



# COPE News

## HELPING PEOPLE MOVE ON

### About COPE

COPE works throughout Lao PDR supporting essential services to people with disabilities. COPE works in partnership with local government services enabling people to receive prosthetic, orthotic and other mobility devices. COPE is also providing an extensive rehabilitation training program.

Our vision is for a high quality, comprehensive rehabilitation service which is locally staffed and free to those who cannot afford to pay. We are working hard to put in place innovative ways of securing funding so that the service will be here long term. Be part of a global network to get us there!

### Meet our staff



**Ms. Cody McDonald  
Orthotic Mentor**

Ms. Cody McDonald joined COPE in January 2012 as the Orthotic Mentor. She is a certified prosthetist orthotist from San Francisco, CA in the US and specializes in paediatric orthotics and prosthetics. Her role at COPE is to assist in expanding the orthotic practice through training local staff and introducing new methods and materials.

“COPE has worked hard to establish a great prosthetic practice here and I look forward to helping bring orthotic treatment to the same level and availability.”

### Dr Thongchanh Thepsomphou, 1938 - 2012

**It is with great sadness to write Dr Thongchanh Thepsomphou, the Chairman of COPE and long-standing Director of the National Rehabilitation Centre, passed away suddenly in January aged 73.**

**Dr Thongchanh was in Khammouane Province at the time in central Lao PDR preparing to visit a mother and child health project in Savannakhet Province. He was the director of the national rehabilitation program from more than twenty years and was an important figure in driving the growth of the partnership between COPE and the government service.**

**His enthusiasm for establishing high quality rehabilitation services throughout the country was widely respected. He was committed to ensuring**

**that people with disabilities had access to the physical rehabilitation services they could benefit from. He will be remembered fondly for his leadership and commitment to the services, working through even times of ill health.**

**The COPE team will miss celebrating the end of the week with Dr Thongchanh sharing Beer Lao and barbecued buffalo skin! Our thoughts are with his family at this time of loss.**



### National Staff Workshop Days

On 8-9 February 2012, 60 staff from the Physical Medicine Rehabilitation Centre and the Provincial Rehabilitation Centres came together for the annual two day national workshop. This is an important annual event in the COPE calendar where doctors, prosthetists & orthotists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists from the different centres get to share information and discuss how to further develop services for disabled persons.

Staff also participated in training sessions on clinical audit to learn how audit fits into the context of

quality improvement. They will now undertake clinical audit projects in their specific departments as part of monitoring and evaluating the quality of patient care.



## Renovations in provincial centres will continue

The buildings of the provincial rehabilitation centres are in need of renovation and are underequipped to meet all patient needs. With the help of our donor AusAID, improvements will continue to be made this year.

In Pakse, the roof and ceiling of the rehabilitation centre will be fixed and an office for the prosthetic and orthotic team will be built.

In Xieng Khouang, renovations to their new physiotherapy department are already complete and a new gait education area has been requested to be built this year.

Additionally, all centres will be provided with internet access to improve communication.



## New physiotherapy and surgical equipment

This month, we look forward to the arrival of a shipping container from the UK full of physiotherapy and surgical equipment funded by our donor CBM. The container, which includes everything from ultrasound machines and exercise bikes to patient plinths and pillows, will allow patients to receive a range of treatments not possible before.

In addition, the new equipment will also benefit our physiotherapy trainers. When speaking about the arrival of the new equipment, Mrs Boaukham from Luang Prabang said, "I'm looking forward to using the electronic patient plinths because then I won't need treatment for my own back ache!"

## Physiotherapy training programmes

The COPE Physiotherapy project works in five rehabilitation centres across Laos. The main centre is in the capital Vientiane, with the four provincial centres in Savannakhet and Pakse in the south and Xieng Khouang and Luang Prabang in the north of the country.

Two physiotherapists from each of the provincial centres have been selected to be trainers and are currently upgrading their skills through the COPE 'Training of Trainers' programme. The COPE physiotherapy mentor, who is based in Vientiane, heads the project.

Training of the physiotherapists takes place in a number of ways. Courses on specific clinical topics are frequently held in Vientiane and the next five-day course in March will focus on gait analysis and management. This will be co-run with the Prosthetic Orthotic Mentor.

The eight provincial trainers also spend an intensive week each in Vientiane to focus on knowledge and skills taught in previous COPE activities and to

cover any specific areas of interest to the individual. Mrs. Khankeo, from Savannakhet, travelled to Vientiane in mid February to work on improving her knee assessment ability. At the end of the week she said, 'I'm very happy to have this training and look forward to using my new skills.'



In addition to the teaching conducted in the capital, one-on-one skill training also takes place during bi-annual visits to each of the provincial centres. These trips not only allow the Mentor to provide intensive hands on training but also to evaluate the needs of the physiotherapy departments and their teams in general.

## Professional development in Oudomxay Provincial Hospital

Over the last year, two staff from Oudomxay Provincial Hospital have been participating in continued professional development to improve their clinical skills to treat patients with disabilities, especially children. The COPE and Physical Medicine Rehabilitation Centre team from Vientiane visits the hospital twice a year to monitor the staff's progress and complete a paediatric clinic to assess new patients.

The team recently visited in February where staff completed tests to measure the changes in their clinical competence. The paediatric clinic had its highest attendance of patients with many travelling from remote rural areas in the North of Laos. It was a clinic for the team providing valuable advice to families for the first time to help their children develop and participate in daily life.

## Fundraising activity: Irish children raised money for COPE

Ann Curran from Ireland visited COPE in February 2011 and was very impressed by COPE's work. The 4,000 US dollars she brought back to COPE in December 2011 came from very generous friends and family in Ireland. Some of the money came from children in Galway. Ann's niece and nephew Rachel (12) and Stephen (10) braved the cold Atlantic on Christmas Day to do a sponsored swim. Meabh (6) gave

money from her money box. Jack (11) who cannot walk and is a wheelchair user because he has cerebral palsy asked his parents to buy a leg for a child in Laos instead of being given a present for himself. They all wish COPE well in their excellent work.

Thank you very much Ann with family and friends and especially the children!

