

ChildFund  
Rugby








# Stories of Changes

# ABOUT CHILDFUND RUGBY

ChildFund Rugby's partnerships provide children and young people with opportunities to play, learn and grow. Using integrated rugby and life skills curricula, young people from vulnerable communities are equipped to overcome challenges, inspire positive social change, and take active leadership roles within their communities.

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# CASE STUDIES

## WHAT ARE THEY?

A ChildFund Rugby case study is an in-depth investigation of a specific person, event or trend in its real-life context. The subject of the case study (e.g. a female Coach working with teachers) is used as an example of a phenomenon (e.g. leadership) and provides the frame through which the investigation attempts to understand the underlying causes and factors (e.g. improved leadership skills among female Coaches).

# Lao Khang

*Former Coach - Laos*

For Lao Khang, one of the earliest participants in Pass It Back, the experience has been life-changing.

Lao Khang comes from a small village in Nonghet District in the rural north of Laos. Like many of her classmates, she helped on the family farm, in addition to keeping up with her schoolwork as she was growing up. At 13 years old, Lao Khang stopped going to school so that she could take care of her family as her father had fallen ill. “I couldn’t talk about what I wanted at that time,” she says.

In 2012, at age 20, Lao Khang was introduced to the world of sport through ChildFund Laos’ Sport for Development activities in Nonghet, taking part in the first pilot of what was to eventually become Pass It Back.

Lao Khang learned about the sport of rugby, and seized the opportunity to be a part of something new that was engaging young boys and girls in her community. She began participating in rugby for leadership sessions held in the village, eventually becoming a Coach, which led to an internship with the Lao Rugby Federation.

A native Hmong speaker, she worked hard to improve her Lao language skills while also supporting the Lao Rugby Federation and ChildFund with coaching work in Vientiane, as well as organising rugby events and activities in Nonghet District. As her rugby skills improved, Lao Khang was also selected for the Lao Women’s National Team. Since 2014, she has represented her country at international tournaments in Thailand, Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore including the 2014 Asian Games and the 2015 Southeast Asian Games.

In 2014, Lao Khang was awarded a Global Sports Development’s Athletes in Excellence Award. She is the first Hmong speaker also to earn a World Rugby Coach Educator qualification and now helps lead World Rugby courses in Laos as well as helping with coaching courses in Vietnam.

Lao Khang says: “As a girl I was always very shy. Now I am a brave and confident young woman. Before I began playing rugby I only knew people in my small village. Now I have friends all around the world.

In 2018, Lao Khang was named by the BBC as one of its 100 most influential and inspirational women from around the world, chosen for their impact on their communities, and in 2019 Lao was also listed in Forbes 30 under 30 Asia Entertainment and Sports.



She remains a firm believer in the power of sport to change lives, especially children in developing communities. Lao Khang says: “Rugby is an exciting way to educate children. When we play games, we teach children about things such as the importance of hand-washing, manners and respect for elders and friendship.” And she is determined to see others benefit in the same way she has: “I want to help involve as many Lao girls and women from rural and remote communities as possible in rugby so they too can feel brave and strong.”





# Lan

*Coach - Vietnam*

Lan is 22 years old and lives in a village in a rural, mountainous area in Kim Boi, Hoa Binh. As with many areas of Vietnam, life can be challenging and communities have limited access to many of the opportunities that people in more urban areas have access to, such as organised sport and safe spaces to play sport. Women and girls in Lan's community, as well as those in neighbouring areas, face difficult challenges around participating in sport because, as Lan highlighted to us, they have more burdens than men and boys in their daily life: "We [women] have to spend most of our days farming and doing housework, and rarely have time to go out." Before the Pass It Back Program launched in Kim Boi, Lan seldom had opportunities to play sport. However, in 2015 the program started to provide opportunities to children and young people in Kim Boi to play sport and learn life skills, and Lan seized the opportunity to sign up to become a Coach and coach children in her community on tag rugby and life skills. The more she participated as a Coach, the more she realised that she really enjoyed playing rugby and coaching children. She had found a chance to participate, to play, and to "learn about gender equality, about how women can be leaders, and about how women can play sport." Lan has been working hard to improve herself, particularly around coping with barriers that she faces as a female Coach. In a community where the majority (of both men and women) feel strongly that women and girls should just stay in the kitchen where they belong and that they should be happy there. Lan has challenged this 'zone' the community has placed her in and instead has fought for the right to participate and be involved in organised sport. Over the past three years, Lan has been a model Coach, she has graduated from teaching college, she has become a Coach Group Leader, and now she is embarking on her newest journey as a mother.

Before Lan joined the program, she had limited opportunities to play sport. Lan liked volleyball but she was only able to play it two or three times in her life. Her village has only one playing space, and once the boys and men start playing, the girls and women cannot use the space or join in the game. Lan and her friends once had to give the playing space to the boys even though the boys came later. The girls and women in the village are shackled by the idea that, as Lan said, "Our [referring to girls] space is in the kitchen, not on the sports field." Lan also spoke of how: "Most married women do not know how to enjoy their life. Some of them do not even have time to see a doctor when they get sick. And girls are never told that they have the right to play sport. Instead, girls are told to do the gardening, cut bamboo and sell it in the market, and do the cleaning around the house. Sport is generally seen as something just for men and boys, not for women and girls."

When Pass It Back started, Lan was recruited as she demonstrated a strong interest in being a Coach. At the time, Lan was a young girl who had just graduated from high school and was still finding a path for her future, so it was a big decision for her to make. Lan was completely new to coaching. Like other new Coaches, she was nervous and wondered, "What should I do with rugby and coaching? How can I make players understand what I try to teach them?" After recruitment, Lan went to Laos for 15-days of training, and it was there that she first touched a rugby ball and learned what to do with it. Lan and the other Coaches also learned about life skills such as leadership, gender roles, planning for the future, overcoming peer pressure, and how to use rugby to deliver life skills to children in her community. When Lan returned to Kim Boi, she started recruiting players and organising her training sessions. As a young female Coach, however, she faced many difficulties in keeping her team activities going (sometimes she was not able to manage her players during training, for example). Many parents even questioned her and other Coaches' abilities to deliver training. Some even asked Lan, "Who do you think you are, what kind of certificate you have to teach our

children?” Lan said that it was very hurtful for her and the other Coaches to hear that. Lan added, “In many people’s eyes I was just a high school graduate and the other Coaches were just married farmers; people really looked down on us.”

To support the Coaches, the Pass It Back program regularly organises training to up-skill the Coaches. As a result, Lan has learned more and sharpened her coaching and leadership skills, as well as her rugby skills and life skills knowledge. The program also brought Lan to Thailand for the Bangkok 7s competition (in November 2017, organised by the Bangkok International Rugby Sevens) and a World Rugby Level 1 course was hosted by Lao Rugby Federation in Vientiane, in October 2016 where she learned about coaching contact rugby. But it was in Bangkok at the Asia Rugby “Growing the Game” Conference in 2016 that Lan had what she calls “my opportunity of a lifetime” where she delivered a speech about Pass It Back to “a room filled with people from various rugby federations across Asia.” Lan said that she never expected that such a thing would be possible in her life. By doing this, Lan said, “I felt proud of myself, that I had the strength to follow my passion for being a Coach.”

Lan has been working very hard on managing her group activities and developing tag rugby in her community. At the very beginning of her coaching career, she had just three teams with 30 players, but now Lan is a strong Coach Group Leader with many Coaches and teams under her guidance. Her group has four female Coaches and three male Coaches, and the group has 13 teams with over 161 players (including eight female teams with 118 players). Lan has also been behind the scenes of a considerable increase in the number of players, as well as the remarkable effort that she and her Coaches put into each and every training session. They have also been successful in slowly changing the perceptions of those in their community regarding women and sport. In the beginning, it was difficult. For example, Lan described how:

“The pronunciation of ‘rugby’ in Vietnamese sounds similar to the pronunciation of ‘having sex’; ‘rugby’ is said ‘bóng bầu dục’ and ‘having sex’ is said ‘quan hệ tình dục’. So, people often made fun of us Coaches and our activities. Sometimes, they saw us, and instead of saying, ‘Hi Lan’, they made fun and said, ‘Hi having sex Coach’. It was so disgusting. Even some people who worked at the school and for the local authorities looked down on us. They refused to help us whenever we asked for help; they said they were busy, and asked us to come back later, but when we come back they said they were busy again. They acted like they were just kidding and playing with us, and not taking us seriously at all. Many people did not support our group’s activities, and many teachers and parents stopped their students and kids from joining the program.”

Whenever this occurred, Lan would find the courage to work harder and let the outcomes convince those who spoke badly about the program. With support from the Pass It Back program, she and the other Coaches in her group have not only supported children (girls and boys) to participate in sport and life skills activities, but have also begun changing stereotypes in their communities regarding women and girls in sport.

Lan told us of a player named Que who was playing in the “Female Fighting Wolves” Team and who had stopped playing rugby on her father’s request. Que’s father did not allow her to continue to participate because he thought it was all just a waste of time and did not bring any benefits to his child.



Lan recognised Que’s strong abilities in rugby and how quickly she absorbed new life skills (such as in the Planning for the Future Module). After hearing that Que had left the program, Lan and Hien (a Coach in her group) went to Que’s father to convince him that his daughter Que is a gifted player. They showed Que’s father evidence of how Que had set up goals for her studies and had a plan to achieve them — something that came as a result of participating in the program. According to Lan, Que’s father had not taught this to his daughter, and so he now saw the value in his daughter participating and let her resume. Que then came back and continued with the program. In fact, Que is now a Coach and is coaching her own teams. Que is not the only one to receive this kind of support. Many times, Lan and her peers have fought hard to ensure their players have the right to play sport, for both boys and girls.

