

Participation of People with Disabilities in the Myanmar Labor Market

Salai Vanni Bawi



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The Consortium of Development Studies in Southeast Asia has drawn on primary postgraduate research undertaken for theses from the master's programs of Asian Institute of Technology's Master of Science in Gender and Development Studies (MGDS), Chiang Mai University's Master of Arts in Social Science (Development Studies) (MASS); and the Chulalongkorn University Master of Arts in International Development Studies (MAIDS). Scholarships for the students of CDSSEA has been generously provided by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada. With a diversity of academic approaches (gender studies, political science, social sciences), the individual works of this collection have in common a focus on the increasing interconnection and regionalization of the five mainland Southeast Asian countries (Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam), and examine these exchanges and encounters within the context of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS).

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Participation of People with Disabilities in the Myanmar Labor Market: The Role of Vocational Training

Salai Vanni Bawi



The Regional Center for Social Science
and Sustainable Development
Chiang Mai University

Participation of People with Disabilities in the Myanmar Labor Market: The Role of Vocational Training

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Series Foreword

The Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD) at Chiang Mai University has extended its publication program to include Master's dissertations from The Consortium of Development Studies in Southeast Asia (CDSSEA). The CDSSEA series covers mainland Southeast Asia: Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, and regionalization, development encounters and exchanges within the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS).

The CDSSEA program brings together resources and expertise from three of Thailand's leading institutions offering Master's degrees in development studies: Chiang Mai University's Master of Arts in Social Science (Development Studies) (MASS); Chulalongkorn University's Master of Arts in International Development Studies (MAIDS); and the Asian Institute of Technology's Master of Science in Gender and Development Studies (MGDS). Although the Consortium's program focuses on the relationship between development studies and social sciences, each of the programs has a different emphasis. The Chiang Mai degree focuses on social sciences and anthropological perspectives, with research interests in environmental and resource management, food security and local livelihoods, labour migration and trans-border issues, ethnicity and development, health, tourism, and agrarian transitions. Chulalongkorn's program concentrates on the political dimension of development, including democratization, human rights, conflict resolution, international and civil society development organizations, community development and globalization. The Asian Institute of Technology focuses on the relationships between gender and development—including women's rights, civil society, and gender dimensions of urbanization and industrialization.

The CDSSEA program has a practical dimension, building leadership capacity in mainland Southeast Asia's regional development, bringing together postgraduate students, encouraging debate, and promoting the rethinking of development alternatives in such areas as social equality, justice and participation, environmental and economic sustainability, and community development. In this regard, a major objective is to develop the knowledge and skills of development practitioners and to enhance the quality and effectiveness of policy-making and its implementation in the region.

The publications in this series—selected from the CDSSEA Master's program—are designed to express this diverse range of interests in development studies and regionalization, and to emphasize the relationships between empirical and theoretical research, policy-making and practice.

Victor T. King, Senior Editorial Adviser,
Consortium of Development Studies in Southeast Asia series

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Abbreviations

AAR	Association for Aid and Relief
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CBM	Christian Blind Mission
CBR	Community Based Rehabilitation
CSR	Cooperate Social Responsibility
DPOs	Disabled People Organizations
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
DWA	Association of Myanmar Disabled Women
EFA	Education for All
EU	European Union
E4Y	Education for Youth
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
IE	Inclusive Education
IHLA	Integrated house hold living Assessment
ILO	International Labor Organization
INGOs	International Non-governmental Organizations
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MBA	Myanmar Blind Association
MCFB	Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MDRI	Myanmar Development Resource Institute
MILI	Myanmar Independent Living Initiative

MOE	Ministry of Education
MPHA	Myanmar Physical Handicap Association
MYMCA	Myanmar Young Men's Christian Association
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
PIE	People into Employment
TLMI	The Leprosy Mission International
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization
YCDC	Yangon City Development Committee
YMCA	Young Men Christian Association

Glossary of Terms

Corporate social responsibility (CSR, also called corporate conscience, corporate citizenship or responsible business)	A form of corporate self-regulation integrated into a business model. CSR policy functions as a self-regulatory mechanism whereby a business monitors and ensures its active compliance with the spirit of the law, ethical standards and national or international norms.
Resource person	A person with expertise in a certain area who may be called upon as necessary to perform a task or provide information.

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Salai Vanni Bawi

Chapter I

Introduction

Background

A World Bank study on disability and poverty concluded that the two are closely linked, and that persons with disabilities are poorer than the non-disabled. The report points out that one of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, which cannot be achieved without taking account of a group that is among the world's poorest (World Bank, 2013). The disabled are poor not only because of physical and mental impairments but also because of low educational achievement, and consequent low income, and the inadequacy and inequity of income maintenance schemes and other programs. Persons with disabilities are part of society and they can achieve their potential in many different ways (Mike Oliver & Zarb, 1989). But their potential and their capacity are neglected.

The first and only Myanmar national disability survey in 2008-2009 was conducted by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and The Leprosy Mission International (TLMI). According to this survey, 2.3 per cent of Myanmar's population have some form of disability.¹ Of these, 68.2 per cent have physical impairment, 13.3 per cent have visual impairment, 10.4 per cent are persons with hearing impairment and 8.1 per cent have some form of intellectual

1 The proportion of disability amongst the world's population is 15% (WHO, 2011.) However, the criteria used to measure disability in Myanmar are different from the international criteria.

disability. Most disabled people suffer from some discrimination and/or exclusion, but the degree and severity often depends on the nature of their impairment and their personal situations. Disabled children and women are particularly vulnerable (Department of Social Welfare, 2009).

Participation of disabled persons in education is very limited in Myanmar. Education is vital to a good productive life; it motivates self-reliance and provides us with what we need to make decisions for our own lives. Thus, we can say that education is a human right to enable independence and self-determination (Tilbury, 2000). Education is of the utmost importance for disabled persons to create the foundations for social, academic and economic skills, independent living and vocational training. There are few educational institutions for the disabled in Myanmar able to offer the necessary range of education. Those that do exist are located in Yangon. Additionally, the national education system presents many difficulties and obstacles to disabled persons who attempt to access mainstream education. Most disabled persons outside Yangon have little access to either formal or informal education; their only option is limited special community education.

Most vocational training institutions for the disabled are also to be found in Yangon. These institutions do not provide adequate skills and knowledge to enable trainees to find jobs. There are a few supporting organizations providing livelihood programs for the disabled and their families, but they do not have enough funding to support job creation programs. Limited funding resources and low donor interest in disability have affected the struggle of service providers to initiate livelihood programs and improve vocational institutions. There is also limited organisational and human resource capacity-building available to disabled people's organizations.

The Myanmar National Plan of Action 2010-2012 for persons with disabilities confirmed that unemployment was high among the disabled. Only 1.5 per cent of the disabled population had university degrees; only 27 per cent were aware of existing social services for disabilities, and only 24 per cent knew of the existence of the Department of Social Welfare and its social welfare services. Only 20.2 per cent of disabled persons know about the special institutions in Myanmar for the disabled, and most of the disabled population has no contact with those organizations (Department of Social Welfare, 2010)

There has been insufficient study of equal rights and the participation of disabled persons in developing vocational curricula. It is important for vocational training institutions to develop effective teaching plans for disabled persons. There is little evidence or reports about improvements in vocational training or the engagement between vocational training institutions and the employment market. Before we can even begin to build the foundations of these services, service providers must have a firm understanding of the best strategies to mainstream facilities for the disabled, and of appropriate methodologies to support the needs and challenges of disabled persons.

Myanmar is presently going through a critical social and political transition, and is leaning towards a democratic process that is seeking to improve the country both socially and economically. Section 32 (A) of the 2008 Constitution of The Union of Myanmar states that “the State has responsibility to take care of mothers and children, orphans, children of deceased military personnel, elderly people and persons with disabilities.” The Department of Social Welfare has the primary responsibility to fulfill this mandate. On November 17, 2011 the government signed the Bali Declaration on The Enhancement of the Role and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the ASEAN Community, and on December 7, 2011 the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons (UNCRPD). Yet there is so far a lack of research and recommendations to establish an inclusive development program for those with disabilities.

In addition, it is important that both the Myanmar public and the government become aware of the social implications of disabilities and of the capacity and effects of different rehabilitation services. The new government is committed to increased efforts in poverty reduction nationwide, focusing on poorer people and regions. Disabled persons must be included in the national development plan.

This research is intended to help Myanmar government institutions and service providers to be able to offer better support and more adequate services for disabled persons. Vocational training institutions in particular need to plan for creating job opportunities, for being better informed about the opportunities that exist, and for doing more to prepare trainees to enter the employment market.

Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What are the barriers preventing disabled persons from finding employment in Myanmar?
- How do vocational institutions prepare disabled persons to obtain employment and job opportunities?

Research Objectives

- To identify the barriers to getting employment and job opportunities for disabled persons in the community.
- To assess how different stakeholders cooperate in finding job opportunities for disabled persons.
- To analyze the role of vocational institutions for disabled persons in the labor market.

Hypothesis

In Myanmar, only about 70 per cent of persons of working age are actually in the labor force; the remaining 30 percent are dependents of one sort or another. Employment opportunity is an essential road to poverty reduction. The hypothesis of this book is that vocational training institutes for disabled persons in Yangon do not provide training that is adequate for their graduates to find employment, and that moreover those institutes do not do enough to identify employment opportunities for their graduates. I would argue that, to achieve these two objectives, greater participation of disabled persons in the decision-making process is required, together with greater cooperation with other stakeholders.

Research scope and limitation

The research focuses on the four vocational institutions which are the only ones existing for people with physical and visual impairment in Yangon. Yangon lacks vocational institutions for the hearing impaired and intellectually disabled.

The research was conducted in vocational institutions of the Association for Aid and Relief (AAR Japan), the Christian Blind School, the Blind School (Kyimindine) and the Vocational Training School for Adult Disabled. I interviewed the principals and teacher-trainers from these organizations. The study focused on Yangon because it is the major city in Myanmar and many NGO and INGO head offices are based there. At the same time, the city provides easy access to information, and has good communications nationally and internationally. The target population was people with visual and physical impairments who are able to access vocational training in the institutions mentioned. Most disabled persons live in short term accommodation in the institutions while they are studying. For interview I selected at random two different types of trainee, the visually and physically impaired, from different institutions. The major limitations for conducting this research were the difficulty of engaging with government officials, and difficulty in accessing accurate data and official releases. Interviewees' names are not revealed in order to respect their confidentiality. The bureaucratic nature of the Myanmar government was one constraint in collecting accurate data for government sector implementation. But I was able to interview one or two persons working in departments responsible for disabled persons' employment opportunities. I also interviewed some vocational training enterprises for the non-disabled, for comparison purposes.

The study addressed three specific areas which have been identified as important: the effectiveness of vocational institutions; the challenges faced by disabled persons in seeking jobs; and the implementation of job creation for disabled persons by the different stakeholders. Education for disabled persons was equally important, although it was not addressed in detail in this study.

