UK for a few years to build up my experience level but would love the opportunity to move to a developing country to help with training and mentoring national staff. It would be wonderful symmetry if one day I am able to come back to Laos and give something back to the people that have sparked my passion for this incredibly rewarding, hands-on job.

Has studying P&O changed your thoughts on disability?

I have always been of the opinion that you should see people's abilities, not their disabilities. I suppose the eye opener for me has been other people's opinions on disabilities. I think the 2012 Paralympic Games were truly inspiring for people of all abilities because it showed the world what people with disabilities can achieve. It was so exciting that disabilities were front page news and so many

people from different backgrounds were talking about and debating the Paralympics.

Any words of advice to those wanting to make a difference?

You can achieve anything you put your mind to. I find it truly amazing that because of being handed one little leaflet on a rainy morning in Laos five years ago, I am now living in another country and studying something I'd never even thought about. In my first year of study I won an award for being the top student in my year. I am finding it such an interesting degree that time is flying by, I am so eager to start my new career and in a year and a half I will be.

"People reading this don't need to all go out there and start studying P&O to help, anybody can make a difference by supporting COPE."

- Sioned Betts (Third year Prosthetic and Orthotic Student, University of Strathclyde, Scotland)