One of the reasons that Lan is a Coach Group Leader is that she can identify potential conflicts or issues and proactively deal with them. This is a skill that she learned as a Coach in the Pass It Back program and one that she has used to help many players, but it is also a skill that recently became critical to her own future. Recently, Lan’s life changed significantly; she got married and has given birth to a daughter. She has followed the traditional role of a married woman and the couple is living with the husband’s family, where she has had to change some of her routines to adapt. Traditionally, if her husband and husband’s family ever asked her to stop coaching, she would have to give up being a Coach. However, Lan predicted that this situation could occur, and so, before the wedding, Lan asked her husband: “Will you let me continue as a Coach after our marriage?” Then she said, “If I cannot, then we should not marry.” Lan meant this, as she separated with her previous boyfriend as he tried to stop her from being a Coach. Before the wedding, Lan also asked to talk with her future husband’s parents regarding her future with the program. She shared with them her passion for being a Coach and for playing rugby with them. “I asked them to understand and provide support for me so I can follow the love of my life and be beside their son.” Lan also said to the parents “If you cannot support me, I will not marry your son.” Her husband’s parents are open-minded and were also convinced by her determination, so they agreed that Lan should keep participating in Pass It Back. They even discussed some future plans together such as when she has a baby, they all should all share the housework and set up weekly plans for all the activities happening in the house so people can support each other. In contrast to other married women in the village, Lan is able to enjoy being a Coach and follow her passions.

Lan’s story is remarkable in a place like Kim Boi. Each woman only has one husband so should be 'women do not dare talk to their husband's family to discuss matters like this so directly and to negotiate for their rights like Lan did. Lan strongly believes that, “The situation can be solved if only people openly discuss it.” She also said that:

“I had that much bravery because I love my job as a Coach. I would rather end the relationship than stop being a Coach. I am fascinated by the program, where my players and I can play rugby in safe places, free to express our opinions. Being a Coach has helped me to make more friends, even some from Laos, where I never imagined I would have friends. It helps me to understand and fight for beautiful things, like how everyone should be treated equally. I am so lucky as I have entered into my husband’s family where people give women like me a chance to pursue my dream of being a Coach. Not many girls and women in our communities are as lucky as I am. I feel lucky as I have been equipped with knowledge that empowers me. In the program, I became a member of a strong network where we, the Coaches, all fight so hard to give girls

and boys the opportunity to play and to learn. I now know how to ensure my rights, so I always keep in mind that I have to do more to give other women and girls in our communities opportunities to do the same.”

“While I was pregnant I kept trying to continue my role in the program, right up until the day I gave birth. I did this because I would like to give other women and girls the message that just because I am a married woman and I am pregnant doesn’t mean that I can’t be a part of a sport for development program like Pass It Back. And, so can you all. All you have to do is to believe in yourself and plan for it. I set my goals and made a detailed plan for the coming baby, so that I could keep everything in order and balance my responsibilities between taking care of my family and my passion for being a Coach. So, if a pregnant woman like myself can continue to pursue her passion in sport, everyone can. To all the women and girls out there, please keep being involved in whatever passion makes you happy and make your community a better place.”



*Lan and her daughter, Little Bear, during a Coach Training in July 2019. After giving birth to Little Bear, Lan returned to the program and continued being a Coach. She took Little Bear along to almost all her work trips, so that she could both take care of her daughter and participate in activities.*

# Truong

## *Coach - Vietnam*

Bui Van Truong is a 25-year-old from Nuong Dam Commune in Kim Boi District. He graduated with a degree in mathematics from Northwestern University of Education. Currently, he is both a farmer and a Coach in the Pass It Back program.

According to Truong, “I have only coached players for 4 months, but there are so many memories that I have with the players, and their way of thinking and their stories are very funny and lovely”.

Based on Pass It Back’s platform of providing specialised training for coaches, Truong has found himself gaining new experiences around working and new knowledge around communicating effectively with children. Truong told us, “I think that the work of teachers and coaches has some similarities, both vocations require planning, preparation and the delivery of instructional activities that facilitate learning. However, in my opinion, I think that the teacher-student relationship in Vietnam is typically not a very close relationship; there is not much communication outside of the classroom. But, as a Pass It Back Assistant Coach, I want to act as a friend, a big brother, with my players. I want to remove all the boundaries between us, and be a person willing to listen and support them. In particular, because all of my male players are in their teenage years, so fighting, arguing or teasing sometimes happens among them.”

Truong gave reference to a specific instance that he faced during a Pass It Back session that highlights his feelings and attitudes towards his role as an Assistant Coach.

“There is an emotional boy in my team, his name is Quan. During training, I saw Quan crying. I asked: “Why are you crying? What happened?” He said: “The other boys keep on teasing and calling me ‘Cry-baby! Cry-baby!’” I tried to calm him, and gathered all players and said: “We are teammates, why did you do that? Name calling is really mean and selfish. Is there anyone who remembers the 5 rugby values?” All of them replied: “Yes! Yes!”, and they listed the values. Then I said: “It seems like all of us remember them, but did you guys respect Quan? Did you show solidarity as you teased Quan?” Then the other boys understood and immediately said sorry to Quan. Quan stopped crying, and re-joined the session with the team.”

Truong explained, “I think when children make mistakes, it is very important to explain the mistake calmly to them and minimise punishments. The key is, Coaches need to continuously monitor the players in order for him or her to be aware of any difficulties that the player is having. Understanding each player’s personal



problems, their fears, or any uncertainties that they are experiencing, this will give the Coach a better understanding of each player's difficulties and capacities. Once the Coach becomes aware of the problems, he or she will have more patience with the player, which will effectively help make the child feel secure."



*Truong and one of his players.*

During the life skill sessions, Truong always shares his own experiences with his players to encourage the players to share their stories. "Pass It Back has created an open and comfortable space for players to share and seek support when they are experiencing personal issues. Some of them find it very difficult to speak out, even with their parents, about their difficulties, such as being bullied, academic pressures, sexual

harassment, or family problems. However, during Pass It Back life skills sessions, the players can share their thoughts or feelings with their teammates, and talk to their coaches in confidence. The players always get the support they need. After the Child Safeguarding training, I feel that am well equipped with the skills to give players appropriate advice and knowing about the child protection reporting system is very useful.”

Truong is also clearly aware of his responsibility as a role model for his players. Parents often encourage their children to learn from Truong: he does not smoke, drink, gamble, and he is a gentle and thoughtful man. “I am pleased and proud of being recognised by my community, and I will try to improve myself further. I think that people who work and interact with children should be aware of their actions because, for example, the methods of communication that we use on the pitch and in daily life will be observed and learnt by the players. So, if we want to create a positive influence on children, we need to be a role model first.”

Quan, from team XZ, shared his feelings about his Coach with us as well. “Truong is very gentle, and he often encourages me to be more confident and emotionally stronger. Now, if I am teased, I will not cry anymore. I love to train with the team every week, playing tag rugby, especially when we can participate in the tournaments. The feeling of scoring a try is so wonderful!”

Truong summed up his thoughts on being a Pass It Back Assistant Coach, saying: “The more I love being around my players the more I persevere with the Pass It Back project and our teams also received enthusiastic support from parents. I am proud to be part the project to create the positive change for children in my community.”

It is challenging to be a Pass It Back Coach, while also being a friend to the players at the same time. Thus, it is critical for coaches to be self-aware of their responsibility to serve as a role model on the pitch, and in their local community. Exemplary coaches are active citizens, and they reflect the successes of their own personal and professional development, and ultimately the effectiveness of the Pass It Back program.

*“Pass It Back has created an open and comfortable space for players to share and seek support when they are experiencing personal issues.”*

# Chee Ha

*Coach - Laos*

For the past 2 years, Chee has worked for the Lao Rugby Federation as a part-time Pass It Back Coach in Xieng Khouang Province. She has now gone through three Coach upgrade trainings. Before becoming a Coach, Chee had been participating in rugby since 2012 when the Lao Rugby Federation first began conducting activities as part of its Champa Ban Youth Rugby program in her home village. Her longstanding dedication to rugby over the past five years and the coaching skills she developed over that time, made Chee a standout candidate when the applications for Coaches opened up to participate in the Pass It Back Belfast Cup. This was the first Pass It Back event hosted outside of Southeast Asia and in conjunction with a major global sporting event, the Women's Rugby World Cup. The Lao Rugby Federation selected Chee as the representative Coach from Laos, to lead 5 players from Laos, and join a Coach and 5 players from Vietnam and from the Phillipines - the team was named the Southeast Asia Dragons, or SEA Dragons.

While in Northern Ireland, the SEA Dragons participated in community events, including an international youth competition in conjunction with the Women's Rugby World Cup that featured 12 women's teams from around the world. Throughout the trip, the Dragons met with representatives from non-governmental organisations, national and local rugby unions, and government embassies. While they may not have shared much common language, the players and team staff were able to bond with these representatives through their shared interest of rugby.

At the Pass It Back Belfast Cup, the Dragons were split into two mixed country teams and played a total of three tag rugby matches against Belfast players. The Lao and Philippine Coaches worked together to support their team and provide feedback between matches. After the friendly competition, the Coaches led a life skills activity from "Session 8: Resisting Negative Peer Pressure" with their players and individuals from Peace Players International.

Chee Ha explained that the responsibilities of the Coach during the trip were to take care of a player if she became sick or injured and to look after the group of players at all times. This proved to be the most challenging task, as she described, because the players would not inform her when they were feeling sick or had headaches and would not eat the food in Belfast. Before heading to Belfast, the Lao team had traveled to Bangkok, Thailand for a little less than a week in order to process their UK visas to travel to Belfast. It was only the five players, one Lao Rugby Federation support staff, and Chee Ha who made the trip to Bangkok. For all but the support staff member, the trip represented the first time out of the country and without their



families. The trip to Belfast was similar in that the group was abroad without their families, but the food and cultures were vastly different from their experiences in Laos and Thailand.

