
PROJECT

**PROMOTING ESTABLISHMENT OF INDEPENDENT
LIVING CENTER FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM**

(February 1st, 2013 – January 31st, 2014)

ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared by



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Table of Contents

1. Update on the project outcomes	3
2. Impacts to these outcomes	9
3. Challenges	11
4. Lessons learnt	12
5. Work plan and Activities	13

Abbreviations

CRPD: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

DET: Disability Equality Training

DOLISA: Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs

DRD: Disability Research and Capacity Development

IL: Independent Living

MOLISA: Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs

PWD: People with disabilities

1. Background information about the project:

Independent Living Project has been implemented by Disability Research and Capacity Development Center (DRD) since August 1st, 2010, sponsored by Nippon Foundation through Human Care Association. This is the pilot project for people with severe disabilities who have difficulty in integrating with society and need appropriate supporting programs that can help them live and be able to be self-responsible for themselves at home as well as community.

The project's goal: to use the effectiveness of a pilot IL program to enhance the recognition of the government and the public on:

- (1) the needs to increase the life quality for PWDs and the needs to have IL services in Vietnam, and
- (2) the possibility of having IL centers in Vietnam

2. Update on the project outcomes:

Being at the 3rd year of implementation, the project has been able to achieve more progressive results and show more outcomes as bellowed:

2.1. Outcome 1: to develop an effective IL program that is well run and meets the needs of PWDs

It can be realized that life quality of PWDs (user), especially person severe disability is supported to live independently at home and community. Users have a more positive change their self - awareness of disability, having more confidence in life, improving independent living skills, taking part in more social activities, raise up their voice for their reasonable rights and benefits, as well as being helpers for other peers.

Activities have been implemented:

2.1.1 Providing PAs (PA - Personal assistant): Who assists people with severe disabilities in daily life; give them advantages to enhance their capacity to live independently.

Since the day of implementation, the project has had a total of 22 PAs (17 females and 5 males) and 11 people with severe disabilities included 4 PWDs do not use PA service any more. Currently, there are 7 full-time PAs and 3 part-time PAs. Besides providing PAs for 7 PWDs (directly beneficiaries from the project), the project also provide PAs for other PWDs in need in DRD's activities. One PWD need from 8 hours to 12 hours per day of PA to assist them in daily life needs such as going to school, going to work, socializing, participating in group activities, in personal activities as personal hygiene, washing, cooking, in helping PWD with self-control and self-determination rights, etc.

Moreover, the project helps a group of youth with developmental delay who have syndrome of intellectual impairment improve their IL skills like taking care of themselves, personal hygiene, studying, learning cooking, doing simple work so that they help their parents and earn some money, etc. This activity aims to change their families and community's negative thinking about the ability of people with developmental delay.



Now, the group's members rise up to 20. Under the two mentors' assistance (considered as PA), they have had positive changes.

Up to now, the Project has conducted 6 large-scale training for PAs courses with a total of 205 participants from more than 200 volunteers, students, PAs, collaborators...

Besides that, new PAs are also instructed and shared experience by PA coordinators when they are on duty. The courses were about awareness of disabilities, the philosophy and meaning of IL model for PWD, the role and duty of PA. It also focuses on skills and techniques of how to safely assist PWD to live independently at home and community. They were guided specific skills for assisting each target of different types of disability such as people with spinal cord injuries, undeveloped limbs, cerebral palsy, etc. under the instruction of disability specialists, medical specialists and project's staffs. These courses not only trained on skills and gave information for official PAs of the Project before they take the job which is rather new in Vietnam but also provide a network of collaborators and staff resources in case of need.

Participant said: *"When we play the role of disability, unable hear or speak, we feel very difficult when communicating with the visitors in the park. Most of them try to avoid and don't want to help me. I understand more than how difficult for the PWDs to face. This is the first time I feel the discrimination!"*

2.1.2. Trainings on Independent living skills and soft skills for PWDs: Conduct training courses from basic level to advanced ones such as how to work with PAs, financial management, time management, communication, cooking, etc. in order to help PWDs live independently.