Research Methodology

The field work research was mainly based on qualitative methods to understand clearly the circumstances of vocational training in Yangon, the challenges of employment opportunities for disabled persons, and the cooperation of different sectors to enhance job opportunities. Regarding the hiring and inclusion of disabled persons in the workplace, the perspectives of private companies with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies, NGOs and government institutions were important.

Measuring the Barriers to disabled persons in the Labor Market

In order to answer the first research question, semi-structured interviews were used to obtain information from different key informants, namely one assistant director from the Department of Social Welfare, one district level officer from the Department of Labor, and one official from the Yangon Region Administration. The purpose of these interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the development of employment law, policy, the implementation of employment opportunities for disabled persons, and the national implications of international and regional agreements on the rights of the disabled. In order to have information on current investment trends, challenges and opportunities for Myanmar, I also interviewed a key informant who is a Presidential advisor. The interviewees also included two experts: the former principal of the Christian Blind School in Yangon, and the Japanese acting country director of the Association for Aid and Relief. The interviews were mainly focused on the planning of vocational training, preparation for entering the employment market, the strategy for market cooperation, the creation of formal and informal job opportunities for disabled persons, and innovations in vocational training.

The study also included several semi-structured interviews with the chairs of various organizations such as the Association of Myanmar Disabled Women (DWA), the Myanmar Independent Living Initiative (MILI), the Shwe Min Thar Foundation, the Myanmar Physical Handicap Association (MPHA) and the Myanmar Blind Association (MBA). The aim was to get information on the challenges to and the networking of different stakeholders in facilitating job opportunities for disabled persons, and a perspective on employment opportunities. During the field study, the researcher interviewed ten key informants from different stakeholders in Yangon. Some of these key informants did not want to be identified and their wishes have been respected.

Measuring the ways in which vocational institutions prepare disabled persons

The research focused on the preparation, planning and strategy of different vocational training courses for disabled and non-disabled persons in Yangon. This required in-depth interviews. Firstly, I interviewed four officers from the Association for Aid and Relief (AAR Japan), the Christian Blind

School, the Blind School (Kyimindine) and the Vocational Training School for Adult Disabled. The study focused on the type and curriculum of vocational training, basic information-sharing nationwide, the criteria to access vocational training for disabled persons, the management procedure in vocational institutions, the preparation of vocational training for employment opportunities, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The interviews also sought information on private vocational training in Yangon for the non-disabled. Those interviewed included the principal of the Dual Tech Training center, and an official from the Opportunities NOW Entrepreneurship Training program. Subsequently, the researcher also interviewed the secretary of the Myanmar Young Men's Christian Association (MYMCA) which is implementing vocational training for vulnerable youth, funded by the European Union (EU); and the project officer from the Education for Youth (E4Y) vocational school for marginalized youth, which is being funded by one of the Swiss foundations. The purpose was to identify effective training designs, market approach strategies in the labor market, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The study also included interviews with eight disabled persons who are currently undergoing vocational training. These interviews helped to provide information on the design of vocational training curricula for disabled persons, the strengths and weaknesses of this training revealed in the labor market, and lessons learned from different obstacles to innovative ideas for creating job opportunities for disabled persons in current economic circumstances. Interviews with two trainers on aspects of the preparation and implementation of vocational training are also included.

Another technique was non-participatory observation in two vocational institutions. The classes involved each had about eight trainees. The idea was to observe the relationship between trainer and trainees, the natural behavior and attitudes of learners and the interest level of participants in the training.

Measuring the role of the stakeholders in creating job opportunities

To understand the role of different stakeholders in creating job opportunities for the disabled, diverse stakeholders were interviewed. This included disabled persons who have working experience in formal and informal employment, disabled people organizations (DPOs), the private business sector

and government institutions. The voices of disabled persons were particularly valuable. These included two vocational training graduates without jobs; one person with physical impairment who had established his own business; one person with visual impairment who had worked in a company; and one team leader who had graduated from vocational training and established a group business with peers. The study sought to investigate the engagement of disabled persons with formal/informal employment opportunities.

I also interviewed the general manager of M-spiral Creative Media Company Ltd who had experience of recruiting disabled persons. We looked at the prospects for a barrier-free environment, accommodation, and the cost and effects of hiring disabled persons; the employer's perspective on the inclusion of disabled persons in the workplace; the challenges of the workplace; and the requirements for disabled persons. I interviewed three companies which had signed up to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies. These three companies were Shwe Taung group which is one of the top ten companies in Myanmar, Myanmar Information Technology Company Ltd and A Crown Export and Import Management Agency. The study tried to find out the challenges, the strengths and the weaknesses of employing disabled persons at both the organizational level and the individual level.

In order to obtain diverse perspectives on the challenges and experience of disabled persons in the labor market, I also used focus group discussions. Five disabled persons, three trainers, and eight family members of disabled persons were included. The preparedness of disabled persons for employment opportunities and the roles of different stakeholders were discussed.

Secondary data such as Myanmar national laws, policy, journals, newspaper articles, and reports were also covered. This provided an analysis of literature about vocational training, the participation of disabled persons in the labor market, Myanmar's poverty reduction strategy, the implications of international agreements regarding the rights of disabled persons, and significant changes in the current Myanmar national development pattern. The research methodology utilized is described in Table 1.

Table 1: Key-Informant Interviews, Observations and Discussions

Key-Informant Interviews			
Research Focused	Interviewee	Method	Gender
Measuring the barriers to Disabled persons in the labor market	District Officer, Department of Labor	Semi-structured interview	Male
	Assistant Director, Department of Social Welfare	Semi-structured interview	Female
	Presidential Advisor	Semi-structured interview	Male
	Former Principal, Christian Blind School	Semi-structured Interview	Male
	Acting Country Director, AAR Japan	Semi-structured interview	Female
	Chair, Association of Myanmar Disabled Women	Semi-structured interview	Female
	Director, Myanmar Independent Living Initiative	Semi-structured interview	Male
	Director, Shwe Min Thar Foundation	Semi-structured interview	Male
	Chair, Myanmar Physical Handicap Association	Semi-structured interview	Male
	Chair, Myanmar Blind Association	Semi-structured interview	Male

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Key-Informant Interviews			
Establishing how vocational training institutions work	Officer, Association for Aid and Relief (AAR)	In-depth interview	Female
	Principal, Christian Blind School	In-depth interview	Female
	Principal, Blind School (Kyimindine)	In-depth interview	Female
	Principal, Vocational Training School for Adult Disabled	In-depth interview	Male
	Principal, Dual Tech Training center	In-depth interview	Female
	Officer, Opportunities NOW Entrepreneurship Training	In-depth interview	Male
	Secretary, Myanmar Young Men's Christian Association	In-depth interview	Male
	Project officer, E4Y vocational school	In-depth interview	Female
	Two disabled persons, Association for Aid and Relief	In-depth interview	1 Male 1 Female
	Two disabled persons, Christian Blind School	In-depth interview	1 Male 1 Female
	Two disabled persons, Blind School (Kyimindine)	In-depth interview	2 Male
	Two disabled persons, Vocational Training School for Adult Disabled	In-depth interview	1 Male 1 Female
	Two vocational Classes	Non-Participatory Observation	

Key-Informant Interviews			
Measuring the role of different stakeholders in creating job opportunities	Two unemployed disabled persons	In-depth interview	1 Male 1 Female
	Disabled person with own business	In-depth interview	Male
	Disabled person, formerly employed	In-depth interview	Male
	Disabled person in group business	In-depth interview	Female
	General manager Spiral Creative Media Company Ltd	In-depth interview	Male
	Chairman, Shwe Taung Group Company Ltd	Semi-structured interview	Male
	Legal Consultant, Information Technology Company Ltd	Semi-structured interview	Male
	Director, A Crown Export and Import Management Agency	Semi-structured interview	Male
	Disabled persons and Trainers	Focus Group Discussion	3 Female 3 Male
	Disabled persons' family members	Focus Group Discussion	7 Female 1 Male

The study recognizes the different perceptions and participation of males and females respectively. Different perspectives on the livelihood program, on vocational training and on barriers in the labor market were noted. We sought to identify different types of vocational training for male and female disabled persons, taking account of job seeking experience and the circumstances of the labor market. Forty nine persons were included in field interviews: seventeen males with disabilities, nine non-disabled males, nine females with disabilities and fourteen non-disabled females.

Significance of research

In Myanmar, there is very little research focused on disabled persons in vocational institutions and the job market. This research looks at ways of matching vocational training curricula with labor market needs to enable disabled persons to have better chance of getting relevant training. The findings highlight the circumstances of disabled people and their lack of employment opportunities, and provide a better understanding of the need for different stakeholders to create job opportunities for the disabled. It is hoped that the findings will provide an effective strategy for creating job opportunities and the inclusion and participation of disabled persons in the development plan, to promote independent living and improved quality of life. Overall, this research aims to provide an understanding of the problematic vocational training faced by disabled persons. It should help those implementing vocational training, and those who would like to establish vocational training for disabled persons, to be better focused on matching vocational skills to the needs of the labor market as well as helping government agencies to initiate employment policies for inclusion in the national development plan.

Ethical issues

When conducting interviews with disabled persons, ethical issues are very important, especially in using specific language in a survey or interview questionnaire form. At the beginning, the researcher interacted with the heads of vocational institutions and explained the idea of this research. The researcher created a research survey form avoiding discriminatory words or meanings. In conducting interviews with different key informants, the researcher addressed their wishes and perspectives in terms of the research questionnaires. The researcher kept all issues confidential and did not disclose any research findings without permission from the interviewees.

Conceptual Framework

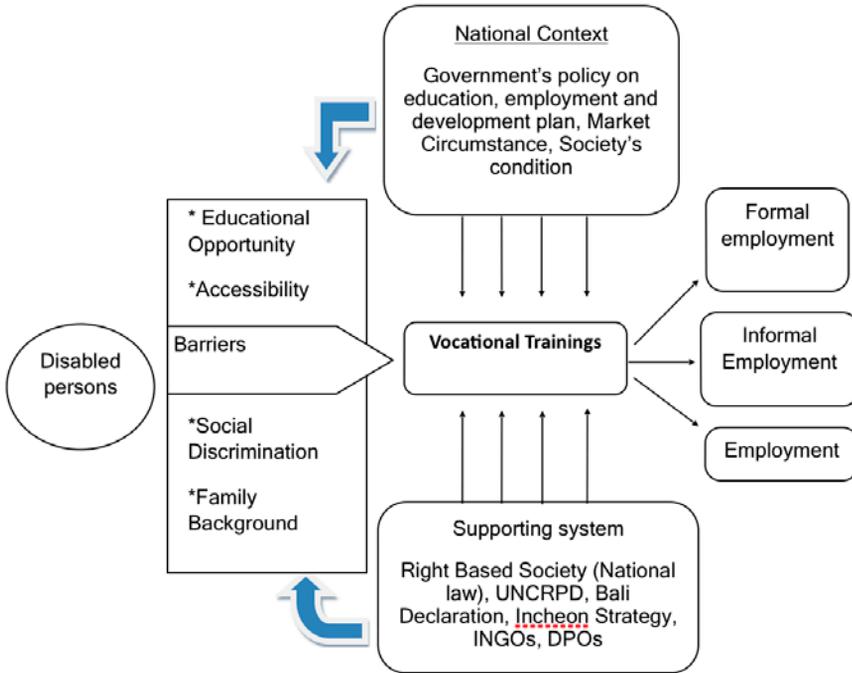


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework explains the aims of the research and addresses the inter-relationship of different aspects. The human rights/rights-based approach is the way to include disabled persons in mainstream development, so that they can fully participate in society, with equal rights. The approach values the participation of disabled persons in helping to develop national policy and legislation, to support their participation in society. The research will analyze the crucial place of disabled persons in universal human rights documents such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Bali Declaration and the Incheon Strategy, which emphasize their inclusion in mainstream development.

