Installations and exhibits at the 'From Disability to Visibility' exhibition at The Factory in Phnom Penh.

From Disability To Visibility

Art plays a central role in raising awareness of social inequalities and injustices and can be used to advocate for disenfranchised people and communities where power structures suppress dissent or activism.

This is a reality for people living with disabilities in Cambodia. Apart from hollow words of encouragement and empty promises, people with disabilities have no representation in policymaking that addresses their needs or places zero tolerance for discrimination by people in the community.

Keeping this in mind, the "From disability to visibility" exhibition was organized by frequent hbs collaborator Miguel Lopes Jerónimo in collaboration with more than 10 organizations working on the topic and more than 20 artists and creatives, many of whom have disabilities.

"The main goal of this art show is to shine a light on the lives, challenges and dreams of people from various backgrounds and showcase what they are doing every single day to become independent and thrive," says Jerónimo.

The multimedia exhibition also included discussions on topics such as the differences between the medical and the social models of disability, promoting different NGOs and showcasing what an inclusive event can be: the entrance was wheelchair accessible, the event had a sign language interpreter during talks, catering was provided by organizations that employ people with disabilities, with dance group formed by deaf and wheelchair users providing entertainment for the night.

The exhibition had a wide array of offerings, including illustrations and a brick installation from Chan Phoun, an artist who lost an arm in an accident at a brick factory as a teenager, presented photos and videos from journalist Mech Choulay documenting the lives of a blind couple, or guests could buy jams made by people with intellectual disabilities.

Series of photographs at the exhibition focusing on a football program by ISF Cambodia involving blind teenagers.

The exhibition ties into hbs's mission to support grassroots initiatives to highlight important parts of Cambodian society and raise awareness among all people. It is not often that topics of disability and how ableism has become a default in society are discussed using the prism of equal representation, visibility and art.