



## Associate Parliamentary Limb Loss Group

*for the promotion within Parliament and Whitehall of the Prevention of limb loss and the Provision of prosthetic, orthotic, wheelchair and other vital rehabilitation services to all persons suffering limb loss in the UK and Internationally*

# John Howell MP

## Welcomes POWER International

### Lifeline to Laos



John Howell MP says: *"having recently attended a local fund raising concert in my Constituency in rural Oxfordshire for POWER International 'POWER' to raise awareness to the plight of limb loss issues in Laos, it now gives me great pleasure to welcome the Lifeline Appeal shown on BBC TV in July 2008. This appeal whilst showing the need for organisations*

*such as POWER internationally, also shown their superb work and achievements through their locally developed Co-operative Prosthetic and Orthotic Enterprise 'COPE'."*

John went on to say that *"I would like to also take this opportunity to congratulate POWER on their achievements to-date and wish them well for the future challenges that lie ahead."*

The Lifeline appeal programme is available to view on the link below

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=gwletkkqd40&feature=email>.

This appeal was in part being shown through Santar's story, which we have also shown below.

## Santar's Story

Seng, a patient of COPE in Laos was describing a 'disease' that resulted in his above knee amputation; who was managing well on crutches but was keen to hear about whether or not a leg could be fitted. Whilst discussing his options with his clinician when he told COPE about another boy that they had heard about, all they knew was that a trekking guide who worked in the town might know where he lived.



The directions were vague but eventually POWER arrived at the village.

Santar was sitting on a small wooden stool. His younger brother was wearing a

traditional Yao hat and sat silently on his grandmothers' knee.



Everyone stared at each other for a while.

The story unfolded, Santar was called to cross the road, his deaf father hadn't heard the truck coming and Santar, keen to obey, ran into the road.

He lost his right leg and his left leg healed badly.



He returned home to a village of 4 houses on a hill overlooking a valley

12kms from Muang Sing. There he stayed for 2 years until January 2007.

His left foot was stiff, pointing down so that he could not stand on it.

He was also confined to his house with no idea that outside his small world there was help available.



Santar stared at the floor while discussions continued about what could be done. The family agreed to send Santar and his sister to Vientiane. They made the 26 hour bus journey together. Also on the bus were Seng and his Father and the 2 boys became firm friends.

Santar required surgery but after 6 weeks the cast came off and with a support fitted Santar was able to stand again.



The prosthetic leg was adjusted; Santar was determined to master walking with it. Santar practiced in parallel bars relentlessly and was soon walking slowly with crutches and then after a weekend of practice he proudly showed how he could stand and walk without support.



Soon he was swimming, jumping into the water and looking forward to returning home and to school ..... and what about Seng?

He did receive a new leg and returned home but sadly with devastating news.

Whilst in Vientiane it was discovered that he had numerous tumours throughout his body. He was never told that the disease that took his leg was cancer and that it was possible it could recur.

He died at home with his family 5 weeks after returning home.

He was an older brother figure for Santar, vital in helping him settle in to the strange world they found themselves in.

From different ethnic groups they shared a strong bond, both of these boys are an inspiration to all who met them.

The story continues as we hear that Seng's family who helped Santar get the help he needed, will offer him their home and continued support. They live very near the school and Santar will be able to walk to school and return to his village at weekends.



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## Background Information

Before POWER started in Laos, the provisions for helping amputees were underdeveloped and insufficient. So POWER was invited there in August 1994 by the Ministry of Health of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and then started a nationwide programme partnering with government.

In 1997 POWER set up the local organisation now called COPE, so that in time the service came to be run and managed by Laos people. We are still involved 12 years later, as a donor and supporter of COPE, having ensured there are properly trained technical and administrative staff.

COPE in partnership with the local service is now the ONLY provider of prosthetic, orthotic and mobility devices in Laos. These devices can really make a difference but people also need rehabilitation to ensure that they are effective.

COPE's vision is a high quality, holistic 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 for the long term.

COPE now treats over 1,500 patients per year throughout Laos, and this number is growing more people know of the service.

Since 2001 POWER has been involved in a programme for strengthening the Lao Disabled People's Association 'LDPA' which is run in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and this is now our principal project.



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The association continues to develop and open branches in further provinces, now being in 11 out of the 17 provinces in Laos.

POWER is planning a new stage of development to start in 2008, with the creation of self-help groups and employment initiatives for disabled people, in a drive to be more effective in short-term efforts to lift people out of poverty.

POWER International is an Associate Member of the Associate Parliamentary Limb Loss Group

For further information please visit the websites below

POWER International [www.powerinternational.org](http://www.powerinternational.org)

Co-operative Prosthetic and Orthotic Enterprise [www.copelaos.org](http://www.copelaos.org)

or email

[info@powerinternational.org](mailto:info@powerinternational.org)

[cope@laopdr.com](mailto:cope@laopdr.com)

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Associate Parliamentary Limb Loss Group Website is at [www.apllg.org.uk](http://www.apllg.org.uk)

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