It is crucial to understand the participation of disabled persons in education, employment and the community in Myanmar. There are problems which need to be addressed by different stakeholders. We need to define disabilities, and explain the social exclusion of disabled persons, society's

ignorance, the segregation, the extreme poverty, the discrimination in decision making, their inability to secure their rights and their exclusion from education and employment. National law and policy is of vital importance to establish the role of disabled persons in the Myanmar national plan of action. The research will focus on the obligations of the state as set out in the National Constitution, Myanmar labor law, employment policy, and the Myanmar National Poverty Reduction Strategy. National statistics paint a broad picture of disability in the development agenda, and the socioeconomic hardship and poverty of the families of disabled persons. Statistical data will help to identify the disabled population in different regions and especially the Yangon region. The study will look at the design of vocational training for the disabled and the non-disabled, highlighting the lack of participation by disabled persons in the implementation process, and the broader discrimination of society and difficulties of getting job opportunities in the formal and informal business sectors. Facts about job opportunities, market demands and skill requirements in the formal and informal business sectors are fundamental in planning vocational training for the disabled and non-disabled alike. Finally, the discourse of the human rights based approach, the notions of participation of disabled persons in the community, understanding the challenges and lessons learnt from the labor market and vocational training, will all help to give disabled persons more choice in the formal and informal labor markets. The findings of this research should also encourage the formal and non-formal business sectors to value the participation of disabled persons in employment.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter will address the situation of disabled persons in Myanmar according to the official statistics of the Department of Social Welfare, including the relationship between disabled persons and poverty. The argument will highlight the challenges to disabled persons of social exclusion, lack of legal support, hardship, lack of job opportunities and limited access to vocational institutions. At the same time it will highlight the value of including disabled persons in mainstream development.

The General Situation of Persons with Disabilities

The United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) states that:

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Disabilities may be present from birth or may occur during a person's lifetime.

According to the WHO:

Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is

a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. (WHO)².

The purpose of the UN Convention is to promote, protect and ensure that disabled persons in the community have equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

There are over 650 million people in the world living with disabilities - approximately 15 per cent of the world's population. In every region and every country, disabled persons live on the margins of society as a disadvantaged minority. 80 per cent of them live in developing countries; their unemployment rate is as high as 80 per cent in some cases; and 90 per cent of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school (WHO, 2011).

Global Discourse on Disablement Issues

The United Nations describes poverty as “the denial of opportunities and choices most basic to human development - to lead a long, healthy, creative life and to enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self-esteem and respect of others”(UN, 1997). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights³, written in 1948, says that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights...” Article 23 provides as follows:-

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

2 See: <http://www.who.int/topics/disabilities/en/> (accessed on 3/3/2013)

3 http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/wgme/dv/201/201103/20110309_declarationhumanrights_en.pdf (Accessed: 8.5.2013)

Article 25(1) provides that:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

The ILO Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention 1983 (No. 159) is the first legally-binding international instrument on the issue of disability and employment opportunity⁴. It supports the principles of equality of opportunity and equal treatment for women and men with disabilities.

UNCRCPD clearly recognizes that persons with disabilities have an equal right to work, including working opportunity and accessibility to the employment market. It also recommends that states initiate safeguards and promote the realization of the right to work and to vocational training as appropriate actions, including through national legislation.

Article 27 of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities focuses on employment opportunities for disabled persons:

“1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labor market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation, to, inter alia:

a) Prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability with regard to all matters concerning all forms of employment, including conditions of recruitment, hiring and employment,

⁴ It appears not to have been ratified by Myanmar.

continuance of employment, career advancement and safe and healthy working conditions;

b) Protect the rights of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to just and favorable conditions of work, including equal opportunities and equal remuneration for work of equal value, safe and healthy working conditions, including protection from harassment, and the redress of grievances;

c) Ensure that persons with disabilities are able to exercise their labor and trade union rights on an equal basis with others;

d) Enable persons with disabilities to have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programs, placement services and vocational and continuing training;

e) Promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labor market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment;

f) Promote opportunities for self-employment, entrepreneurship, the development of cooperatives and starting one's own business;

g) Employ persons with disabilities in the public sector;

h) Promote the employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector through appropriate policies and measures, which may include affirmative action programs, incentives and other measures;

i) Ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities in the workplace;

j) Promote the acquisition by persons with disabilities of work experience in the open labor market;

k) Promote vocational and professional rehabilitation, job retention and return-to-work programs for persons with disabilities.

2. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are not held in slavery or in servitude, and are protected, on an equal basis with others, from forced or compulsory labor.”

Regional Discourse for disabled persons

After the democratic transition, the government signed the ASEAN Bali Declaration on Inclusive Development for disabled persons⁵, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Strengthening regional agreements, the Incheon Strategy adopted in 2012⁶ is a declaration at ministerial level by the Asia and Pacific countries to support disability-inclusive development goals. It was aimed towards an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for disabled persons in the Asia Pacific region. According to this declaration, the regional governments shall accelerate the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for disabled persons, achieving the regional vision of an inclusive society that ensures, promotes and sustains their rights. By strengthening implementation, the Incheon strategy supports the development of an overarching policy framework for regional work in the field of disability. The Strategy sets out the principles on the rights of disabled persons as follows:

- Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy, including the freedom to make one’s own choices and independence of persons
- Non-discrimination
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society

5 The full title of the Declaration is ‘The Bali Declaration on the Enhancement of The Role and Participation of the Persons with Disabilities in ASEAN Community’.

6 “Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific”. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
- Equality of opportunity
- Accessibility
- Equality between men and women
- Respect for the evolving capacity of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities

The time frame of the Incheon strategy for achieving the goals and targets is within the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, from 2013-2022. The first goal was clearly set out as “Reduce poverty and enhance work and employment prospects.” The ILO (2002) supports “effective working space for disability based on evidence, good practice and experience to enable workers with disabilities to contribute productively to the enterprise, work proficiency and the state.” In practice, the national government has a responsibility to provide, protect and equip businesses to create decent jobs, necessary education and training for disabled persons who can and want to work. Lifting disabled persons and their families out of poverty would contribute to the achievement of inclusive growth and sustainable development. The Incheon Strategy also targets fundamental areas for poverty reduction including the elimination of extreme poverty among disabled persons, the increase of work and employment for persons of working age with disabilities who can and want to work and increased participation of persons with disabilities in vocational training and other employment-support programs funded by government. However, the core values of international and regional level agreements still had to run the gauntlet of the national constitution, legislation and policies of Myanmar. Hyde (2000) stresses that even when countries have ratified several UN conventions, practical implementation to fulfill the needs of disabled workers is still a challenge.

Rights-based Approach

Disabled persons are specifically mentioned as “marginalized people’ or “poor people”. People with disability should have a voice that affects their lives, and encourages the government to set policies for their inclusion in development. We should applaud the commitment to engage disabled persons themselves

in research aimed at improving their position in society (Gilbert, 2004). Government agencies, international development agencies and non-government organizations should practice a rights-based approach in developing plans to achieve a positive change and to strengthen the capacity of rights holders in society. The charity approach, which is largely based on the needs of the individual, makes disabled persons economically dependent, and targets of social discrimination, rather than lifting them out of poverty. Disabled persons want their own rights as ordinary citizens to be recognized (Coleridge, 1993). Disabled issues become recognized as an essential cross-cutting development issue and play a significant role in mainstreaming development arenas to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (Palmer, 2012). A human rights-based approach is more closely aligned with development efforts as well as being focused on the root causes of poverty (Schmitz, 2012). The rights-based approach is practiced deeply and widely within international development organizations. It is defined as “basing development programming, at national and international levels, on guaranteeing the effective implementation of the rights already recognized in national law and international treaties” (ILO, 2002). The ILO suggests that rights-based programs must start by identifying what rights exist in national legislation, constitution, policies, other commitments of the state and the country’s ratification of UN conventions or other treaties (ILO, 2002:17).

For my purposes a human rights-based approach implies “a fundamental right for disabled persons to obtain the same public accessibilities in society as other people.” It values the individual potential and willingness for public accessibility and responsibility. An individual’s ability is deeply embedded in the spirit of that person. The right to personal development is a right for each individual, a right to equality, equity, and justice, regardless of ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability. The main concern of this approach is the participation of disabled persons to ensure equal accessibility to health care, education, food, shelter, livelihood, and employment opportunity, irrespective of their physical or mental weakness, and without discrimination compared with the non-disabled.

Social Exclusion

Social exclusion can be defined in many different ways (Silver 1994).

“Social exclusion means the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the typical activities of society whether in economic, social, culture or political arenas” (Levitas et al., 2007).

Handicap International (2010) analyzes different key features of poverty and social exclusion as:

- Lack of opportunities to work
- Lack of opportunities to acquire education and skills
- Barriers to older people living active, fulfilling and healthy lives
- Inequalities in health
- Poor housing
- Disadvantaged groups

The impact of social exclusion affects all disabled persons. They are excluded by physical barriers, attitude barriers and institutional barriers, educational under-achievement, poor vocational skills and low self-esteem. Multiple factors may apply; for example children and women with disabilities are more likely to be socially, economically and politically excluded.

The Relationship between Disability and Poverty

Disability is a development issue because of the link to poverty: disability may increase the risk of poverty and poverty may increase the risk of disability (Sen, 2009). Oliver emphasized that the relationship between poverty and disability is close and requires urgent attention from several development actors.

So far, “there have been very few international studies of the lives of persons with disabilities” (Michael Oliver, 1996). They have faced uncountable challenges in their daily lives by exclusion from socioeconomic discourse, decision making and development policy. Disability Awareness in Action stressed that “a very high percentage of unemployment is seen as one of the central problems facing persons with disabilities in the developing world - they are forced to beg to survive”. According to an inclusive development guideline of the Christian Blind Mission (an international Christian development organization concerned with the disabled) 50 percent of impairment leading to disabilities is preventable and directly related to poverty. For instance, malnutrition is estimated to be the cause of disability in 100 million people worldwide. People living in poor communities are at high risk of impairment leading to disability due to lack of adequate nutrition, health care, water and sanitation, and secure employment. They are also vulnerable to natural disasters. They are likely to be discriminated against in education which leads to exclusion from social and economic life, leading to extreme poverty through unemployment.⁷

Poverty reduction strategies for disabled persons are crucial to including disabled persons in socioeconomic development. There are different organizations and different people using different mechanisms to improve the quality of life of disabled persons in society. To reach the UN Millennium Development Goals, disabled persons need to be included in poverty reduction strategies. Nowadays, development programs accept that disabled persons have potential even with their impairments and despite being excluded from opportunities to participate in the mainstream. The emerging development pattern is based on human rights and provides the path to social justice (Munger & Mertens, 2011).