The project organized 11 times with the total of over 273 turns from 80 PWDs. The courses' goals are providing information, soft skills and life skills for PWD so that



they will be more confident in themselves and find out their abilities to live independently. Most of the course sections had made positive effects on PWDs and received good feedback from them. PWDs said: *“we are well – prepared with the knowledge and skills necessary for independent living. Supporting PWDs not only create*

appropriate conditions for the PWDs to live independently but also trains the personalities and reinforce helpful living skills for them.”

2.1.3. Peer-Counseling activities: group and individual sessions are still going on as planned. One of the most necessary activities to help PWDs in psychology, regain confidence and solve daily problems by their own choices and decisions.



The events still focused on the basic concepts of peer-counseling and the practice between participants. It helps PWDs to rebuild their self-confidence, relationship and to make the society to be better.

Up to now, the Project has conducted 10 official training courses with the total of 175 counseling turns for more than 80 PWDs. The courses were about awareness of

disabilities, the philosophy and meaning of IL model for PWD, the role and duty of counselor.

The project's peer-counselor activity includes individual peer-counseling and group peer-

counseling. They can be conducted as direct counseling at office and PWDs' home, peer-counseling through email, telephone, Face book, messenger, Skype, etc.

The good point from this activity is that the project has managed to form a core group of peer counselor of 7 members. The project has focused on building their capacity for a year with different necessary skills and it is expected that the first session done by the core peer counselor will be initiated in this year.

2.1.4. Information and consultation providing related to disability, laws and policies, housing information, job opportunities, studying and scholarship information, medical services, bus service... for many people with and without disabilities, and parents of children with disabilities.

Social media has been used to disseminate information. Blog, Face book are proved to be very effective tool in letting people aware of what is happening with the project as well as independent living philosophy. Almost all users, PA and those participating in the IL activities have their own FB, that the information is often been shared. Sometimes there are PWDs are to approach to DRD and the IL team for questions, so they use FB to approach for clarification and explanation about disabilities issues, activities that DRD is currently doing, whom they can ask for support, etc. Therefore, the project team has decided to use FB as a part of social media tool to distribute and advocate for IL related activities.

The project blog has been also a useful tool to update audience about all disability-related issues and IL activities.

2.2. Outcome 2: To do awareness rising on IL services and needs

The awareness of PWDs will be changed and the self – confident in their ability to live



independently will be increased. And PWDs' family and community's awareness of PWD's desire and ability to live independently will be changed and raised.

They have more precise awareness of PWD's need for independent living and integrating with society, especially people with severe disabilities; deeply understand the important role of PAs, cooperate with DRD in

order to give PWDs advantages that help them have confidence empowerment and participate in various kinds of social activities.

In 2013, there were 167 articles and video clips about DRD being posted on official online newspaper and television channels, thus expecting to share information about disabilities and more and more people are aware of the obstacles as well as any reasonable accommodation that would be extremely appropriated for PWDs in full social inclusion.

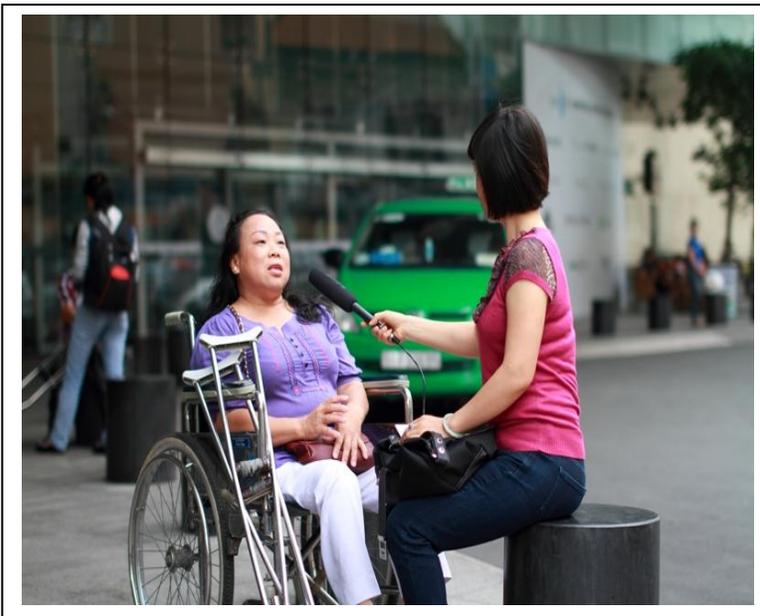
Activities have been implemented:

2.2.1. Outdoor activities: Organize outdoor activities such as entertainment, socializing, skill training combined fieldtrip in order to give PWDs opportunities to take part in social activities. The purposes of those outdoor activities were giving PWDs opportunities to go out and visit public entertainment centers, to access public facilities and meet other people, socializing and sharing life experience as well as develop their skills. These were also good chances to change other people's view, thinking and attitude towards PWD's value, needs and abilities. Through all of that, we can make positive effects on stopping discrimination and removing social and environmental barriers to PWDs' integration.

The project organized 7 times with a total participation of over 210 turns for 80 PWDs. The goals' trips raise awareness and better understand for PWDs and the community about the needs for accessing to public facilities, amusement parks...

Let's listening to their thoughts: *"It is a wonderful day! A feeling that is hard to describe makes me trembling." Or "Before, whenever I came out to somewhere that I could not able to access, I never come again but since joining in DRD, I understand the right of the PWDs so I'd like to come those places. I can raise my voice to everyone."*

2.2.2. Self-advocacy: help PWDs conduct their self-advocacy activities and



petitions, providing information for concerned organs of government and the mass media.

The project, on one hand, made 2 recommendations to HCM City People's Committee, Department of Transportation, and Managing Department of Urban Railway: One recommendation suggested that accessible buses should be equipped with

low accessible floor buses for PWDs (more than 500 signatures supporting) (2011). Another one suggested that trains and subway should be accessible for PWDs (2013). it was a good chance for PWDs to raise their voice for their reasonable needs. On the other hand, the project advocated for a barrier free environment for PWDs through **accessible map campaign**.

In addition to these above activities, the project team and users of the project have worked in cooperation and participated in the other projects managed by DRD in organizing and providing opportunities for members to participate in many activities such as:

Sensitization workshop for journalists: Taking the fact that within the last 5 months of 2013, there've been 101 articles and TV shows about DRD and its beneficiaries, a DET training was organized to raise awareness for journalists and communication collaborators to introduce about different models with focus on the rights-based approach that DRD follows. The journalists agreed that the way PWDs see themselves have either negative or positive impact on the community perception. The way journalists posts news about



PWDs also wheel the community's understand and thinking. Therefore, it is very important to deliver images of PWDs with dignity and respect to mass media in order to make people accept all other's differences. With focused group discussion, the journalists now understand what should be mentioned and what should be avoided when delivering news on PWD and what

can media do to support the rights of PWD. The result of the training could be seen with articles about PWDs using proper terms and starting mention about the equal opportunities for PWDs.

International Disability Day: To celebrate the International Disability Day on the 3rd December, DRD organized the Accessibility Event with games experiencing different types of disabilities were designed for participants who are people without disabilities. DRD also exhibited images of an Accessible City and organized a magnificent musical performance done by PWDs. There were about 1,000 people attending the event, including students from 10 universities in Ho Chi Minh and members of DRD's network. 17 articles and TV shows had been posted about the event, contributing to advocate for more accessibility for PWDs. After the event, most of students expressed that they now were aware of barriers that PWDs have faced. Nguyen Minh Trung, 2nd-year student said

“By joining this game, I realize that though the moving of PWDs is very difficult, they are people with such effort. And also the public transportation is still causing barriers for PWDs”. Another student also shared “My classmate is a person using wheelchair. Every day he has to climb up to the class upstairs. I wish that my university will create more conditions for him and other students with disabilities by having elevators or arranging them to study at ground level. I also wish that the road and public buses are more accessible for PWDs.”

This event aimed not only at raising awareness for community members about disability issues, but creating opportunities for PWDs in employment, especially self-employment. More than 40 businesses were invited to participate, among which 20 opened their kiosks to introduce their products. YWDs spent time with different shops and they said that this was the best ever opportunity for them to think further what they would like to do for earn their income lately.

