

## Introduction

Children with disabilities in Laos often face stigma, limited access to rehabilitation, and few opportunities for inclusion. Lao Friends Hospital for Children (LFHC) provides essential pediatric services, but lack simple and culturally relevant ways to measure progress and guide family-centered care. Most standardized outcome tools are costly, complex, or not aligned with the Lao context.

Literature and LFHC needs-assessment findings highlight major barriers including caregiver knowledge gaps, cultural beliefs about disability, and limited visual or sensory-based supports. This project aimed to address that gap by developing a brief, culturally adapted Quality of Life (QoL) outcome tool that reflects what truly matters to children and families—daily participation, well-being, and meaningful routines.

## Project Description

The **QoL Tool** was designed as a one-page, low-literacy tool that can be completed by caregivers and staff together during therapy or follow-up visits.

It emphasizes daily routines, play, and social connection rather than medical symptoms.

The accompanying **user instructions** provides simple instructions on administration, interpretation, and using the results to guide care planning.

It consists of 8 easy to follow and open ended questions that guide the conversation to create realistic expectations and goals for both the therapist and family.

### Alignment With Core Values

- Aloha: Culturally respectful, family-centered collaboration
- Kuleana: Responsibility to create sustainable, evidence-based resources
- Pono: Ethical, dignifying materials promoting inclusion
- Kokua: Practical tools supporting caregiver confidence
- Laulima: Teamwork with LFHC staff and community partners

## Purpose/Aims

To design, pilot, and adapt a culturally relevant Quality of Life tool for children with disabilities and their families at LFHC, supporting realistic goal-setting, family-centered care, and long-term program sustainability.

## Methods

### Preparation (Weeks 1–4):

Background research and consultation with LFHC staff to understand common challenges, cultural norms, and family needs.

### Needs Assessment (Weeks 5–6, On-Site):

Conducted caregiver interviews through staff translation and staff discussions to explore what “quality of life” means in the Lao context.

### Tool Development:

Created a brief, QoL tool using culturally tailored questions that focus on what is most important to families in Laos and are written in a way that will assist in goal making.

### Pilot Testing:

Tried the tool with families and staff to gather feedback on clarity, cultural fit, and ease of use.

### Refinement & Finalization (Weeks 7–13, Remote):

Revised the tool based on feedback and refined it into 8 easy to follow questions.

## Results/Outcomes

### Primary Outcome:

A pilot-tested QoL tool adapted for use at LFHC.

### Secondary Outcomes:

Families felt listened to and supported through the interview process.

Staff gained a practical, easy-to-use outcome measure to support caregiver discussions.

LFHC will begin collecting baseline data on child participation and family well-being.

### Deliverables:

QoL Tool (1-page caregiver/staff form)

Staff User Instructions



## Discussion

By shifting focus to participation and well-being, the tool helps reduce stigma and encourages collaboration between families and providers.

Staff expressed strong interest in continuing to use and refine the tool for future disability programming.

This approach supports sustainable, family-centered care in a low-resource setting while providing valuable data for advocacy and grant development.

## Reflections

This project deepened my understanding of how occupational therapy principles—particularly participation and quality of life—can be adapted cross-culturally.

Working alongside Lao clinicians and caregivers highlighted the power of collaboration and cultural humility in developing practical, sustainable tools.

It reinforced my belief that even simple interventions can create meaningful impact when they are grounded in respect, partnership, and shared goals.

### Sustainability & Future Directions

LFHC staff will continue using the QoL tool in therapy sessions and caregiver check-ins. The collected data can inform future allied health initiatives, disability advocacy, and program development across Laos.

Long term, this project lays a foundation for culturally responsive rehabilitation practices and broader inclusion for children with disabilities.

## References

This project did not involve human subjects and did not need IRB approval.