⁷ CBM <http://www.make-development-inclusive.org/toolsen/pcm1.pdf> (accessed on May 8, 2013)

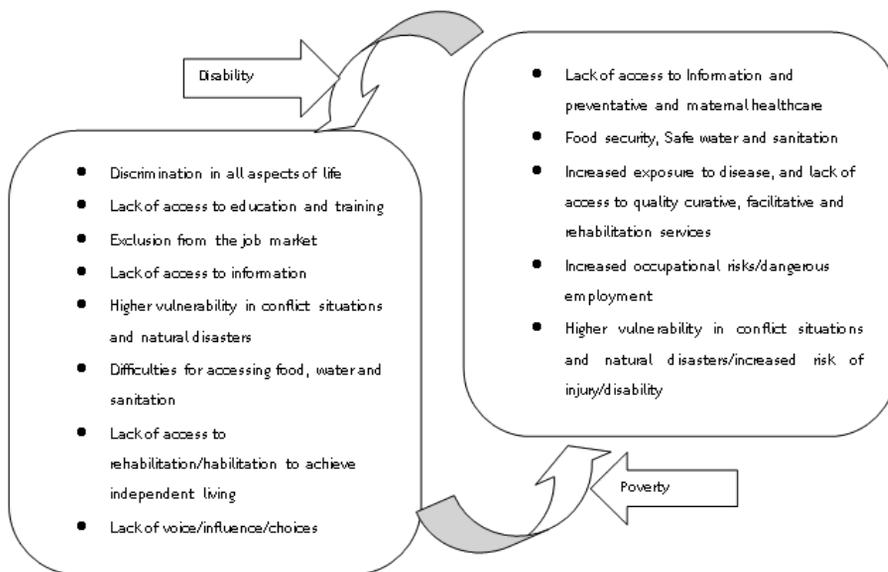


Figure 2 : Relation between poverty and disability
Source: Christian Blind Mission (2010)

New Discourse on Myanmar National Development

The main emphasis is on creating employment for disabled persons and empowering them via the human rights agenda for independent life in society. “Development is not only an all-encompassing change but also implies a process in which change is continuous”(Thomas, 2000).

The Myanmar government also aims for economic efficiency, a basic requirement in a market orientated economic system where countries are in competitive engagement for economic development.

The government will create national economic development plans including new industrialization, market orientated plans, foreign direct investment and human resource development - President of Myanmar.⁸

⁸ The New light of Myanmar, Wednesday 20 June, 2012

Plans include a national poverty reduction plan to be developed in line with the UN Millennium Development Goals. Without including disabled persons in the development agenda, the objectives will not be fully achieved.

Myanmar National Poverty Reduction strategy

The Myanmar Development Resource Institute (MDRI) was created in 2011 to design the country's poverty alleviation strategy, which will focus on the poorer regions. The President noted at the first meeting of the Foreign Aid Management Central Committee in the meeting hall of the president's office:

“The nation will become rich only when it is industrialized. The poverty rate in Myanmar is 26%. It should be reduced to 16 % by 2015 according to UN Millennium Goals. A large number of people are in neighboring countries as legal or illegal migrant workers. It means the country is losing labor. They will come back if there are jobs and higher pay equal to others”⁹

The Myanmar National Strategy for Rural Development and Poverty Reduction stresses that “Human capital is the main asset of the poor and its development is crucial for poverty reduction. Hence every person must have access to basic education, primary health care and other essential services” (Myint, 2012). The relationship between disability and poverty is seen as crucial. Poverty pushes disabled persons into vulnerability, exclusion, discrimination in social participation and decision making (DFID 2000). Appropriately designed and effectively implemented national level planning ensuring inclusion in poverty reduction is one of the best ways of changing the lives of disabled persons in Myanmar.

National Context of Disabled Issues in Myanmar

The Myanmar first National Disability Survey, conducted by the Department of Social Welfare, reported that a total of 2.3 per cent of Myanmar's

9 <http://asiancorrespondent.com/84699/priority-for-president-of-burma-in-the-name-of-reform/?lang=en> us output=json

population have some form of disability.¹⁰ Of these, 68.2 per cent are persons with physical impairment, 13.3 per cent are persons with visual impairment, 10.4 per cent are persons with hearing impairment and 8.1 per cent have some form of intellectual disability (Department of Social Welfare, 2009).

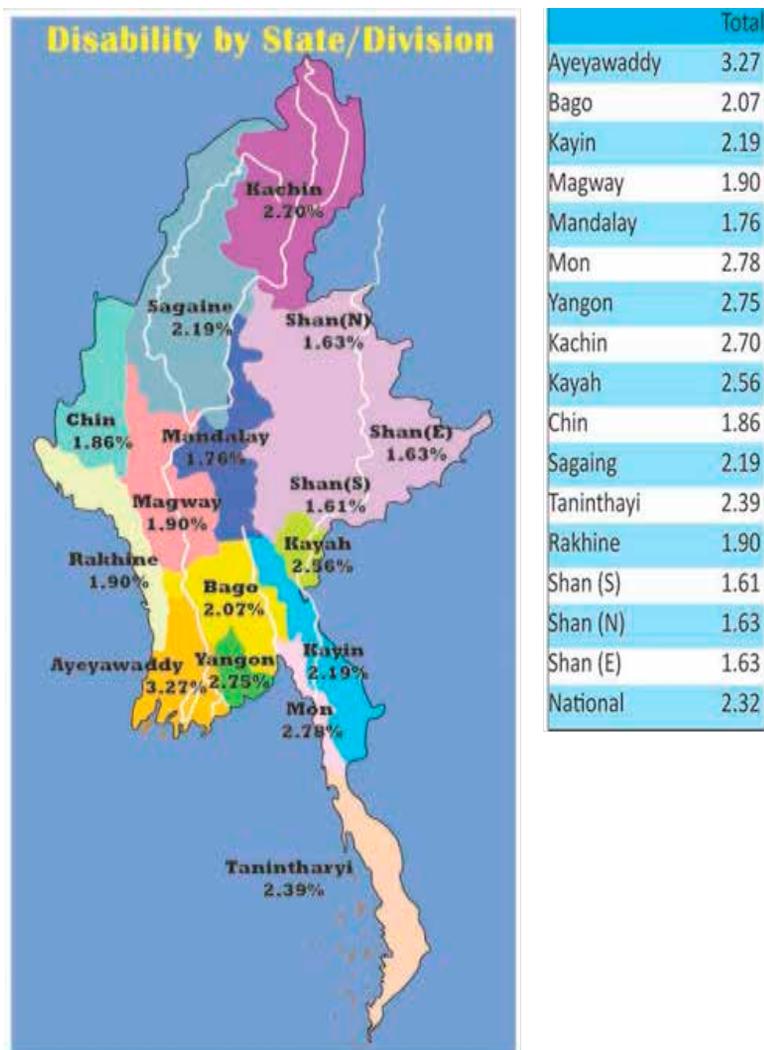


Figure 3 : Disabled populations by region Source: Disabled Survey 2010

10 The proportion of disability amongst the world’s population is 15% (WHO, 2011.) However, criteria to measure disability in Myanmar differ from the international criteria.

Disability prevalence can be disaggregated by urban and rural residence, gender, group and type of disability. In 2012, 28% of Myanmar's population was considered to be living in urban areas. In general, the rural disability rate was higher than the urban rate. In developed countries disability rates for women seem to be higher than for men, while they are lower in developing countries. Lower female rates may indicate that severe impairments may be male-dominated, and/or females with disabilities may be under-reported or may receive less care and die sooner. For the childbearing age groups, female rates tend to be slightly higher, possibly because of ill-health resulting from too many pregnancies, inadequate health care, and poor nutrition (Elwan, 1999).

		Prevalence(%)	Population (projected)
Location	Urban	2.49	425,291
	Rural	2.24	850,709
Gender	Male	2.55	695,824
	Female	2.10	580,176
Age Group	<5	0.88	68,521
	5-16	2.03	248,948
	16-65	2.25	711,880
	>65	7.47	246,651
Type of Disability	Physical	1.58	869,000
	Seeing	0.31	170,500
	Hearing	0.24	134,750
	Intellectual	0.18	101,750

Figure 4 : Disability Prevalence

Source: Myanmar Disabled Survey DSW & TLMI (2010)

Causes of Disability in Myanmar

The National Disability Survey distinguished between physical impairment, hearing impairment, visual impairment and intellectual disabilities. According to the disability survey, the most commonly reported type of disability is physical disability. More than two thirds (68.2%) of the disabled have limited physical function. There are three classifications that can be broadly understood: congenital, injury (industrial injury and traffic accidents) and

disease. The main cause of physical disability is disease, including polio, leprosy, and cardiovascular disease.



Figure 5: Main Causes of Disability Source: Myanmar Disabled Survey 2010

Disablement Law

In Myanmar, the law on the rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities was enacted in 1958. Preceding the Asian and Pacific Decade of the Disabled Person, from 1993-2002, the law was reviewed by the central law scrutinizing committee in 2002. The Myanmar child law was enacted in 1993 and ensured the education and protection of all children with disabilities. According to Section 18 of Child Law:

A mentally or physically disabled child has the right to acquire basic education (primary level) or vocational education at the special schools established by the Social Welfare Department or by a voluntary social worker or by a non-governmental organization

The Department of Social Welfare is responsible for carrying out the policy for disabled persons. The Myanmar government’s national policy, laid down since 1975, includes these three policy objectives:

- Seeking various ways and means for the rehabilitation of disability.
- Reintegration of persons with disabilities in production activities after the rehabilitation period.
- Implementation of rehabilitation programs to encourage self-reliance and decrease dependency of persons with disabilities.

The limited nature of these objectives and of implementation by the government suggests that a systematic and fundamental policy reform will be necessary.

Section 32 (A) of the Constitution of the Union of Myanmar, which was approved on 28th of May 2008, states that “the State has the responsibility to take care of mothers and children, orphans, children of deceased military personnel, elderly people and disabled persons.” The issues concerning disabled persons are mainly the responsibility of the Department of Social Welfare, within the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (Myanmar Constitution, 2008). Education for disabled persons is a separate function run by the Department of Social Welfare, not the Department of Education. A main challenge will be cooperation between the two departments, and ensuring that each of them is up to the task. A national plan of action was launched in 2010 with the object of improving opportunities for disabled persons to contribute to the country’s development. It includes a nation-wide focus on disabled persons. Its main goals are to increase mobility, accessibility and opportunities for disabled persons in order to render them able to enjoy equal rights and to actively contribute to the economic and social development of the state.