When asked to describe her most challenging day during the trip, Chee answered the day when one of the Lao players was sick but did not inform any of the Coaches or staff. She could not join in on the Australian Wallaroos training observation with the rest of the group. Rather than raising her voice and showing anger towards her, Chee learned to try and identify when individuals are sick and when they can fully participate in activities. Afterwards, she had a quick discussion with the Lao players to explain why it was important to let her know when they were feeling ill, as she was in a position to help them. She found that her relationship with the Lao players in Belfast was different from her players from her home village because for the latter group, they already saw her as their Coach whereas the team in Belfast was made up of players from teams and villages across her District. However, she told herself not to think that these SEA Dragons players were not her responsibility; rather they were the Lao Rugby Federation's Pass It Back players and, therefore, were family and she had to take care of them.



*Chee Ha (far right) in Belfast.*

Because most of the Lao players were already familiar with rugby before being selected for the trip, it was quite easy for them to communicate on the rugby pitch. At one point, after knowing that the Philippine players had only been playing for six months, Chee encouraged her Lao players that they could also talk to them about rugby skills. She noted that though everyone was not Lao, everyone was able to communicate with each other as Pass It Back rugby players.

When asked about how she felt when she first met the Vietnamese players and Coach in Hanoi, where they transited for one night for flying to Belfast together, Chee described how she did not have the courage to go up and talk to them, but on the following morning when the two country groups went to eat pho noodle soup together, she sat at a table with a couple of the Vietnamese players and found that they seemed to have good personalities. Afterwards, Chee was no longer as hesitant to approach the other players and Coaches. From the trip, Chee explained how she was able to befriend the Philippine Coach, who was the oldest of all the players and Coaches. She noted that because the Philippine Coach most likely had a higher level of education, she knew more about what kind of personality is needed to become friends with someone. The two were able to become closer to each other during the language exchange activity, in which all three Coaches worked together to facilitate discussions between their players by teaching them how to ask questions about each other's family life and rugby experience in Lao, Hiligaynon, and Vietnamese. Chee also had the chance to hear about the experiences of the Philippine and Vietnamese Coaches through a translated discussion, which she had requested because she wanted to take advantage of the fact that there were two Coaches from the same program but from different countries.

She learned that she could depend on body language to overcome some of the communication challenges. Chee explained that in the future, if she were in a similar situation where she could not speak the other person's language, then she could use what she learned from the trip to communicate with the individual using body language. At the competition, the players worked well together by communicating with their body language, and the Coaches had the chance to share feedback during halftime. During the last match, the Dragons had not been able to respond to the other team's offence. Chee and the Philippine Coach called everyone into a circle and gave out feedback on how to improve for the next half, referencing players to see as an example of what to do. A Wallaroos veteran player with four Rugby World Cup appearances had been listening in and commented that what Chee said were the exact types of feedback she would have made as a Coach. She later went up to Chee to say that she was impressed with her skills as a Coach.

Out of all of the events and activities from the trip, Chee noted, without hesitation, that her most rewarding day was when she had the chance to watch the Women's Rugby World Cup. It was her second time watching an international rugby competition and also motivated her to become a national team contact rugby player. Through the Belfast trip, she found that rugby does not discriminate between genders and that "there is a lot of solidarity in this sport, whether its between players or between the whole world." She also saw that females are just as capable of being referees as men. "I want to be a referee for World Rugby or for high level rugby...I think being a referee is a good match for me. What we end up doing needs to be a good match for ourselves. Becoming a referee is a special goal. Once I finish going through all my studies, I'll continue with rugby as I still have some years left. I'm going to learn how to become a referee so that I can reach the goal that I've set." She further explained that the Lao Rugby Federation would be able to help

her reach this goal because it will offer referee specialisation training courses, which will be a part of the Pass It Back Coach Training. When describing what kind of person would be able to make the most out of an opportunity to travel abroad to play rugby, Chee noted that the player, “needs to have a sense of solidarity... she would need to be aware of how she should act and would need to be someone who respects others.” She found that she herself had experienced a change within herself after coming back from the trip. “I didn’t think I would be able to go to another country...once I knew I would be going, I had to be a good example of a what it means to be a Coach so that the Vietnamese and the Philippine Coaches would know that Lao Coaches are good.”

Upon her return to Nonghet, she supported with the Lao Rugby Federation’s Women’s Rugby World Cup Celebration in her village where she said a number of players asked her questions to hear her experiences as someone who had traveled abroad, particularly about how it was like to fly in an airplane. “Are there toilets on a plane? Is there a lot of dust in the plane like they say? How’s the temperature in the plane?” She found that a lot of people were curious about what other countries were like, given that there have not been many individuals who have had the opportunity to travel to a different province let alone a different country, so she tried to answer as many questions about her time in Belfast. Chee explained that one of her friends was confident and interested in playing rugby, but her father did not allow her to participate. However, Chee hopes that because she had the chance to travel abroad, her friend’s father will let her register and play, as he and others who think similarly may begin to realise the opportunities that rugby brings.

Through the experiences she gained as a Coach and participant at the Pass It Back Belfast Cup, Chee Ha learned how to be a more caring and supportive Coach for her players, became more confident in overcoming problems around communicating with members of the group using her existing skills, realised that she is capable of travelling abroad and set a new goal for herself to become a World Rugby referee at the international level.

Before going to Bangkok to get her UK visa and to Belfast for the Pass It Back Cup, Chee had never had the experience of being responsible for players on an overseas trip, so it was a challenge to be a Coach both on and off the pitch, all day everyday. When the players would not tell her whether they were sick, though it frustrated her, she learned that getting angry at them would exacerbate the problem. Instead, she made the decision to also stay with the player and miss out on the national team training observation and rugby session; additionally, she was proactive in trying to prevent the problem from happening in the future by encouraging her players to communicate any issues with her and creating a more supportive and comfortable environment for them to ask for help if needed.

As for her relationship with the players and Coaches from Vietnam and the Philippines, Chee was initially unsure how she would be able to overcome the language barrier to communicate with them; however, through facilitated activities and constantly being in each other’s company, she found that she was able to use her body language skills and to seek the help of those around her to ultimately get closer to the individuals in her group. She noted that in the future, if she were in a situation where she did not know how the other person’s language, instead of not talking to the individual, she would try to use what language she knew, body language, to communicate what she wanted to say, thus demonstrating her ability to apply what she learned from the Belfast trip to future situations.





Upon her return to her village in Nonghet, Chee realised that her experience abroad was a unique opportunity to share what it was like being in a different country with her community and also could be motivation for others to find value in participating in Pass It Back. For Chee, this trip also provided her with the motivation to continue with rugby so that she could reach her new goal of becoming an international level referee, such as the one she saw officiating the Semi-Finals match at the Women’s Rugby World Cup. In seeing a female referee, she saw that World Rugby did not discriminate against women from becoming high level officials, showing the importance and positive impact of having female representation in positions that have traditionally been seen as male-only roles. When describing how she would reach this goal, Chee knew that she first wanted to finish her studies and then would be able to fully dedicate her energy towards becoming an international level referee with the help of the Lao Rugby Federation. She was able to identify her goal, set a timeline, and realise who would be able to support her in achieving it.

Through her participation as an Lao Rugby Federation Pass It Back Coach for the past two years, Chee has gone through training around understanding and knowing how to teach the Pass It Back curriculum — including the Gender Module — to players between the ages of 11 and 16. Her knowledge of these two topics and the life skills covered in these modules provided her with the tools to be a dynamic leader on the trip, to overcome the challenges she faced and to identify how she can use what she learned in her future outside of the context of the trip.



Kim Chi

*Player - Vietnam*

PASSITBACK

Kim Chi is a young player from Team Tomatoes in Vietnam. She loves playing rugby.

At the beginning, Kim Chi could not get her parents' approval to join the program. She said: "They told me that I should stay home and help them with housework, that there is no use for a girl to play tag rugby, and that I should spend my free time doing my homework. They also thought I should not play sport because I got sick quite often!"

Being asked how she managed to make them change their minds, she responded confidently and happily: "Seeing my friends play the game and knowing I had to stay home made me decide to try my best to complete the assigned house chores such as cleaning the house, cooking meals, doing the laundry, and washing the dishes, as well as to completing all my homework. Then, I told my parents that if I got to play tag rugby, I would also be taught life skills by the Coaches. Those skills are quite similar to the civil education lessons I learn at school. Also, I told them that this program is not only for boys but for all children – boys and girls can join. I promised them that I would not get sick playing rugby, so they didn't have to worry".

"Seeing me keep asking for permission to join and after hearing about the program, my parents found the sessions quite interesting and because of this, they decided to let me sign up. But, they were still worried that I would get sick, and so they warned me that if I got sick, I would have to stop playing. I was very grateful that they let me play. As I eat more after training, I have even gained weight and my health has improved and my parents have stopped their worrying. Since joining, I have started to save money by applying the skills learned from the sessions, and it has made my parents happy. They can see me learning life skills from Coaches. My Coach also gave me a rugby ball, and instead of keeping it on my cabinet as a souvenir, I brought it to my village's playground and taught other children how to play tag rugby too."

Responding to the question "How can you play tag rugby without tags?", she said: "We used leaves and string to make our own tags, we were very excited, the parents were also excited watching us making our own tools and playing with each other."

