



### SNAPSHOT

## Promoting Awareness of People with Disabilities' Rights with Technologies



*Despite contracting polio, Sokhorn (left) works hard as a snack seller. One of her routines in the afternoon is preparing ingredients for snacks.*

[Photo Credit: Socheata VINH ]

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### Telling Our Story

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“People used to call me ‘blind girl’ and were unfriendly to me. But now, I can stand up for myself. I tell them that people with disabilities also have rights,” remarked Sokha, a visually impaired woman in her early 30s living in Kratie province. After listening to a narrowcast MP3 on the rights of people with disabilities, she feels empowered to protect herself from verbal abuse in public. Now, she says, the villagers rarely treat her in such a way.

Sokha is one of many people with disabilities in Kratie province. Countless instances of discrimination are informally recounted by the estimated 500,000 other people living with disabilities across the country. In addition to facing discrimination, bullying and violations of their human rights, many people with disabilities are not aware of their own rights and how they can protect themselves. The public has been slow to show support to this marginalized group, and many community leaders have not engaged their communities in changing these negative ways of thinking.

To address this issue, the Cambodian Disabled People’s Organization (CDPO), a membership-based and non-governmental organization representing persons with disabilities in Cambodia, initiated a project on raising awareness on human rights for people with disabilities through offline and online methods, with a grant from USAID’s Development Innovations and funding from DFAT Australian Aid through UNDP. The project targets mainly those living in rural areas that have limited education and limited access to information, through offline and online means.

Narrowcasting is an offline method of disseminating information to specific groups of people, like rural communities, and is especially useful for locations that are not connected to the internet, or with sporadic access to electricity. The narrowcast that Sokha listened to is a strategy employed by CDPO to spread information on human rights issues to people with disabilities. CDPO’s project employs the use of an MP3 player that stores sound clips of discussions on understanding human rights, as well as stories of five ‘heroes’ who have overcome adversity while living with disabilities. MP3 players along with posters about the rights of people with disabilities were distributed to ten Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs) at the provincial level for further use with their constituents.

In Kratie province, the local DPO leader has played the sound clips to three self-help groups in the village and in a commune meeting, which has been met with great appreciation. Sokhorn, a middle-aged snack seller who contracted poliomyelitis in this province said that she felt hopeless before she knew anything about the rights of people with disabilities. “People used to consider me as weak and dependent. After the commune narrowcast [about] the rights of people with disabilities, they are now friendly to me.”

In addition to the offline narrowcast to increase rights awareness among people with disabilities, CDPO plans to build a broader social media campaign to disseminate digital content to the public that includes infographic and interactive content on rights of people with disabilities to education, health services, information access, participation in election, and accessibility to buildings. They plan to leverage more funding and cooperate with the government to further promote the rights of people with disabilities after this project. CDPO hopes that all of their programming will help encourage respect for all individuals with disabilities across the country.