The Department of Social Welfare is trying to draw up a disability rights law in cooperation with Disabled People Organizations and the National Legislation Committee and in consultation with four groups of disabled persons: physically impaired, visually impaired, hearing impaired and intellectually disabled¹¹. The consultation focused on fundamental human rights, UNCRPD, and equal accessibility to education and social, economic, cultural and political participation. Section (10) of the draft law mentioned employment opportunities for disabled persons in government institutions, public and private institutions. The draft included the rules and responsibilities of the state, and benefits in the form of a tax reduction for employers who recruit disabled persons.

The Law has four objectives:

1. To protect the rights of disabled persons;
2. To care for disabled persons;

¹¹ The law has since been enacted: The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law, 2015 (30/2015)
For further details please see the Appendix

3. For disabled persons to enjoy all human rights without discrimination on the basis of disability;
4. To enhance the socio-economy of disabled persons with full participation in nation- building tasks.

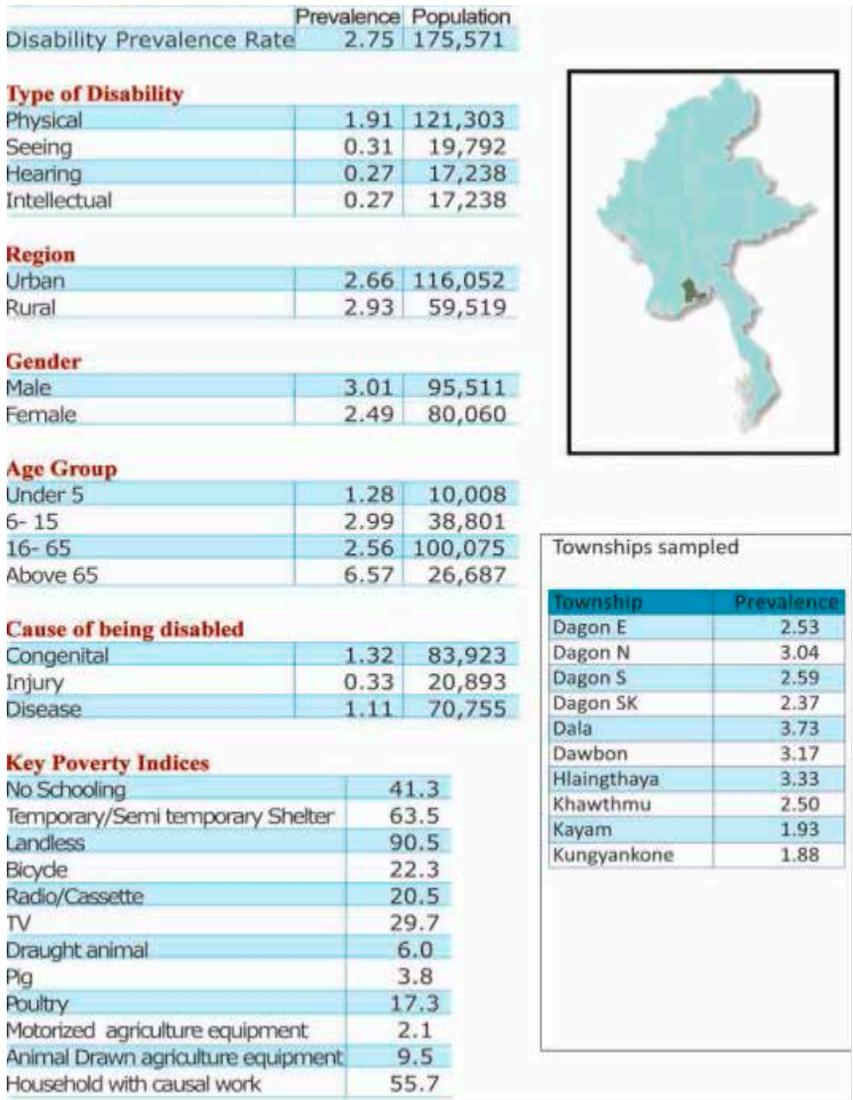


Figure 6: Disability Prevalence Rate in Yangon region

Developing Vocational Training in the Labor Market

The labor market includes formal sectors—public and private—and the informal sector. The public sector includes government departments, public education, police, defence, public enterprises, etc. The private sector includes private enterprises of all sorts. The informal sector includes the self-employed—farmers for example.

Although the private sector is outside government, government intervention plays an important role in the development of the private sector labor market: for example prescribing bargaining processes, legal protection, wage setting (Hollister & Goldstein, 1994). In the informal sector (Richards, 2001) income and employment conditions are unstable and cannot easily be measured or regulated. There are three elements to income security in the formal sector: stable business conditions, job security and a mechanism for income compensation. Income security in the private and public sectors is a major concern in poverty reduction programs.

(Khan, 2007) pointed out that human capital formation plays a crucial role in economic growth, and also benefits poor and unqualified employees. Human capital development, endowing poor people with education and skills, can improve their capability and productivity. Enhancing employment opportunities to enable the poor to be employed more intensively, productively and remuneratively can improve the country's economic growth rate. Khan's (2007) strategy to eradicate poverty included (a) an increase in wage employment; (b) an increase in the real wage; (c) an increase in self-employment; (d) an increase in productive self-employment; and (e) an increase in the terms of exchange of the output of self-employment. Creating job opportunities for reasonable wages and increasing productivity is one of the best ways to take people out of poverty (Karnani, 2007).

The ILO believes that “nothing is more fundamental to poverty reduction than employment” (Osmani, 2003). Employment is a major concern for economic growth which is necessary for poverty reduction. Effective growth policies to support the employment and labor markets, including human resource development, will rapidly renovate the employment structure and immediately decrease the poverty rate (Islam, 2003).

In Myanmar, a lack of vocational training centers, a lack of resource persons, a lack of livelihood and microfinance opportunities for the disabled, and the lack of an employment market are all big challenges to the running of a livelihood program for disabled persons. Disabled persons need job opportunities to provide a livelihood which is either non-formal at home and in the community, or formal through technical and vocational education and training institutions. Vocational training is particularly associated with the prospect of employment (Mitra & Sambamoorthi, 2006). On the other hand Olavides-Soriano, Ampo, & Escorpizo (2011) refer to “occupational rehabilitation” rather than vocational training. However, the perspective of occupational rehabilitation is similar to that of vocational training. They observe that “occupational rehabilitation is a multi-approach which aims to return the worker to employment. It also facilitates and sustains return-to-work for disabled persons in particular.” The main principal is similar to vocational training which is a process for a person with disability to secure and retain suitable employment, and hence integration into society. Vocational training should be implemented by making effective courses available to all disabled persons, modifying course manuals, materials and accommodation as necessary. At the same time, disabled persons are always faced with barriers to livelihoods and economic self-reliance. They need extra support. The effort to get disabled persons integrated into mainstream employment requires “affirmative and incentive-based legislation and guidelines to support integration and protection in the labor market”(Gathiram, 2008). People into Employment (PIE), supports disabled persons in the work place and works in conjunction with partners to achieve suitable work-related training, job seeking, transportation, and assistance with job interviews. Job seeking services geared up to the local labor market can successfully promote social inclusion for disabled persons (Arksey, 2003).

Strengthening tools for planning vocational training

Education is a crucial factor in gaining employment and it is one of the most important requirements in getting a satisfactory job (Mina, 2013). “Accessibility to educational opportunities will open all the doors of employment and vice-versa” (Khoo, Ta, & Lee, 2012). However, the Myanmar education system does not include persons with disabilities in mainstream schooling even though the government claims to administer an “Education for All” policy. In

addition, the current government's educational syllabus and special education schools cannot guarantee employment opportunities and training accessibility for the disabled. One of the reasons why disabled persons endure such high rates of unemployment is their poorer and segregated education, and limited access to vocational training, all of which puts them at a disadvantage in the labor market, not only reducing their job opportunities but stereotyping them as incapable and unreliable (Beresford, 1996).

Participation in development empowers poor people to be at the center of the development discourse, and provides them with a role in decision making—people-centered planning instead of planner-centered planning (Michener 1998).

The planning stage is very important in implementing vocational training. When starting a new vocational training project, the organization will need to take the following steps:

- A **Needs Analysis:** The institution needs to know what skills are required of students, and what trades/professions are in demand in the employment market. The program has to be planned and developed in order to meet the needs of both trainees and market.
- B **Goals:** The program should set up goals to be met, with time frames, for future evaluation. When the program is being set up, a resource person should be engaged.
- C **Implementation and Evaluation:** Implementation should be monitored and evaluated after completing the training: what was taught, what employment was offered and what was obtained. Records are an important part of the implementation and evaluation process. (Steyn & Vlachos, 2011).

Literature summary

Vocational institutions for persons with disabilities are still applying specific priorities for accepting trainees, limiting participation in course design, and failing to develop trainers' capacity. The national poverty alleviation strategy does not make it clear that every citizen, including disabled persons, can make a valuable contribution to the national economy through employment.

Chapter 3

Disabled Persons and the Barriers to their Participation in the Labor Market

Disabled persons have great difficulty in finding job opportunities because of the weaknesses of the education system, infrastructure barriers, discrimination, limited support from disabled persons' organizations (DPOs), and the weaknesses of vocational training.

Understanding the Circumstances of Education in Myanmar

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for providing and upgrading Education for All (EFA), creating an education system that will ensure accessibility (MOE, 2012). The Ministry is carrying out a thirty-year long-term education plan from the 2001- 2002 to the 2030-2031 academic years. It aims to expand human resource development, utilization of technology and research, to upgrade to a lifelong learning society, to improve the quality of education, and to preserve national identity and national value. Their report highlighted the increasing number of universities in Myanmar - from 32 in 1988 to 163 in 2012. The report also noted that the number of degree programs offered in different universities was increasing, along with an increase in academic staff numbers. The total number of undergraduate and postgraduate students at universities and degree colleges in 2011-2012 academic years was 470,912 (MOE, 2012).

While the government lauded the achievements of education in Myanmar, the Myanmar Youth Forum complained that the system lagged behind other countries: curricula were out of date; there were weaknesses in educational policy; inequality in educational opportunity; no guarantee of employment for graduates; weak government planning; a lack of practical research; a lack of coordination between parents and teachers; insufficient transport and community access to education; and over-centralization (Myanmar Youth Forum, 2012). Employment prospects are very challenging for university graduates. The subjects students study at university may not match work force skill requirements. Many graduates end up working in non-professional positions, for example driving taxis and pedaling trishaws.

Supporting Education for Disabled persons

The Ministry of Education has initiated Inclusive Education (IE) for disabled children. The IE program enhances disabled children's access to formal education to achieve the goals of Education for All (EFA). It aims to ensure a significant improvement in education for disabled children and to provide all school-aged children with access to compulsory basic education of good quality by 2015 (MOE, 1998).