Kim Chi's creativeness and her willingness to 'pass it back' shows the value of the program to young people. She worked hard to get the opportunity to play and to share her enjoyment with her community - she is an example of young people leading in their communities.

# Febriana

*Coach - Timor-Leste*

Seventeen-year-old Feb is blazing a trail in her small community in Timor-Leste. She is a passionate and confident Pass It Back Coach who wants to change the future for girls and women in her country.

“In Timor-Leste, there is no gender equality,” she says. “We still use this ancient system, where opportunities are given to boys or men. There are less opportunities in terms of education and jobs for girls and women. Women have no opportunity to lead; they just know how to cook.”

But Feb is stirring the pot. As a Pass It Back Coach she is a part of a new generation of girls and young women in Timor-Leste who are learning about their rights and taking action.

“What I would like to change in Timor-Leste is this ancient system; we have to give opportunities for girls and women so they can develop themselves and they can become leaders,” Feb says. Recently, she applied to become a member of the Youth Parliament. Her motive? “I want to raise the issue of gender equality,” Feb says. “I want equal opportunities for girls and boys in Timor-Leste.”

Feb grew up in a small community, where her parents worked on the family farm and sold rice and vegetables to raise their five children. Where many children in similar circumstances dropped out of school to help their parents and contribute to the household income, Feb was determined to finish her education. A few years ago she left home and moved in with an aunt so she could be closer to a good secondary school.

“When I finish secondary school, I want to go to university,” Feb, who is now in Grade 9, says. “I want to study English and Information Technology.”

As the eldest child, Feb is a natural leader and hopes she can set a positive example for her siblings. As part of Timor-Leste’s first cohort of Pass It Back coaches she has been able to develop her leadership skills and help pave a new path for many girls like herself. For the past nine months, Feb has been coaching a team of young girls in her community, helping them to learn the rules of rugby, the values of the game and develop important life skills, including how to plan for the future and drive social change in their communities. Timor-Leste’s first ever season of tag rugby – the “papaya ball” game, as locals call it – wrapped up in June, and Feb says the program has changed her.



“I really like Pass It Back because it focuses on gender equality and includes the participation of girls and women,” she says. Before joining the program I was one of the girls who always disturbed other classmates. I was very naughty.”

Feb says the rugby values that stand out the most for her personally are passion and respect. “With passion, I have learnt that when we participate in anything we must participate with our full commitment and not because we’ve been forced by others to participate,” she says. “With respect, I must respect myself first and my family so that other people can respect me and my family.”

There have been many noticeable changes in her players as well since they joined Pass It Back, Feb says. “In the first session when they came to play, it was hard for them to introduce themselves to me,” she says. “They were not confident. When I saw this, I motivated them. In our first competition, while they knew how to play rugby they weren’t confident and lost their focus, but after the game I supported them and motivated them. I would like to see my players change their mentality, to become good women and to contribute to changing Timor-Leste.

“In the Pass It Back program we have girls’ and boys’ teams, but in the future I would like to see more girls’ teams so we can change the ancient system in Timor-Leste and girls will be empowered and be able to develop themselves.”



# Adrian and Rose

*Players - Philippines*

Adrian is a 17-year-old Pass It Back player from Bacolod City. His story is an example of how Pass It Back has influenced him to make positive decisions, to be a team-player and to become a better person.

“Before I joined Pass It Back my life was only about living for the moment, I would get carried away by bad influences from my friends — if they cut classes I would too and I also liked to bully and tease my classmates. That’s one reason why I was kicked out of school. At one point I was also addicted to computer games; I would spend my school allowance playing online games and I would come home late. My parents almost gave up on me.”

“One day a friend of mine and Coach Marion invited me to try out to be a Coach since I am an out-of-school youth. They said this might be able to help me. I said okay, I wanted to try out, so I went to the recruitment event in Talisay City. We had fun and I enjoyed it. After that, the trainers said that they would contact us if we were chosen to attend the Coach training. I got a little excited, but then weeks passed and no one had contacted me, so I told myself that maybe I had not been chosen. To my surprise, in the last week of January Coach Marion said that I needed to prepare because I had been chosen to go to Coach training. I told myself this might be the start of something good for me, my only problem was that I was required to bring rubber shoes, I only had sandals and slippers, I didn’t have a pair of rubber shoes. I told Coach Marion about this, but he said that I didn’t need to worry, that I just need to go. To my surprise when I arrived at the training, he handed me a new pair of shoes — I felt so happy!”

There were around 27 aspiring Coaches who went through the five-day intensive Coach training, however after a thorough deliberation by trainers, Adrian was one those who did not make it. Adrian said, “When I knew that I had not passed the training I felt bad because I was very excited about becoming a Coach, but then the trainers told me that I could still be a player and I could try again next time. During our last night of training Coach Marion spoke to me and told me that I am still young and maybe there would be something better for me in the future. But I could still join his team as a player. Even though I felt bad I told myself that maybe I could start out as a player.”

Adrian now belongs to the “Raptors” team under Coach Marion and Coach Sienned. He was very active during player recruitment, helping both his Coaches. “One of the values I learned during Coach training is the

value of solidarity, and because of that I volunteered to assist during player recruitment, inviting players from my community and helping them in fill in the forms so that we could build our team”.

Marion is one of Adrian’s Coaches. Marion also spoke to Adrian about the changes he has made. He told Marion, “I used to be a bully in class, I also got addicted to computer games and dropped out of school. My parents almost gave up on me because I quit school. You invited me together with Sienned and Dave to try out to become a Coach for Pass It Back. At first, I was hesitant because I was scared — I didn’t know what the program was all about. I didn’t even have rubber shoes, which was one of the things we needed to bring. But you told me to go, and to my surprise, after Coach registration you handed me a new pair of rubber shoes for the training. During the training, slowly, I changed, especially when I started attending mock sessions. I didn’t pass because I was naughty and I didn’t really prepare my session plans. I felt bad at first, but you said that maybe it wasn’t the right time yet because I’m still very young, and so I became one of your players. Since then I have become more focused, more friendly, I feel respected and I know how to behave properly — I don’t bully kids anymore. You always remind me about my behaviour, to keep me focused and to remind me how I am improving. Also, I was able to appreciate the meaning of solidarity as even though I was not accepted as a Coach, you took me on as a player, and I gave something back by helping out with recruiting players for our team.”

Adrian continued, “When I started attending sessions, I felt so energised, and little by little I left behind my habit of playing online games, as well as my friends who were a bad influence on me. Now, I have made new friends who have influenced me to become a better person. The Coaches that I met during the training have also become my good friends, and most importantly I am living by the five rugby values: discipline, solidarity, integrity, passion, and my favourite, respect. Because of Pass It Back I have respect for other people, I don’t bully them anymore because I know that it doesn’t do anything positive, and it makes people feel bad.”

Adrian continues to be one of the star players on his team, which recently won the championship during the mid-season tournament. He is proving to be a leader on and off the field and has shown that failure can have a positive outcome. Adrian did not turn away from the program after he did not pass Coach training, but instead took the opportunity to shine as a player and focus on bettering himself and helping build the team. His development has set him on a better path, and whether or not he tries out for Coach again, he is better for his experiences.


Another person to attend Coach training was Rose. Rose is 22 years old. For much of her teenage years Rose has been a timid and shy girl. But, when she was a little girl, she used to be jolly and enthusiastic. As she grew up, her family started to break apart. When she was in Grade 3, her mother left her together with her sister who was only three years old, and then their father left them, too. Rose said, “I never thought that I would lose both of my parents. My father and mother always argued about everything, almost every day. Because I was young, sometimes I understood what they were arguing about but most of the time I didn’t, I just felt really bad all the time. One day I woke up without parents, my brother was sent for adoption, my older sister went to our aunt’s place, while my younger sister and I were left with our grandmother.” It was here that Rose’s struggles began, and she went through things that she did not expect she would go through at such a young age.

At 14 years old she decided to go and work as a nanny for her aunt. Her job included taking care of her aunt's children, washing dishes, and cleaning her aunt's house. She was paid monthly for her work. Rose used the money to pay for her school fees. When the opportunity came to join Pass It Back her instincts really told her to go for it as "opportunity only knocks once."

Rose passed the Coach recruitment process and was sent to the five-day Coach training in Talisay City. She said of her experience, "The training was really challenging, it was the first time I'd been through that kind of training, I felt like giving up at times because I felt that I was not good enough to be a Coach — I was so shy. But the good thing is that my sister was also doing the training and she gave me the strength to go on. She helped me realise that I am doing this for us. Some senior Coaches also helped me to prepare the session plans that I need for my assessment, even though it was already so late at night." Rose did not pass her first assessment but was given the opportunity try one more time. Rose's determination led her to pass, and to graduate and become a Pass It Back Coach.

Rose said, "Since I passed the training, I have begun to realise that life is good, and I just need to be positive and never give up, because there is always something ahead, just waiting for you."

Rose and Adrian show that facing challenges and facing failure can, while challenging, also be a rewarding and character-defining experience. Both individuals took risks, and when faced with stressful moments, they chose to focus on their goals and try their best to overcome the challenges in front of them. Pass It Back works to instil these skills and attitudes in Coaches, who will go and pass them on to their players.



***“Since I passed the training, I have begun to realise that life is good, and I just need to be positive and never give up, because there is always something ahead, just waiting for you.”***



A group of young children, likely in Vietnam, are laughing joyfully outdoors. The children are in the foreground and middle ground, with a blurred background of trees and foliage. The lighting is bright and natural, suggesting a sunny day. The children are wearing various colored shirts, including blue, red, and orange. The overall mood is happy and energetic.