Accessibility Exhibition: The exhibition lasted one week from the 15th to 23rd December at DRD’s Clubhouse “Life is Beautiful” to show pictures and testimonies of PWDs in have access to education, vocational training, employment and other social activities. This exhibition was open for all people who are students and other community members to provide them with an overall picture about PWDs and how they have overcome barriers in life to enjoy their rights as expressed in the UNCRPD and Vietnam Law on Disability. Different workshops were organized within the exhibition week, covering topics of “Go”, “Family”, “Experience”, “Construction” and “Law and policies”.



The exhibition had attracted more than 300 people and mass media. Most of participants expressed that they are better aware of the issues and expected to have more public attention towards the PWDs. One more result that the event has brought is that the exhibition was prepared since May 2013 by more than 10 collaborators who are students at different universities. After the event, they expressed that they now better understand the issues relating to disability and accessibility in particular. They also know how important reasonable accommodation is in providing full inclusion for PWDs.

2.2.3. Events, workshops, media programs to promote the philosophy, meaning and services of the independent living model.

The project organized 5 times for a total of more than 316 turns from 80 PWDs.

The Special music “Full Moon”: This was not only like a bridge to child with disability



who expressed gratitude to her/ his parents but also an opportunity to raise community’s awareness about PWDs’ rights. There were more than 60 letters for the program. Based on the need of the group in learning experience of the others who are well-established, the project organized an exchange visit for 35 PWDS to province Can Tho. Clubs of students with disabilities of Can Tho and

Dong Thap were invited to join, increasing the total number of participant to 65. During the visit, they were able to ask questions about different issues: The organization and development of a group, Fund-raising activities through various resource mobilization, Independent living model. As the result, members are more aware of the development trend of a group and learn some skills especially those related to live independently from the other groups’ experiences.

One of the users said: “Before getting to know DRD, I did not know what my future would be, I did not have a clear plan and any objectives for life, though I’d thought of becoming “a designer”. I did not know about the rights of PWD neither, did not have any soft skills at all. I spent most of my free time staying at home. At that time, I thought that “let’s finish my vocational training first, then look for a stable job”, however, it was not happening as what I thought because I never got into conversation with anyone. When I was forced to drop out school, I was very sad and frustrated, but since then, I felt anxious in looking for opportunities that help me live independently. Knowing DRD through a friend, joining all activities have gradually changed myself. I have gained employment skill, communication skill and know much more people than before.

With more attention from media, PWDs have also been contacted by journalists for interview. They have started to share with media about the dignity and values of PWDs and promote the reasonable accommodation for better and full inclusion of PWDs in the society and the message of “A world for all” initiated by DRD has been delivered to advocate for disability-related issues.

2. Impacts

After three year of operation, although the pilot project has been carried out only for 7 PWDs in urban area of Ho Chi Minh city, the results and the changes from direct and indirect beneficiaries and from the community has proved that PWDs, even people with severe disabilities, can make full of contribution to community as well as reduce the burden on their families and society when they are given appropriate assistance. 4 PWDs do not use PA service but they still join other activities such as skill training, peer-counseling. They are considered as successful cases because after using IL services, her skills and capacity have been enhanced. They can apply what they learned from IL philosophy to ask for assistance from community. It was introduced very clearly on the Annual Review of the IL project on the 8th December 2013.

3. Challenges

The philosophy and meaning of IL are still too new to PWDs in Vietnam; hence there are many challenges that the project has to face, especially the running of PA service, because:

- PA is still a new concept and not an officially acclaimed job. Therefore, many people might have a vague understanding of the meaning of this job and equate it with house servant, which leads to the fact that few people want to choose it as their career.
- PA's expenses are out of all proportion to users or their families' income.
- Another reason which causes PA troubles when they assist PWDs at home and community is that traffic system of HCMC is not easy for PWDs to access, while one of the project's purposes is to encourage PWDs to take part in every social activities, to promote their opportunity to access education, work and contribute to society. Thus, going out to integrate in society is necessary. However, public places and buildings are not accessible for PWDs. Now, although some streets have been improved with sloping pavements for wheelchairs, those streets are being occupied for other usages and sloping pavement for wheelchairs are too high for PWDs to use. In addition, bus is a very useful kind of public transport but it still has many characteristics that causes PWDs difficulties such as high floor with many steps, no special room for wheelchairs (only reserved seats for PWDs, senior citizens and pregnant women now); the staff's showing not much sympathy to PWDs' needs, showing discrimination against or no respect to PWDs, which make PWDs hardly use this kind of transport. Taxi and motorbike-taxi are too expensive to hire while PWDs have to transfer a lot every day; moreover, most of people with severe disability is still unemployment but the government welfare is still not enough. Therefore, to help PWDs take part equally in social activities like others, PAs have to use their own means of transportation (usually motorbike). This brings other problems of petrol and parking expense of PA, as well as more danger for PAs and PWDs. So, these difficulties limit PWD's chance to attend social activities. However, from other view, these difficulties/challenges are reasons for PAs to be more specially well-trained in order to reduce risks. As a result, PA could gain trust from PWDs and make them feel more assured.

- Lots of families and community are still not fully understood PWDs' needs and values. Lots of difficulties still exist in PWDs' life. The infrastructure and public facilities are not appropriate for PWDs. The country has a lot of obstacles. The benefit for PWDs is unsubstantial. The world's economic crisis is also major challenges to the development of the service. However, we also consider those as an advantage for the project to expand activities in order to help PWDs improve their skills, promote their self-advocacy and self-pleading abilities, voice up their rights for reasonable needs, help them use available resources, as well as to prove their contribution to the development of society.
- It is how DRD can get this model be duplicated widely, especially by the concerned agencies such as MOLISA at national level and DOLISA at provincial level. Taking the well-established and strictly-followed procedures of support into account, if this model is applied by the authorities, a larger number of PWDs will benefit from the basic social services, thus contributing the sustainability of this model.

4. Recommendations

- DRD Independent Living project is still the “starting point” to the establishment of official ILC in Ho Chi Minh City. The project determined to drive the promotion of life quality of PWDs forward with IL concept and reach out as far as possible that provide quality services to PWDs in the area. Furthermore, the project will organize the training courses to spread IL concept and services to other PWDs.
- Intensify activities of enhancing awareness and improving skills for PWDs and community.
- The project still focuses on creating more leadership opportunities for the existing YWDs and building their capacity in order to form a group of potential leaders for further activities with the least support from DRD.
- Documentation of the most significant changes is very useful and important to disseminate information and share with other organizations for duplication.
- Increase self-advocacy and ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development) ability for PWDs.
- To create more opportunities for PWDs, the project will organize advocacy campaign to sensitize about disabilities issues just like what it has been doing last time and get a lot of positive comments and attitudinal changes. The advocacy campaign will be designed in such way that social model, reasonable accommodation and benefits that have more precise awareness of PWDs' need for independent living and integrating with society.
- Enhance the project staffs' capacity.
- Cooperate with other organizations, especially local authorities to appeal and take advantage of community's resources in various ways.

5. Work plan and activities for February 2014 – January 2015:

ID	Activities	Timeline	Remark/Responsible
Objective 1: Peer-counseling activities			Sharing peer-counseling activity and the philosophy and meaning of IL to other PWDs who live in districts of city.
	Monthly support for 12 months	Feb-Dec	
	Once two months	Mar-Dec	
	Provide general support for a core group of peer counselors (once quarterly)	Feb-Dec	
	Annual Review	Dec	
Objective 2: Training on skills			Focuses on creating more leadership opportunities for the existing PWDs and building their capacity in order to form a group of potential leaders for further activities with the least support from DRD.
	Providing needed training based on the assessment (Once two months)	Mar-Dec	
	Annual Review	Dec	
Objective 3: Advocacy activities for free-barriers environment			Cooperate with other organizations, especially local authorities to appeal and take advantage of community's resources in various ways.
	Increase self-advocacy by PWDs' voice to other parts of city.		
	Made a recommendation to Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee.	May-Aug	
	Annual Review	Dec	

Certification

Name and Title of person who prepared the report:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Tung', written over a horizontal line.

Nguyen Thanh Tung, IL Coordinator

Name and Title of person who is legally responsible for the grant:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Luu Thi Anh Loan', written over a horizontal line.

Luu Thi Anh Loan, DRD Vice Director

Date: February 19th, 2014