A joint program of the Department of Education and the Department of Social Welfare provides educational rehabilitation for children with disabilities, persons with visual impairment and persons with hearing impairment. Since 1999 they have run 3 schools for persons with visual impairment, 2 schools for persons with hearing impairment, 1 school for persons with intellectual disabilities and 1 school for persons with multiple disabilities (JICA, 2002). However, there remains a need to open more schools to prepare more disabled children for integration into the mainstream. The special schools have tried to integrate their students into regular schools, but the process is still new and challenging: school buildings need to be adapted for children with disabilities, and very few teachers have received proper training to teach disabled children.

Overall, education for disabled children in Myanmar is still limited due to the inadequacy of special education schools, a lack of academic institutions and limited resource persons. The National Disability Survey (2010) noted that exclusion from education is a major problem for disabled persons. The Survey

pointed out that 50 percent of disabled persons do not access education, compared to less than 10 percent of non-disabled persons. Due to lack of education, they do not have a chance to participate in the community and face difficulty in accessing vocational training and employment.

The current education system of Myanmar is very challenging for many people. It depends on the economic background of parents because only the rich can get placements in good schools. I am lucky because my family lives in Yangon. I used to be rejected from government schools because of my disability. I studied in the special school of the Department of Social Welfare, and had the opportunity to continue in education until I graduated. However, I had to work twice as hard as other people, and faced attitude barriers, and physical barriers as well (Win Zaw, in-depth interviews).

The Department of Social Welfare is responsible for social services and rehabilitation for disabled persons. The department provides social protection for disabled persons in line with the 2003 child law.

For access to formal education, two vital first steps are needed. Firstly, the strengthening of the Inclusive Education (IE) policy to ensure educational opportunities for disabled children, and secondly preparation of the physical environment. In Myanmar, many schools have limited barrier free environment, do not have well trained teachers for disabled children, and suffer from a lack of awareness about the students and the negative attitude of society towards them. Those are not the only weaknesses of IE policy; there is also society's ignorance of how to support disabled persons in education. However, the special schools are able to provide a barrier-free environment, assistive devices, learning devices and well trained teachers. Therefore, disabled children prefer to begin their studies in special schools run by the Department of Social Welfare and some non-governmental organizations (Expert on disability, semi-structured interview, June 21, 2013).

The Reasons for Problems in Education

Education is of the utmost importance for disabled persons as the foundation for social skills, academic skills, economics skills, independent living and vocational training. But participation is limited because of the few educational institutions for the disabled nationwide, different administration of government institutions and weakness in cooperation and implementation between the Department of Education and the Department of Social Welfare. Only a few schools in Yangon provide specialist education for disabled children. Even when the Ministry of Education was undertaking IE, many disabled children were rejected from the mainstream. Additionally, the national education system is not, on the whole, inclusive for students with disabilities, and presents many difficulties and obstacles to those disabled persons who attempt to access mainstream education. There remains a need to open more schools to prepare disabled children for integration into mainstream schools.

The government's budget allocation is a major concern for supporting and innovating educational access for persons with disability. Without money, the educational training system and barrier-free environment cannot happen (Head, Blind School, in-depth interview).

Budgetary limitations are thus another barrier to the participation of disabled persons in education. Weak cooperation between the Department of Education and the Department of Social Welfare is another. While the Department of Social Welfare has ratified international conventions requiring persons with disabilities to be provided equally with education, vocational and employment opportunities, the two institutions do not coordinate effectively. When a disabled person applies for admission to a government school, the Department of Education does not want to take action on their behalf and they are mostly referred to the Department of Social Welfare. The difficulties of finding education deny disabled persons their educational rights. This is a major educational challenge for disabled persons in Myanmar.

Infrastructure Barriers in the Community

Disabled people's organizations (DPOs) cooperate with the Department of Social Welfare in approaching other government institutions such as the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC), and the Ministry of Construction, to initiate handicap-friendly environments for all in Myanmar. Many disabled persons, especially those with visual impairment, face challenges in moving safely from place to place. It is essential to talk to them about their needs. Once they are familiar with the physical environment and the special arrangements which have been made to meet their learning needs in a vocational training setting, most students with visual impairment are capable of performing well.

Infrastructure barriers are one of the major challenges preventing disabled persons from surviving independently in the community. The government has little in the way of plans to improve public transport, road facilities and communications.

Discrimination in the community

Disabled persons face discrimination and abuse. They are neglected on many levels, within their families and communities, at the regional level and also at the national level. Most disabled people suffer from some discrimination and/or exclusion, its degree and severity depending on the nature of their impairment and their personal situations. Disabled children and women are particularly vulnerable. Disabled persons are often prevented from participating fully in family and community activities and functions by the demands of care, and, in some cases, as a result of lack of understanding about the causes of disability. Reduced participation in community activities often leads to further isolation and discrimination. Society looks down on disabled persons as slow learners. The long-term effects of increased isolation from society brought about by institutionalization, residential and non-residential, can affect a disabled person's perception of the value of education, and of educational institutions.

The negative attitudes of society have greatest impact on the development and the daily life of disabled persons. Some religious groups in Myanmar believe that disablement is a kind of punishment, that the disabled are useless and unlucky people. Consequently, nobody wants to help or support

education, social life, health care, public facilities and employment for the disabled. This ignorance and stigmatization leads disabled persons to become isolated, chronically unemployed and invisible in society (Aung Ko Myint, Director, Myanmar Independent Living Initiative, semi- structured interview).

Studying the daily life of disabled persons, discrimination was observed not only at the community and family level but also at the employment opportunity level. Because of discrimination, disabled persons do not have an equal chance to participate in the labor market.

Discrimination in formal and informal employment

The Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security plays a vital role in creating employment opportunities for citizens, in promoting and protecting the legal rights of employees, and in establishing a cordial relationship between employers and employees in the workplace. The Ministry encourages both employers and workers to adopt a system of contracts of employment. The Ministry aims to maintain industrial peace, administer the registration and placement of job seekers both in-country and overseas, conduct vocational training for workers, conduct research, and ensure the legitimate rights of workers (Online: 2013)¹².

Our department initiated a job seeking branch for both employers and employees. We posted vacancy announcements on an advertising board. According to the new labor law, the department must initiate a job seeking service for employers and employees, consultation on job choice and skill development training for employees. However, we have a very limited budget to implement those things in practice. Until now, our department has been struggling with many labor conflicts in industries because people aren't aware of the new employment laws, how they work, and the responsibilities of employers and employees. At the same time, we [are] also

12 From: <http://www.mol.gov.mm/en/>

weak in accurate statistics about the labor force, employment and unemployment rates in our country. Creating employment opportunities in our country is very difficult because of limited resources, manpower and budget allocation” (District Officer, Department of Labor, on June 19, 2013).

The policies and regulations of the Department of Labor do not clearly mention employment opportunities for disabled persons. The government has ratified international conventions for strengthening civil society and government institutions to focus on inclusiveness, but implementation is very weak.

Discrimination by government institutions, is another barrier for disabled persons. The Union Civil Service Board (UCSB) recruits civil service personnel and the Civil Service Selection and Training Department is responsible for managing, selecting and providing training programs for personnel (Win, 2011).

I had been affected with polio. I graduated in 2005 and applied for an officer position in the township administration. The UCSB did not accept my application on the grounds that the position was only for people in good health. This was what they usually announce in the public vacancy notice. It means that they include a discriminatory provision in the job description such as good physical health criteria. Even graduate disabled persons cannot enjoy employment in the civil service (Khin Maung, in-depth interview).

Good health is a major concern in recruiting government officials. They are especially concerned about persons with a visible type of disability. On the other hand, some disabled persons were recruited within the Department of Social Welfare.

“In our office, some staff and I have disabilities. I was a landmine victim when I was in military service. After I was injured, the government referred me to join the Department of Social Welfare as the head of this school. Only personnel with disabilities from military service can join the public civil service at officer level according to their previous military

rank. Some staff with disabilities in our school are family members of the staff of the Department of Social Welfare or former students who were outstanding in the vocational training despite their disability. Those personnel could join when some low level position was available. However, DSW does not recruit disabled persons for all job positions.” (Head, Adult Disabled School, In-depth Interview).

Discrimination in the public sector is clearly one of the challenges faced by disabled persons. Although many disabled persons have university degrees, they cannot secure high positions in the public sector. Rather they are restricted to lower level positions - but even those positions are available only in the Department of Social Welfare, and are not for all disabled persons but only for ex-military or family members.

From the private sector, the managing director of M-Spiral explained that his company did recruit disabled persons with adequate skills and good performance: two years ago they recruited an IT expert who had a visual impairment. However, the company staff had negative attitudes to disabled persons in the workplace.

The Chairman of Shwe Taung Companies group also said that:

“We open up employment opportunities for all. We tend to recruit a person who has adequate skill in line with the job position announcement. With the current economic situation of Myanmar, many companies require not only educational background but also working experience. I think if disabled persons have those kinds of skills and experience, definitely we could hire them. However, until now, we have not got any applications from disabled persons even though we are open to employment for all. Disabled persons may be deterred because we are in the construction sector. The best way to get employment opportunity for disabled persons is systematic government policy to require companies to hire disabled persons as a percentage of their employees, as is done in foreign

countries.¹³ At least, that could be one way to help the disabled and is something the DPOs could advocate to the government and the private sector” (Chairman, semi-structured interview, June 14, 2013).

So discrimination in the private sector labor market is another challenge for disabled persons.

Current employment situation in Myanmar

According to the integrated household living conditions survey (2009-2010), there are four main occupations for Myanmar people: industry, agriculture, hunting and forestry. 54% of poor households were involved in agriculture. However, the majority of poor households were in the casual labor market (UNDP, 2011).

Myanmar’s unemployment rate was estimated by the International Monetary Fund to be 5.5% compared to 0.7% in Thailand. There were more than 6,000 unemployed medical graduates, and tens of thousands of other graduates who have been waiting for years as the government failed to create new jobs. Underemployment, estimated as the proportion of working population aged 15 years and older who work less than 44 hours per week, was 37% in 2010.

Myanmar’s new democratic government reforms may bring about economic and political changes creating more job opportunities; growth will mean investment in human capital and infrastructure, including education, health and social services (Asian Development Bank, 2013).

There is a lack of statistics regarding employment opportunities in the private sector, and it is difficult to find data on the working population of disabled persons. The President of Shwe Min Thar Foundation said that,

13 For example, in France any company with a workforce of more than 20 employees must ensure that at least 6% of their personnel are disabled workers; Malta has a similar rule with percentage set at “at least 2%”. Japan sets different percentages for different types of institution, all around 2%.

When we discuss the employment opportunities for disabled persons in the private business sector, the degree of awareness and the attitude of employers are essential points to consider. Without understanding the nature of disabled persons, nobody wants to recruit them. DPOs and companies owned by disabled persons do recruit disabled persons because they understand them. This means empowerment for disabled persons to access job opportunities and at the same time because the employers understand the weaknesses and strengths of disabled persons they can offer them suitable employment in a safe environment (Myat Thu Win, Director, field interviews, June 25, 2013).