# First Competition

*Vietnam*

In October 2018, three months after Pass It Back began implementing the program in Tan Lac, the first competition was hosted. The participants included more than 500 players from 32 teams, and 17 Coaches from seven communes in Tan Lac. Approximately 20 senior Coaches from Kim Boi also attended to help the Tan Lac Coaches organise the competition. Additionally, local government partners from Tan Lac also participated as members of the organising committee. Due to the remote location of Tan Lac and its tough access roads (some areas cannot be reached by car), it was difficult to gather all players in one central location for the event. So, in order to allow for all teams in the seven communes to join the competition, the decision was made to host it in two venues at separate locations, with a morning tournament occurring in Phu Vinh Commune for players from Ngo Luong, Quyet Chien, Phu Vinh, Phu Cuong, and Ngoc My Communes, and an afternoon tournament hosted in Ong Village (in Trung Hoa Commune) for players from Trung Hoa and Ngoi Hoa Communes. In each venue, large groups of parents and family members also attended to cheer on players and Coaches.

### **The First Competition: Bonding, Learning, and Happiness**

As it was the first-ever Pass It Back tournament in Tan Lac, everything was new to both players and Coaches; and, therefore Coaches and players had the chance to learn new things. At the competition, players not only had the chance to demonstrate the rugby skills that they had learned during the season, but to also take an opportunity to experience what they had previously not; to learn new things from their peers from other communes. For Coaches, the tournament provided a good place for them to improve their skills in officiating tag rugby matches, to practice their first aid skills, and to learn organisation and management skills, as they had to manage the competition activities and look after large groups of players.

After the competition, Khai — one of our 17-year-old Coaches from Phu Cuong — wrote in her November Coach Journal Entry (CJE); “One of the most special days for both the Pass It Back Coaches and players in Tan Lac was on the 25th October 2018. It was the first tournament for everyone. Before the day, anticipation for the competition made our players a little bit nervous, quite a few couldn’t sleep, and many were filled with questions. My players asked me, “What will happen in the competition, sister Khai? We have never been to a competition before. Do you think that our opponents will be strong? Will they beat us?” I responded to them, “I don’t know. Like you guys, I haven’t been to a tournament either. But don’t worry too much. We will try our best in our games, and we will find out what happens once we get there.” During the competition, I saw my players’ delighted and excited faces when they played a tag rugby match or joined in the solidarity games in the life skills tent. They told me that they couldn’t wait to have fun and learn new things at the next competition.”

Thuy — another 17-year-old Coach from Ngoc My — also shared with us her trepidation for the competition: “I couldn’t sleep the night before as I was nervous and worried about how I would be able to take care of a group of 50 players. This was the very first time that I had managed a big group like that. I was completely inexperienced. For me, it was a big assignment. I was like the oldest sister in a family with 50 children. I wondered what I should do to make sure that all of our players were taken care of during the busy tournament? What were the risks for the players, and how could I avoid them? It took a long time to get to the venue, and I had to take care of many players who were carsick. Nonetheless, I was excited too as I could see my players bonding and getting excited. My players played in the first game of the competition. When the organising committee called out the name of my team, my players were supposed to move to the changing



area next to Pitch 1 to get prepared for their game. However, as our players were new to the competition, they didn't know that they had to respond to the call, so they just stayed in their tent. We had to run across the pitch to bring them to the changing area, where they could get changed into their uniform, belt, and tags. Although our team didn't win the first game or many other games in the competition, it didn't matter. All the players were smiling and cheering each other on our way home. We agreed that the tournament was successful as we had all learned something new. That was all that we had expected and hoped for. As a Coach, I felt fulfilled as my players were both happy and optimistic for the next competition."



*Photo: Coach Mo and her players at the Tan Lac competition*

Thang — a 24-year-old male Coach from Ngoi Hoa — told us about his first experience as a referee: "The tournament was a meaningful day for me as I was able to see the results of the efforts I had made towards improving as a referee. I was assigned to referee matches in the competition in Ong Village. At the beginning, I was nervous and unconfident in my decisions, as I was aware of everyone watching me. My confidence began to increase after each game. However, what I didn't expect was that referee skills also include the ability to manage players' emotions. After a game, the players of the winning team were ecstatic that they would jump on top of each other as they cheered their victory. In the meantime, players of the team that

didn't win were sad and some didn't even talk to others or smile back to me when I tried to comfort them. At times, I felt unsure about what to say or do to respond to those players. I wish I could have done something more for them.”

The first tournament in Tan Lac was successful in helping to develop resilience skills among new players and provide them with opportunities to form lasting networks. Coach Mo — from Ngo Luong — said: “The competition was so much fun for our players, and these positive experiences will stay with them for life. It gave many children (who have never been outside their own commune) a sense of happiness from meeting new friends from other places, as well as competing in the games and learning from each other. Although we could only see a small part of the tangible impact of the competition, the event will likely be unforgettable and a source of happy memories for our players. After the competition, the players couldn't stop talking; talking about how joyful they felt and how much fun they had had. They were also eagerly looking forward to the next competition.”

Even after the event, the excitement among the remained. Player Ngan — from Woodland Flowers team — shared with us: “Participating in the competition made me happy. It was so much fun competing in the life skills game about the value of solidarity. I was the one holding the basket for my teammates to throw balls into. We worked well together, and our group won.” Ly, another player, shared: “What I remember most about the event is that many people came to our village. Seeing the many Coaches and players from other places made me feel very close to them because of our shared experiences in the programme. After having the opportunity to chat with them, I hope that we will be able to see each other again.” In later discussions, the Woodland Flowers team enthusiastically asked their Coaches, “When will we have the next competition? When will the Coaches and players gather here again?”

The experiences shared by Khai, Thuy, Mo, and Thang, and Woodlands Flowers team demonstrate that these competitions help build bonds among players and Coaches between and across communities. It also provides opportunities for Coaches and players to practice what they had learned, to learn from their own experiences during the competition, to learn to develop a positive attitude in the face of challenges (and often defeat), and to focus on their lessons learned and their improvements for the next competition. Learning through friendship, through facing challenges, success and failure, helps Coaches and players become more resilient.

### **Gender and Disability Inclusion**

The competition created an inclusive and supportive environment for all participants. One key approach was that it ensured female participants, players from remote areas, and a player with a disability were all included in the event.

Inclusion starts with good competition management practices that increase accessibility and allow more people to participate. For example, the program strives to generate a welcoming and safe environment for girls through the provision of amenities. For instance, as there was no public toilet available at the morning competition in Tan Lac, Pass It Back arranged for a portable toilet. The importance of this was illustrated through the point of view of a mother of a female participant (Coach Anh's mother); “I came to the competition to cheer on the Ngoc My Coaches and players. I saw an interesting thing at the competition — it



was the first time in my life that I saw a portable toilet. I have been to many public events in our community where there is no toilet for women to use. We have to wait until we get home which can be an extremely uncomfortable experience. I think clean and portable toilets are essential so that girls can participate in public events like this. Boys can urinate in the sugarcane fields, but not girls. Hence, setting up portable toilets in the competition is really good for girls, as it improves safety and convenience. The program has done a good job to help girls enjoy the competition.”

The Pass It Back Coaches have also been successful in including players with disabilities in the program. In Tan Lac, there are two players with hearing loss. One player named Duy couldn't join the tournament as he was sick. However, the other player, Mai, came to the competition, although she was initially hesitant to join any activities. The Coaches and players did their best to encourage and support Mai to be able to enjoy the first competition, just like the others. Coach Sinh recollected a fond memory about this in her a Significant Change Story; she wrote:

“

*It was the first time that the 16 players from the Woodland Flowers team got to participate in such an event organised in their own hometown. However, there were only two female teams, so they only got 7 minutes of play in the competition. Since there are 16 members in a team, not everyone got to compete due to the time constraints. Those who had to sit out and watch their teammates play seemed a bit sad. Seeing this, the organising committee decided to hold a second match between the Yellow Bee team and the Woodland Flowers team, which included all the players who didn't get to play in the first match. However, Mai was so shy and nervous that she didn't join in with her team when the second match started. The Coaches and her teammates tried their best to convince her, but she didn't respond; perhaps out of nervousness, or perhaps simply because she couldn't hear. One teammate even got Mai a shirt and tags and signalled that she would help her put the shirt on. Right when Mai finally finished putting on the shirt, the referee blew the whistle and ended the match. Her teammates, Coaches and even the project officers yelled out and asked Thin — the main referee — to extend the match for two more minutes. A player also volunteered to step out so Mai could join. Stepping in, Mai seemed really excited and enthusiastic when everyone on the pitch let her tap kick to restart the match. At first, she was unsure of herself, so one of her teammates ran up and signalled to her which way to run. On her teammate's signal, Mai quickly tapped the ball, then picked up the ball and ran straight ahead. When she got tagged, she passed to her team, stopped for a bit to retrieve her tag then continued to run forward to help her teammates. Coach Ha even commented that she was really impressed by the way Mai swerved and ran into empty space. After the match, everyone was in high spirits and ran around celebrating by hugging each other — not because they won but because every single one of them got to play. As a Coach, this made me very proud. I'm proud that my players care for one another, support their teammates in difficult times, and that they never discriminate against their friends because of their disability, but are rather always willing to help.*

”

A week after the competition, Mai shared her experience with us: “I am still very happy when I think about playing in the game and being part of the competition. When I was playing, I was so surprised. I had thought that the competition was only for good and skillful players and not for me.”



*Photo: Mai (with the rugby ball) at the competition*

Some of the players of the Woodlands Flowers team also shared their thoughts on Mai. One player, Ngan, said: “I was pretty worried for Mai’s health as she is not strong like some of the others, but I felt so happy seeing her playing with us in the game.” Another player, Ly, added, “When I saw Mai enter the game, I was so happy because we could finally get her into a game to play with us. I was excited as our team could help Mai grow in confidence and engage with other players in front of many people. Mai rarely communicates with others, she just stays quiet, so it was good to see her smiling and happy.” Another player, Thuy, added, “I am happy that all the players could play in the competition and that no one was discriminated against. We were all happy to be playing no matter how bad or good we were at rugby. We will try to practice solidarity more, just as our Coaches have taught us, and will try to win next time. I will take care of Mai to make her feel better and make sure she does not feel excluded.”

Mai grew in confidence and had a chance to play a real game of tag rugby — an experience that has changed her for the better. There is no doubt that she will have much more confidence in the next competition. Her teammates and Coaches also grew a little, as they saw the importance of making sure that everyone has an opportunity to play, and that they feel safe and welcomed. This example highlights the importance of reinforcing the values of solidarity, equity, and teamwork, as they can have a much larger impact than on the individual at the centre. Likewise, by providing safe toilets for females, the competition becomes a safe and welcoming space for all female Coaches and players — who make up over 50% of participants. Inclusion can be about one person, or it can be about hundreds.

### **Inclusion of Vulnerable Players from Remote Areas**

The three communes of Ngo Luong, Ngoi Hoa, and Trung Hoa are home to ethnic communities in a remote area. The area has been separated from the other parts of the province by the Da River Hydroelectric Dam, as well as by many other rivers and mountains. Speaking of how tough life is within these communes, and how important the Pass It Back training sessions are to the children and youth in her community, Coach Mo told us: “We rarely have chances like this, to be a Coach and to be involved in development projects like this, because people outside the mountains are afraid of coming here due to the rough and zig-zagging roads. The mountains have limited us. There have been few interventions from outside to provide learning opportunities for children here.

ChildFund is the only NGO that has come to Ngo Luong to support us, and Pass It Back is the first program to provide children here with life skills learning.”

Although these remote locations necessitate more work for Pass It Back when organising activities (including competitions), the impact that the program is having is evident. In order to support children here to realise the rights that they are entitled to, especially the right to develop and play, the program has reached out to communities there and recruited Coaches who have formed teams and organised training sessions for children to provide them with opportunities to play and learn. Coach Mo added, “Ngo Luong is a big commune in terms of geography; villages are separated by long distances over tough roads and mountains. To go to secondary school, children aged between 10 and 15 must attend a communal boarding school. After classes in the morning, children often spend their afternoons doing nothing or playing by themselves. Because of this, many male students in particular often participate in dangerous activities such as climbing and chasing each other over the roofs of buildings. Now we have Pass It Back sessions in the afternoons, which offer players an enjoyable time that allows them to play rugby, learn life skills, and make new friends. Players enjoy the training sessions; they often come to training 30 minutes earlier than scheduled and ask Coaches to deliver more training sessions per week.” Since Pass It Back started, more than 90% of students in boarding schools have registered in the program. Despite the difficulties, Coaches in remote areas strive to maintain their training schedules and bring their players to competitions, so that players can enjoy their right to learn and play.

To join the competition, players from Ngoi Hoa and other villages in Trung Hoa went to Ong Village by foot, boat, and truck. Coach Thang wrote in his Coach Journal Entry: “Delivering training sessions to our players has been an ‘up and down’ emotional experience for myself and Vinh, my co-Coach. Sometimes, I wanted to give up as organising training involved not only delivering the curriculum sessions but also travelling by boat.

We have to cross the Da River to pick up players and bring water and equipment to the pitch in the middle of a hill on one of the islands. This is tiring work. However, my passion for the program was strengthened when I witnessed our players enthusiastically join discussions and practice hard to prepare for the competition.

Our love of the program was also strengthened when sister Ly (ChildFund Project Officer) brought us life-jackets, encouraged us, and came to a pitch on an island to experience and share our challenges. Watching our players enjoy trying on life-jackets and discussing how they would get to the competition made me feel more certain about sticking with the program. Although many of our players have lived on the islands for their entire lives, this was the first time that my players had worn life-jackets. I don't want for any player to be deprived of learning opportunities or enjoyment because their Coach gave up on his job. It was a great reward for me when our players won gold medals in the competition. We had to spend an hour on a boat to cross the river, then another hour on a truck to reach the pitch. This made our players a bit tired by the time we arrived. As the competition was the very first time that some of my players had travelled off their island, so they were initially shy and nervous. However, I was surprised when those players later seemed to forget their tiredness and shyness to dedicate themselves to the game. After winning the final game, they ran to their Coaches and gave us firm hugs. It was an emotional moment as I realised that our victory was not only for the competition but also for our efforts in general."

Beside the joy of receiving medals, players and Coaches were overjoyed as the competition marked their first time of coming together to bond and learn about what happens in a Pass It Back tournament. This was particularly significant for some players from remote areas as they could attend and be included in a big event, and, in turn, they could enjoy their right to learn and play just like any other participant. The competition served as a celebration of the commitment Coaches in Tan Lac have to overcoming challenges around including players from remote communities in the program.

**“After winning the final game, they ran to their Coaches and gave us firm hugs. It was an emotional moment as I realised that our victory was not only for the competition but also for our efforts in general.”**



# Mouapor

*Player - Laos*

Mouapor is 18 years old and he lives in Xieng Khouang Province. He has been a rugby player for 2 years. When he and his friends started, they all planned to come to practice together because they wanted to win the mid-season competition. The team practiced together for 2-3 weeks, but not all of the team members came to the training. Mouapor tried to arrange his schedule so he could practice with the team regularly because he wanted to learn new skills. He said “I like playing rugby. The most important things I have learned are life skills, so I pay attention at practice and participate in discussions by asking and answering questions.”

After Mouapor Lao had been on the team for about 2-3 months, he had learned many things, like gender expectations, making plans, and leadership. Everything he has learned, he uses in his daily life. Importantly, he has shared what he learned about gender expectations with his parents, brothers, and sisters to help them understand that women and men have equal rights, and everyone can study — no matter if they are girls or boys. In rural areas in Xieng Khouang, there are still many families who think that men have more rights than women, so they let the boys study, play sports, and do other things, while girls are required to help their parents with fieldwork and housework and do not get the opportunity to study. They are not given the chance to exercise their capacity, or to have their new experiences in new places. According to Mouapor, “After finishing the Understanding Gender Module, I felt that people should not follow traditional beliefs so much and they should provide opportunities for their daughters to go to school.”

In his first season, Mouapor Lao’s team began to face some challenges; some players stopped coming to practice, and the team did not have solidarity. As a result, the team did not win the competition at the village-group level as they had hoped. Mouapor felt very disappointed; he couldn’t stand it and he shouted at some of the other players, which resulted in an argument with one of his teammates after the competition. In the end Coach Yua Yang had to step in to stop the argument. Coach Yua Yang was very upset to see that the team did not have solidarity and that the players did not respect each other. He asked all the players to come together and told them, “From now on, if anyone doesn’t come to practice, I will dissolve our team”. This made Mouapor and the other players decide to practice together as a team; all the players sat together and recalled the lesson Coach Yua Yang had given them, “Before we reach our goal, we must have a plan and implement it; then, and only then, we will be successful.” According to Mouapor this encouraged the team to not give up and to keep fighting even when they faced difficult obstacles. It also made him even more focused for the rest of the year.



Coach Yua Yang left the program at the end of the season, and so Mouapor moved to a new team under Coach Yur Ha. He said that, “We should calm down, gently speak to each other and avoid using violence to solve the problem. Since I joined Pass It Back and started playing rugby, other people in my village and community have seen that I have become a calm person, I know how to solve problems, and I give respect to other people. I also help others when they need support with growing rice or other things.”

The most significant thing that Mouapor has learned is that, “Men and women can both be community leaders, learn new skills, and play sports, and everyone has the right to do these things.” He even used this knowledge within his family, because his father did not allow his younger sister to play football at school. Mouapor's father said to his daughter, “Why do women have to go play sports — it's embarrassing to the family. You are a woman, not a man who can come and go as he pleases. What you have to do after school is help your father at home. ” Mouapor looked at his younger sister, saw her tears, and felt very sorry for her. Mouapor said, “After my father talked with my younger sister, I went to sit with my father and asked him why he would not agree to let my younger sister play sports. He said that she is a woman, so he did not want her to play sports — he needed her to work at home. I told my father that I had learned about gender and child rights through Pass It Back. I know that men and women can do anything they want. I also know that a father should support his daughter. My sister likes sport and my father should support her. If she goes to play sport and can come home and still do her chores and help, then he should support her. After that, my father let my younger sister play sport at school.” Mouapor was very proud that he could take the lessons he learned from the module and help his father understand that he should allow his daughter to do the things she likes. He is also proud of himself that he helped his younger sister to do activities that she enjoys.

Mouapor's example shows us that players can drive change in their families and — in this case — help eliminate barriers to participating in sport for young females and change the attitudes of males in their families. Mouapor's actions show us that the modules can have a significant impact on players' attitudes and behaviours, and through participating in the life skills sessions, they gain key leadership skills that enable young males and females to work for the kind of community that supports everyone to be educated, safe and healthy, and to fulfil their passions.

**“Men and women can both  
be community leaders, learn new skills,  
and play sports...”**

# Chan Lor

*Coach - Laos*

Chan Lor is 19 years old. He completed Grade 12 in 2018 at Khangphanian Secondary School, Nonghet District, Xieng Khouang Province. He has not yet planned any further studies; instead, he is focused on coaching his players.

Chan Lor has been a rugby and life skills Coach for 2 years. For many months he and his coaching partner trained four male rugby teams together. However, in May 2018 at the end of the season, his coaching partner resigned, and so Chan Lor continued coaching by himself until he was paired up with another Coach.