All activities that directly or indirectly generate wealth or income are encompassed here as employment opportunities which can be in paid work, but also in other activities such as volunteering and internships. But without an information network people will not have access to job information (ILO, 2010).

When I have met with the people from all walks of life, I raised one big question, “what do you need the most?” People answered, “a job.” People need the dignity of living and earning their own regular income by their own capability. In Myanmar, nearly seventy percent of people are living in rural areas and working in agriculture. When we start promoting economic development in the country, we have to look first at what is the reality and think about where we should start. I want to point out that poverty reduction should be the first priority. We have seventy five percent of Myanmar youth unemployed; we have to emphasize a minimum wage, and legislation on Foreign Direct Investment to create employment opportunities for the young generation. We have to have strong laws in our country. However, the reforms in Myanmar have a lack of structure and it is difficult to see significant results from the new government (Aung San Suu Kyi, the World Economic Forum, 2013).

Limited Support of DPOs

Limited vocational training centers, too few resource persons, limited microfinance and lack of an employment market are big challenges to the promotion of livelihood programs for people with disabilities. At the same time, there is social discrimination and stigma, and a pervasive negative view that people with disabilities are incapable of working in the workplace. Many disabled people's organizations have tried to implement livelihood programs for disabled persons in different ways. But these organizations have limited human resources, a lack of disability development concepts, and limited knowledge to deal with the challenges of disablement. Meanwhile, many DPOs are struggling to secure funding from donor agencies and INGOs, hindered by a lack of information about funding resources and funding policies of donor agencies, and inexperience in completing funding applications. The lack of funding for disability projects has a direct effect on the sustainability of DPOs in the community.

There are only a few Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programs in Myanmar to promote and empower people with disabilities into the mainstream. The World Health Organization (WHO) promotes community-based rehabilitation (CBR) as an inclusive, participatory strategy to improve accessibility in education, employment and rehabilitation services for disabled persons in low-income and middle-income countries (WHO, 2010).¹⁴ The WHO guidelines are good enough for DPOs to implement livelihood programs, but operational funding is still a challenge.

If DPOs do not have enough funding, they may cease operations. Even if they are strongly dedicated to supporting disability and development, without funding it is impossible to run a service. Additionally, they have little or no access to capacity building training in areas that could support them towards effective implementation of projects for the disabled, such as proposal writing, project cycle management, fundraising, sustainability and disability leadership training.

The Weaknesses of Vocational Training Design

¹⁴ CBR is currently being promoted as a rehabilitation strategy for disabled persons in Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Laos, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Vocational training for disabled persons in Yangon mostly focuses on the provision of social services, and very basic vocational training and rehabilitation rather than on creating employment opportunities. Consequently, the disabled do not acquire adequate skills, experience and self-confidence to enter into employment. Lack of start-up funds is an impediment to starting up an informal business.

Computer training for disabled persons does not use up-to-date techniques. For instance, sometimes, they are still using Windows XP Microsoft office 2003, when the real market demands at least Microsoft office 2007 or 2010. Meanwhile, for working in publishing or a copier shop, they need skill with page layer and adobe marker. Similarly, other courses are designed at a very basic level. Thus, before disabled persons can apply for work they first have to take additional courses at their own expense (Myint Oo, in-depth interview).

Vocational training planning and design for disabled persons should link to employment opportunities, formal and non-formal, through adequate skills development. However, a lot of training is at a very basic level and not up-to-date. It is not of practical value in the market. Learning time is very limited, and participants have very limited chances to practice in the community during the training period. Therefore, after graduating they do not have the self-confidence to take up employment opportunities. After graduating from vocational training, I had to take extra courses from private hair-design trainers in order to meet customers' requirements (Leader, Disabled Group Business, in-depth interview).

Vocational institutions for disabled persons run primary vocational training in order to provide basic skills and rehabilitation. The structure is very clear: vocational training has a formal selection process, educational requirements and format for conducting training. Organizing the vocational structure is very complex and results are limited because the organizations have to depend on instructions from head office or a committee, the budget to upgrade the training is limited and there is a lack of evaluation. Meanwhile,

the vocational institutions themselves have several challenges to the upgrading of abilities and materials.

We have to follow the government's orders, principles, rules and guidelines to implement a new project or training program. I proposed one training program to head office – motorbike repair training - because it was a very useful skill for disabled persons in rural areas. Meanwhile, I studied that kind of workshop in Thailand and found that many positive outcomes were achieved in rural areas. Currently in our rural areas, many people are still using motorbikes as a major carrier rather than a car. However, my proposal was denied because of the government's limited budget. At the same time, we have a limited budget for studying new markets, technology, and skill development of trainers. Inability to seek or apply small grants from independent donors and agencies is another barrier. (Head, Vocational Training School for Adult Disabled, June 14 2013).

Regarding access to funds, AAR Japan and Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind said that most of their activities were funded by international donor agencies. AAR Japan, for example, received many donations from people in Japan, while the Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind received donations from Yangon City Church, Self-Supporting Kayin Baptist Mission Society, Myanmar Christian Churches as well as from various states and non-governmental organizations.

Actually, the government has been trying to provide vocational training for disabled persons in our country. They want to expand new vocational training centers with new budget allocations. The budget allocation from the government has increased after the democracy transition. However, we are still not able to provide full vocational training to disabled persons; this will require more money for training materials, internal and external market studies, and upgrading the capacity of the trainers (Head, the Blind School in Khimyindine, semi-structured interview, June 10 2013).

Name	2008-2009 Budget Year	2012-2013 Budget Year	2013-2014 Budget Year
The Vocational Training School for Adult Disabled	11,582,062 (Ks)	26,465,289 (Ks)	19,985,000 (Ks)
The Blind School in Kyimindine	20,630,739 (Ks)	57,160,375 (Ks)	28,982,800 (Ks)

Table 2: Budget allocations to government vocational institutions

The School for Blind in Kyimyindine and the Vocational Training School for Adult Disabled were mainly subsidized by the Department of Social Welfare, with only about 14% of the budget available for vocational training materials, food and other facilities. Two institutions, Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind and AAR Japan, were dependent on funding from donor agencies. They wanted to upgrade their vocational training, but because of limited funding they could not make significant progress. Observation of vocational training by NGOs revealed that they mainly focus on grassroots level, uneducated and extremely poor people. They used a multidimensional approach to lift up the lives of these people, making use of their inherent capabilities. Training design and training periods were very flexible. When they selected the trainees, the trainees had to provide information about their own abilities to engage in a business, what kind of business would be the most beneficial for them, how much money they would need and when they would be available to attend the training. The aim was appropriate vocational training for local people. The training design also includes life skills, marketing and financial management. Additionally, some organizations offer business start-up funds for graduates, the amount depending on the aspirations, performance and skill of the trainee as well as the business size, plan and sustainability.

One thing that became clear is that vocational training for the disabled has no proper system to identify employment opportunities, and it lacks upgrading capacity for trainers, innovation, and adequate grant funds. Cooperation among vocational training institutions and between them and private enterprises was found to be very weak, so that training designs lacked effective practical programs, internship programs or job coaching programs.

As a result, disabled persons did not have the confidence to approach private enterprises, and company staff were not aware of the scope for disabled persons in their workplaces. No specific responsibility was allocated for job placement and follow up in the majority of cases even though this should be the most important part of the process. It was clear that in the whole vocational preparation procedure, the area of job placement was the most inadequately conceived and implemented.

In orchestrating this important phase – the job seeking and securing process - vocational counselors must be able to work with other disciplines, employers and the individual's family, taking account of all relevant background information - vocational evaluation, vocational training, vocational choice(s), and daily living skills. As long as their services are needed, counselors must become strong advocates for their clients and remain accessible to them. To ascertain appropriate possibilities, the counselor must be well acquainted with the employment market. They may need to work very closely with the employer. The counselor must be prepared to dedicate time and effort to the interests and needs of the disabled person. Finally, the research found that budget allocations and funding sources were very limited. A small grant program is essential for graduated trainees who want to set up individual or group businesses. People into Employment (PIE) has supported disabled persons in the work place, and has worked in conjunction with partners to achieve suitable work-related training, job searching, transportation, and assistance for job interviews for people with disabilities. Job-finding services could gear up to local labor markets which could successfully promote social inclusion for people with disabilities (Arksey, 2003).

Conclusion

Close matching of the educational background with the demands of the employment market is necessary in order to create more job opportunities for better and more rewarding jobs. Innovation, investment, competitiveness, research, and development are needed to update programs. Solid bridges must be built. Effective mechanisms are needed to identify current labor demands and economic trends.

Efficiency in matching job seekers with jobs needs better communication between training institutions and employers. Employer organizations can work

together with training organizations on other approaches - apprenticeship and internship programs, other ways of gaining on-the-job experience. Education opportunities for disabled persons in Myanmar are still limited and inadequate to ensure fulfilment of national goals. To meet the educational needs of children with disabilities there have to be accessible school environments, well trained teachers, financial support, and effective monitoring strategies.

Chapter 4

The Role of Vocational Institutions for Disabled Persons

This chapter looks at the role of vocational institutions for disabled persons in Yangon, and the cooperation of different stakeholders in terms of creating job opportunities. The study also looks at private vocational training institutions for the non-disabled, to see whether they have anything to teach us. They do.

Vocational Education in Myanmar

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for providing education for all, but not for persons with disabilities because they come under the Department of Social Welfare.

The MOE has long term and short term plans to upgrade educational standards and promote the quality of both basic and higher education. The Ministry is responsible for developing vocational and technical education for young persons, other than the disabled. There are three institutions responsible for providing vocational education: the National Center for Human Resource Development, under the Ministry of Education; the Department of Technical and Vocational Education, under the Ministry of Science and Technology; and the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation. All programs are recognized by the government and private institutions.

The National Center for Human Resource Development provides vocational, professional and technological based courses to produce highly qualified human resource individuals according to the demands of the labor market. This is formal vocational training, offering certificate and post graduate diplomas in foreign languages, accountancy, law, social work, computer training and so on. The program requires at least graduate level education. Most of the training programs are provided by Yangon University, Mandalay University and Yangon University of Foreign Languages, under the human resource development program.¹⁵ The certificate and diploma programs are recognized by the Ministry of Education and make it easier to apply for employment - graduate trainees have two certificates - an undergraduate certificate and a post graduate training certificate - for proving their educational background when applying for a job.