Chan Lor shared his experience of being a Coach with us: “As a rugby and life skills Coach, I have learned many things. After our monthly Coach meetings, we sit together and discuss things from family issues to how we can use the different activities that we have learned, as well as problems we found and how to solve them, and what we can say or do to help our players develop themselves.”

“In terms of coaching life skills, I have learned a lot from the curriculum. I have also applied what I learned to help solve issues that arise among my family members. For example, when my parents have an argument or when we don’t understand each other within the family, I use listening skills and pick up the important points to discuss to help everyone understand the issue and avoid it escalating into a bigger issue. I have also noticed that my life has changed for the better. I use my life skills experiences when I train my teams, and when the players have problems, when they argue with each other, I can help them to solve their problems and I can help them to understand each other”. For Chan Lor, leadership skills are also important. “Leadership is very important. Leadership skills can be used to help people respect one another and promote solidarity in the community.”

Chan Lor has also found that the first aid skills he learned during Coach training have been an important attribute. “Besides coaching skills, we have also learned to use first aid skills to help our players when they get hurt during sessions or competitions. For example, we can clean and dress the cuts. We would like every player to be safe when they come to train and play rugby with us so when they go back home their parents are happy and continue to trust us. I also use my first aid skills to help people in my community when they get into an accident. Many people tell me how happy they are when they receive some help from me for their injuries from working in the rice fields.”





In the past, Chan Lor could only help his parents with work in the rice fields, never in terms of financial support. Currently, although he cannot help his parents with work in the fields as much as he did before, he can now support them with some financial support, such as when the family needs money for supplies, like for soap, petrol, or electricity bills. His parents are very happy that he is a Coach and works with children in the community, that he is a good example for others, and that he can contribute some of his coaching stipend to supporting his parents. Chan Lor's parents also never thought that he could be a leader, but now he has leadership skills and he is a leader in their community. Chan Lor's mother said that: "He has changed so much, he still helps us with the farming, but then he leaves to go train his teams. It is impressive that he can manage both. He is also very respectful of all his players, and he is respected in our community in kind."

According to Chan Lor, being a Coach is very important to him because of the opportunities he has received to learn how to protect and help children develop in his community. He has learned new knowledge, such as about leadership, coaching techniques, and how to be a referee. He has learned about the rugby values, which his players can use when they are at home, school, or with their friends to help them be good people. According to Chan Lor, when he first started to train his teams, he didn't have much experience in coaching and so the players neither paid much attention nor respected him. However, Chan Lor gradually improved his coaching skills and now his players listen to him and pay him much more attention and respect at training. Chan Lor thinks that it is very important to continue improving his coaching skills so that he can continue to improve the knowledge and skills of his players.

**"I have learned a lot from the curriculum. I have also applied what I learned to help solve issues that arise among my family members."**

Chan Lor also shared that in the future if he chooses to continue his studies, he would also like to be a Coach in the communities where his school is located. The reason he would like to do so is to help children there to learn how to solve their problems by themselves, help their friends to solve their problems, and to make good decisions regarding their studies or how they save and spend money.

Chan Lor has developed his leadership skills as a Coach, and we can see from his examples some key areas where he has been able to apply these skills. Chan Lor also demonstrates a long-term vision for how he can support his community, and children and youth more broadly, as well as continue to develop himself as a Coach and as a person. It is evident that Chan Lor has a passion for teaching and developing children. "Being a leader and working to support children's development in the community go hand in hand. Right now, the most important thing for me is that I can support children to overcome the problems they face in their lives with skills that we develop together in our sessions," he said. Chan Lor's focus on life skills, while also recognising the benefits of sport, and the bearing that these skills can have on children's lives is key to his success as a Coach. In the Gender Module survey, for the statement "Disagreements can only be solved when one person has more power than the other," Chan Lor's teams went from a median baseline score of agree (3) to an endline score of disagree (-3), highlighting Chan Lor's efforts to pass the skills that he has learned on to his players.

# Tarn

*Coach - Laos*

Sabai dee, my name is Tarn. I was born in Savannakhet Province. I have played rugby for 1 year and 6 months. I started playing rugby in the Pass It Back program and since then I have trained and developed myself to also play contact rugby with the Lao Rugby Federation. Now, as well as being a Coach, I play for the Vientiane Lions Rugby Club.

Before being introduced to rugby, I was a young girl living in a remote area, very far away from school. When I was 15, I moved to study at Secondary School in Vientiane. At that time, I lived with my aunt. When I was in Grade 10 at secondary school, I started playing tag rugby with my school team as part of Pass It Back. Not long after I began playing tag rugby, I also began playing contact rugby. I was very excited to have a chance to be in the Nagas National Rugby Team and play in my first contact rugby match in Hong Kong.

Later in the same year, the Lao Rugby Federation began recruiting Coaches for the Pass It Back program. I was really interested in becoming a Coach because I wanted to deliver knowledge and skills to other children in my community. I was excited to participate in the training for new Coaches training to become Coaches. It was challenging because I had to talk with many new people, even though I typically do not like talking with others. But when I became a Coach, I realised that I had begun talking with more and more people, and I had gained new skills and experiences, such as around being a leader. I used my leadership experiences from the coaching training to coach my teams. I worked so that the players would see me as a role model; in particular around the 5 rugby values — integrity, solidarity, passion, respect, and discipline. I also applied my leadership skills in my daily life: I have a job that I like, and I take care of my work around the home. In addition, I want to improve my English skills because I am a national team member and will hopefully travel to play in many matches in many countries. In 2017, I played for the DAC Lao Nagas in Hong Kong and from there I was selected to play on the DAC Lao National Team at South East Asian Games in Malaysia and the Youth Olympic Qualifiers in Dubai. I am so happy and proud of my achievements and of those who continually support me. In addition, as a Coach in the Pass It Back program, I think English is really important too. [I like learning English, but] it can be very difficult, even when asking for directions. Sometimes, I know some words but cannot understand when people respond too fast. I am very happy that we have the Pass It Back program because it helps to develop my skills and ideas. In addition, it provides me with new experiences, leadership skills, and an understanding of the 5 rugby values, of gender and gender roles, and of how to plan for my future.

In terms of self-development I started playing rugby from zero — having no knowledge about it — and now I am in the national team. Being able to apply lessons from Pass It Back to my daily life is something wonderful. In the next five years, there may be uncertainty in my life, but I still plan to do things that I like such as playing rugby, continuing to improve myself through coaching, and achieving my goals. I also want to share my experience with new generations of players, develop children in my community, and give more opportunities to disadvantaged people because I used to be in that situation. I want to travel and collect more experiences from more places, finish my studies, get a secure job, support my brothers and sisters to complete their studies, build a new house for my mother, and send my youngest brother to get medical rehabilitation in another country. I am so proud of myself that I have been able to have so many experiences at this young age and I also feel that I am now a grown-up who is self-reliant and able to provide some support to my family.





# Tram, Mai, Lam, Quyet, Thien

## Players - Vietnam

*This case study focuses on five Pass It Back players with a disability and attempts to understand how participating in the program has positively impacted not only their own lives, but also the lives of their peers, Coaches, and communities.*

*In the past, children with disabilities had less opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities such as sports or learning new skills, because of the stigma in the community towards children with disabilities. These children would also receive little attention or support, as their families would feel ashamed that their child was different from the other children in the village.*

*The Pass It Back Coaches who live and work in the same villages where these children live have been working to make a change to this situation. Coaches have encouraged and supported these children to join in the sessions, to socialise and make friends, and be part of the team. As a result, these children have changed from being timid and lonely children and have become more confident and sociable, as well as more proactive when engaging in activities.*

### **TRAM** **Before** **Joining the** **Program**

Tram is 11 years old and plays for the “Meteors” team. “Our family found out that Tram has an intellectual disability when she was 3 years old,” said Tram’s mother. She continued, “At first, our family gave up on the idea of getting Tram any treatment. Taking care of Tram took too much time. Tram didn’t know how to do anything. We had to do everything for her, from combing her hair to washing her clothes. Often, we had to send her to stay with her grandparents because we were too busy working in the fields, and we had no time to take good care of her ourselves.”

Tram’s schooling also stopped. “She could go to school but she could not learn. She would quickly forget things, and she was very slow to learn things. When she was asked about something, it took her 30 minutes to answer, and so she was ignored at school. Although we took her to school every day, without special support, she just wandered about in her class. None of the other children would play with her. So many times, when I came to pick her up, I found her sitting alone,” said Tram’s mother.

Life in general had been difficult for Tram, as her mother continued to tell us, “In our community there are not many opportunities for people like Tram. There are events for children such as the Mid-Autumn Festival or Children’s Day, but Tram was never welcomed or invited to join in because she was seen to be too slow, and unable to follow the other children. During these times, our family felt ashamed and a lot of self-pity. We also felt a lot

of pity for Tram, and we lost face with our neighbours because she was unable to do anything. When I heard them gossiping that they ignored her because she was too slow, I felt so sad. I truly wanted my daughter to be involved in activities just like the other children. But I was also afraid that if I told people my wish for her to join the activities, everyone would laugh. Our family has always been looked down on for having a child with disability, so we don't often let Tram go out, which makes me so sad."

### After Joining the Program

Tram's mother shared her thoughts on her daughter's participation in the program. "We are so fortunate to have the program here. The Coaches and Tram's teammates often come to call for Tram to go to the pitch together. Before taking part in this program, nobody cared for Tram that much. On the day when Coach Thuy turned up and invited Tram to go and learn, our family felt so happy. This was the first time our family have hoped that she will be able to have a chance just like the other children. Since she joined the program, she has been saying the word 'Happy' to me every time she comes home from a session."

Tram's Coach, Thuy, also shared that, "When talking to Tram, we must use sign language and spend a lot of time helping her practice simple moves such as passing the ball. What she had learned one day would often be forgotten the next day. Each time she forgot, we would spend time helping her to learn it again. Initially, Tram was so afraid of the people around her. She was often startled and never smiled. Sometimes when we gave her some fruit, she showed fear on her face instead of putting out her hands to take it. It is difficult to say when Tram started to change, but the players have been hanging out with each other, taking care of each other, and Tram has gradually integrated with her friends. Maybe playing together, when the children have their freedom to choose how to play and who to pass the ball to, has helped them connect. Tram has become more sociable with her teammates and more active in the sessions. She is no longer as passive and slow to learn as in the past. Although it still takes her some time, she can now pass the ball, catch the ball, and run toward the ball just as well as other players on the pitch."

### MAI Before Joining the Program

Mai is 13 years old now, and she is a player in team Forest Flowers. She has a hearing impairment that makes it almost impossible for her to hear at all. She has been living with her grandparents for the past two years, as her parents work far away. Her grandmother shared that, "In the past, Mai was often dour and lonely. She had no friends. Every day, whenever I wanted to ask her to do something, her grandfather had to shout so loudly for her to be able to hear it. As she grew up, her disability became more serious. There were many days when she would cry because of the pain in her ears. At school, she had no special support so her schoolwork got worse and she was often yelled at by her teachers. During breaks, Mai often sat alone because she could not hear what her friends were talking about. At that time, we pitied her so much, and we did not know what to do. We were so sad that she couldn't be like the other children. Before she took part in this program, we thought that it would be impossible for Mai to join in and play sport. But she said that she wanted to play rugby, so we agreed to let her go but we did not expect her to be able to learn anything."

**After Joining  
the Program**


Mai has experienced significant changes in terms of her personal development and in her daily life. Since she joined the program, her teammates visit her house more and more, and now that she has friends, she no longer feels frustrated or upset about her situation. She has become more confident in playing with her friends, and they often pick her up to go to school together. She said that when she goes to the pitch, she gets a priority seat close to the Coaches during the discussion, and her friends take very good care of her. According to Mai's grandmother, "Mai is much more energetic than she used to be. Now when she is at home, she is so eager to learn and often gets her books and pen out to study. After every meal, she volunteers to wash the dishes. She now also takes better care of herself. Her personality has changed a lot. I think that Mai is much happier than she used to be before the program. Mai truly loves attending the rugby training sessions with her Coaches, and she is so eager for training sessions to come, so that she can ride her bike to the pitch. On some days she even rides down the village road to call her friends going to play rugby. Every time she comes back after the session, she seems to be in a very good mood. I hope that the Coaches will keep taking care of Mai so that she still has a chance to learn and socialise with her peers."

Mai's Coach shared that, "When Mai first joined in 2018, she often showed up to the pitch but often sat at a distance from the rest, and did not interact with anyone. She learned slower than her teammates and often dropped the ball, which would make her even more frustrated. Initially, some of the players did not want to let Mai play in their team. We spent time talking to the team about this. We helped the players understand the importance of inclusion. Since then, they have been respectful and consider Mai a member of the team. Thanks to their help, Mai has become much more confident."



*Mai (left) with her teammate at a training.*





**LAM AND  
QUYET**

**Before  
Joining the  
Program**

Lam plays on the “Hot Boy 2000” team and is 15 years old now. He was born with a physical disability, and his feet and hands have no toes and fingers. He does not live with his parents and has told his Coaches that he sometimes feels depressed. Coach Huong shared that, “During player recruitment in 2018, Lam also came to the venue but did not register. Lam was so shy, and just went back and forth watching the Coaches interview his peers. When a Coach approached him and invited him to registration, he showed us his hands and said, ‘My hands are like this, how can I play rugby.’ I really felt for him so much. I told him that this chance was for everybody, regardless of who they are, that all children can join and develop. I said that we would coach him to play rugby in a way that would make him feel most comfortable. After hearing my explanation, Lam registered.”

Quyét is 13 years old and is a player on the “Vietnam Rugby” team. He has a learning/cognitive disability and a physical disability. His parents have sent him to three centres that specialise in treating children with disabilities, but he could not get the support he needed. He often isolated himself and would suddenly get angry with people around him. His parents pitied him a lot and brought him back home. They said that he did not know how to do anything, so they did not try to teach him anything. Since coming home, he would play in the house alone, or follow his father to the field. He did not participate in school or any extra-curricular activities.

**After Joining  
the Program**

When Quyét and Lam began participating in the program, their Coaches had to work hard to ensure that all the players respected each other, and that players did not pick on each other. Coach Huong shared that, “When Lam first attended the rugby sessions, he dropped the ball many times. To help him feel more confident to socialise in the team, we often got the players in the team to encourage him and help him. However, Lam would still get frustrated with himself. There were some training days where he would drop the ball many times and burst into tears. He would raise both hands to yell at the Coaches, ‘You said that in rugby we must catch the ball with two hands, but my hands are like this, tell me how can I catch the ball?’” Huong continued, “We knew we had to persevere with him. After a while, he was able to catch the ball like his teammates and overcome his doubts about his abilities. Lam also lacked the confidence to play rugby, so to encourage him we all selected him to be team captain. He has been doing so well, from calling his teammates to go to the pitch to requesting these teammates respect the team’s ground rules. The team always has a lot of fun. At competitions, they all discuss their strategies together. They have respect and solidarity and try to help each other out both on and off the pitch. Lam now has confidence, and plays rugby at the same level as his teammates. Sometimes, like when he is about to score a try, he drops the ball close to the try line. His face will show his disappointment, but he will quickly lift his spirits and keep playing with his teammates, not like the Lam from before.”

Lam shared that, “Now I don’t feel that I am less advantaged than my friends. When I go to the playground, I can play with them and they respect me. In the competitions, I also play as well as the other players. My friends in my team also love and protect me in daily life. I usually send messages to the Coaches to share my difficulties. I have been receiving a lot of help on the pitch and the Coaches all encourage me. I feel so lucky every time I go to learn with my friends and my Coaches.” Quyét’s Coach, Khuyen, shared that, “Quyét likes taking part in this program a lot and doesn’t miss any sessions. Although he is slower to learn than the other players, he is always enthusiastic on the pitch. Each time he goes to



the rugby sessions, his teammates make sure he gets to sit close to the Coaches. In the beginning, he was troublesome, as he would attend the sessions and only do what he wanted and not listen to anybody. Initially, he would not contribute to discussions. After a while, he started to share his opinions with others in discussions. Although he often speaks slowly and gets off track, we encourage him and let him finish speaking before turning to another player. This helps him to speak out more and contribute better to the discussions.”

“In the latest competition in Phu Vinh, Quyet participated in some of the games and his team won a trophy. This made him so happy. Quyet’s father went to the Coaches’ houses to express his gratitude to them for giving their time and care to Quyet. He said he never expected his son to learn anything because he was too absent-minded at home. Quyet is no longer violent towards other people. His teammates often go to Quyet’s house to go to the pitch together, and this makes the family feel less worried about their son. The fact that he could join a competition with his friends is something that his family never could have imagined. Up to now, in their community, children with disabilities like Quyet have never been able to join in any competitions.”

**“Now I don’t feel that I am less advantaged than my friends.”**

**THIEN**  
**Before**  
**Joining the**  
**Program**

Thien is 10 years old, and a player on the “28 Ngoi Hoa” team. Thien was born with a hearing and speech disability. When some Coaches went to his home to ask his parents to let him join the program, they were very hesitant to let him participate. “If only he were just mute, he would have been lucky enough to participate because at least he would have been able to take things in. But he is both mute and deaf and is unable to communicate with anyone. It is not possible for him to play rugby.” However, the Coaches persuaded Thien’s parents, and they agreed to show the Coaches some sign language to help them communicate with each other.

**After Joining**  
**the Program**

Thien’s mother told us, “When he goes to the rugby sessions, the Coaches use sign language to demonstrate the rugby moves so that Thien can follow. Fortunately, Thien can quickly imitate and practice what other people do. After each session, Thien often shares with me what he has learned on the pitch with body language. He is so happy and always wants to go to the pitch.” Thien’s Coach, Vinh, shared that, “Although Thien cannot speak, he runs so fast and often uses his body language to communicate. He always pays attention to the Coaches and other players’ actions. In the beginning, Thien was often teased by some players in his team and they did not want to let him participate. But we helped these players understand that they should welcome him as a member of the team. Since then, the whole team has shown better solidarity and consider Thien part of the team. We do not really have the skills to coach children like Thien, but we try our best to help him understand. Sometimes Thien’s sister will help translate our words into sign language to help Thien understand the key messages of each session. Thien has been improving so quickly, and it makes us feel so happy.”

**“After each session, Thien often shares with me what he has learned on the pitch with body language. He is so happy and always wants to go to the pitch.”**

**REFLECTION** Each and every child has right to participate, to play, to learn, and to engage with others. Children with disabilities have the same rights as children without disabilities and deserve to be supported in realising their rights. However, the children in these case studies live in areas where opportunities to access and claim their rights are lacking. Furthermore, there are significant barriers to full participation and inclusion in society, which include access barriers, barriers around appropriate forms of communication, and discriminatory practices and prejudices held by the community.

Pass It Back Coaches strove to provide children with disabilities with opportunities to participate in safe and fun learning activities. By participating in Pass It Back training, they realise their right to play and develop just like other children without disabilities. As a result, they can be respected, accepted, have equal rights, and be valued by their communities regardless of their disabilities and, more and more their families, peers, and communities come to value society.

# ChildFund Rugby



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