The programs of the Department of Technical and Vocational Education comprise three sub-programs: technical high schools, engineering technology evening classes, and government technology institutions. Each sub-program has its own training criteria and curriculum. High school level education is required for admission to technical high schools and the training program specifically focuses on practical application and the requirements of industry. It offers a certificate only in skills in related mechanical sectors, and trainees cannot go on to study for a higher degree in the government technology institutions. However, they can start applying for skilled worker positions in industry. The engineering technology evening classes and government technology institutions require high school matriculation. The engineering technology evening class is offered only to persons who are currently working in government offices and who want to upgrade their theoretical knowledge in their respective engineering technologies. They have to attend for three years at two hours per day and five days per week to get a diploma. A student who studies at a regular class in a government technology institution has to study for two years to get a diploma in engineering, one year for getting an advanced diploma and another two years for a bachelor's degree in engineering. The regular-study students have a better chance to pursue advanced degree programs in engineering.¹⁶

15 See https://www.spf.org/spaf/projects/project_16499.html

16 See http://www.seameo.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=112&Itemid=529

The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation runs an agricultural university in Yezin, in central Myanmar. The institution runs two different programs: a diploma in agriculture, and a formal degree program in agriculture. The diploma in agriculture requires high school level education and applied agriculture has to be studied for two years. A five-year study is needed to obtain the bachelor degree. Both courses have field practice components. After graduating, the trainee has an opportunity to apply for various positions in the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation.

The Department of Higher Education also cooperates with UNICEF and the Department of Training and Vocational Education to provide vocational training for people with primary level education. These 1-3 month short programs offer training in handicrafts, fishery, home science and machinery repair and maintenance. The certificate is recognized by the Ministry of Education and graduates can use the certificate when applying for jobs.

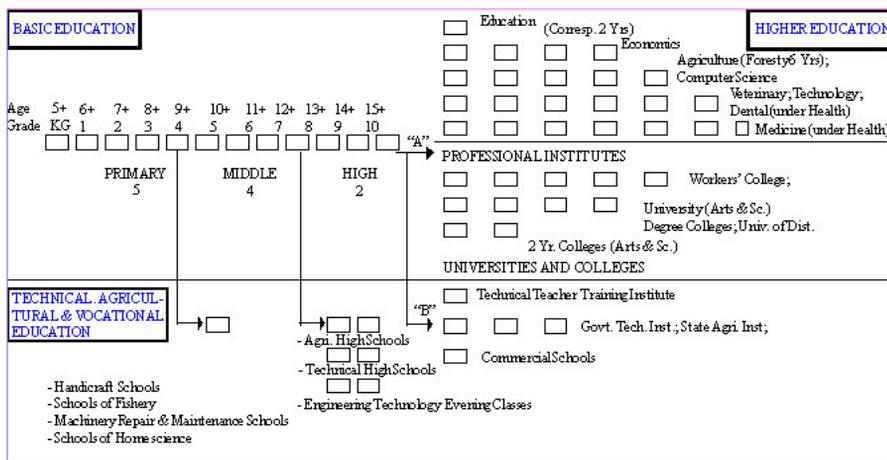


Figure 7: The Structure of Myanmar vocational education

Source: www.seameo.org

Profiles of Vocational Institutions for Disabled Persons

Association for Aid and Relief (AAR Japan)

The Association for Aid and Relief Japan (AAR Japan) is an international non-governmental organization that has been operating in Myanmar since

1999. The organization has been running vocational training for disabled persons three times per year. AAR Japan also plays an important role in supporting educational and employment opportunities for disabled persons in Myanmar. The program includes basic literacy training, nutrition, health and sanitation, and human rights. The organization has long experience in providing vocational training for disabled persons from different states and divisions of Myanmar - for instance, the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) projects in Yangon and the Ayerrawaddy Delta region. The organization aims to support disabled persons to become independent in social and economic life, to create networking space to promote the rights of disabled persons in the community, and to empower disabled persons to become part of the decision making process in the community. The organization mainly focuses on persons with physical impairments and includes both men and women trainees. The main objectives are:

- To support the social, economic and mental independence of disabled persons where social services are inadequate
- To advocate equal rights for disabled persons in cooperation with local and international communities
- To provide independence in society
- To reduce the number of landmine victims

Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind

Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind (MCFB) is a non-governmental organization established with 14 blind Christian students in Yangon in 1975. It became part of an evangelistic work program of the self-supporting Karen Baptist Mission Society in 1975, in order to receive recognition and aid from the state and other non-governmental organizations. It was recognized as one of the members of the World Blind Union in 1996. The organization cooperates with local Churches in Myanmar, with Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) and with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement to promote the rights of the visually impaired. It is especially committed to support access to education, health care, rehabilitation and vocational training. The school accepts both men and women for rehabilitation, education and vocational training.

The main objectives are:

- To improve the education level of the blind
- To enable disabled persons to live as they choose
- To enable disabled persons to adapt to the living environment in society
- To provide job opportunities and job training for disabled persons

Vocational Training School for Adults with Disabilities

The Department of Social Welfare founded two vocational institutions in Yangon for persons with physical impairment and persons with visual impairments respectively. The first was the Vocational Training School for Adults with Disabilities, a rehabilitation center in Yangon fully operated by the Department since 1954. It provides vocational training for persons with physical impairment based on the severity of their disability.

The main objectives are:

- To provide disabled persons with vocational training based on the individuals' degree of disability and their aptitude
- To train disabled persons to develop self-sufficiency, by using acquired vocational skills
- To rehabilitate disabled persons to lead to self-reliance and reduced dependency on others

Blind School (Kyimyindine)

This is the second school. It is the only school for persons with visual impairment in Yangon city. It is based in Kyimyindine Township and fully subsidized by the Department of Social Welfare. The school was opened by English missionaries in 1914. The Department of Social Welfare took over the administration of the school in 1963. The school's objectives were to contribute towards both education and vocational training for those with visual impairment. The school provides a hostel, classrooms and vocational training for men and women. Additionally, the school provides health care, sports activities and musical activities. The main objectives are:

- To encourage blind persons to develop self-reliance

- To help the visually impaired to be independent in their daily life
- To help the visually impaired to adjust to their environment
- To help the visually impaired to lead an independent life using acquired skills and education
- To provide basic and higher education, and vocational training

Profile of Vocational Institutions for Non-disabled persons

Vocational training for the non-disabled is successfully operated in the community, and can provide pointers to the way in which training for the disabled needs to be improved.

It may be helpful to identify the differences between vocational training for disabled persons and those for non-disabled persons. The vocational training institutions for the non-disabled have a good networking relationship with employment agencies. The agencies assist trainees to find suitable employment matching their ability, skills and educational level. The companies advertise vacancies in journals, magazines and brochures thus sharing information on local and international job opportunities. In this way, each trainee can make his or her own decision on whether or not to apply for a particular post.

I selected at random one institution for the non-disabled, Dual Tech Institute of Vocational Education, and met with their principal. Dual Tech is in the private sector, and is a very popular vocational training center in Yangon. The principal explained that their vocational training plan was designed by the company's board including technicians and trainers. Decisions took account of suggestions from technicians and the trainees, of current market demands, long term benefits for the company, and sustainability for trainees. It was market-oriented training to lead to job accessibility in the community or abroad through the improvement of individual skills. The organization has a capacity building mechanism to upgrade its skills, material and management, and a good network with different local and international companies to access information about employment opportunities. Thus, it can undertake job referrals, job consultations and knowledge exchange sessions which are closely monitored by the management department and the trainers.

Other non-governmental vocational schools include Opportunities NOW, Myanmar Young Men's Christian Association and Education for Youth in Myanmar (E4Y). Opportunities NOW focuses on youth who have poor education levels and come from poor communities. They utilize the original capability of the trainees, and provide business and financial management courses. The trainees have to attend for three months during which they have to be present for at least three days every week. After completing the course, the organization provides a loan of about five hundred US dollars for trainees to set up small businesses, the loan to be repaid within one year.

Similarly, MYMCA mainly focuses on young vulnerable persons with limited education levels, lack of income, and poor family backgrounds, in six locations: Yangon, Mandalay, Monywa, Patheingyi, Maubin and Taunggyi. The training curriculum is very flexible, ie diverse training designs are adapted to local needs in each place. All the training includes life skills training, an adaptive educational course, a marketing course and a financial management course. They also offer small grants for graduates who want to establish their own businesses. They connect with different business sectors to facilitate the entry of their graduates.

E4Y is an International NGO that focuses on children who drop out of education because of poverty. The program is designed to provide both education and vocational training; many children have been able to continue their education through E4Y. The vocational training includes wood and metal working, textiles, plastic pipe maintenance, and cooking. The organization has created a communications network which is used mainly for contacts between the graduate trainees and the business sector. The institution has set up internship programs in some businesses for selected trainees. They were well organized in vocational training, planning and cooperation with the private sector for employment opportunities through their internship programs.

Vocational training for non-disabled persons is mainly focused on employment opportunity and income earning activity for the trainees, much as in the case of disabled persons. However, the training designs and curricula are different. The vocational training for non-disabled persons followed a market-oriented design, with extracurricular training such as adaptive educational training, market studies and financial management courses, and life skills. NGO training programs also focus on vulnerable people with limited

education, suffering from poverty and with various needs. To achieve the purpose of the training, the organizations have established networking with the private business sector and provide start-up funds for founding individual businesses. It is difficult to say how successful the training is, as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are again very weak.

Training Preparations of Vocational Institutions for Disabled Persons

Information was obtained from various vocational institutions and divided into two parts: training for persons with physical impairments, and training for persons with visual impairments. The Vocational Training School for the Adult Disabled and AAR Japan both organize vocational training for persons with physical impairments, for example in tailoring, hair cutting/design and basic computer training. However, learning periods were different, depending on budget allocation and the protocol of the institution. The Vocational Training School for Adult Disabled specified three months for those subjects, while AAR Japan opted for three and a half months. Both organizations tried to engage with different monastic education schools, orphanage centers and youth training centers to practice skill performance and build self-confidence. The training curricula were developed by a local trainer who had a lot of experience in specific skills and areas. Teaching was provided not only by the main trainers but was assisted by skillful co-trainers who were disabled persons who had graduated from previous courses. This arrangement aimed towards long-term sustainability, providing a role model for other disabled persons and enabling the participation of disabled persons in the work.

The Vocational Training School for Adult Disabled also ran other courses such as photography, silk screen printing and electronics. The training periods for photography and silk screen printing were also three months. Electronics training included repairing TV, cassettes and radio; satellite installation; and pump motor installation. The training period for electronics was one year. Both institutions provided food, accommodation, and transport for disabled students. However, they did not provide educational training.

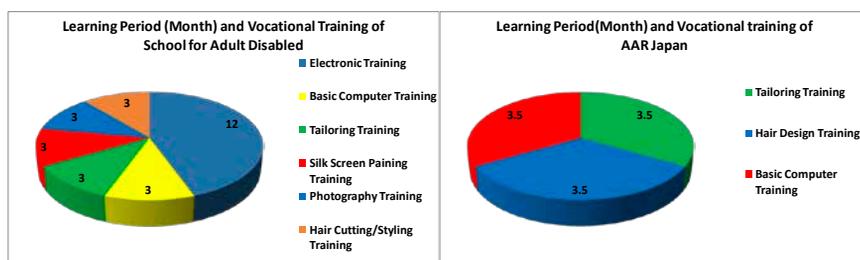


Figure 8: Type of Training and learning Period

The Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind school and the School for the Blind provide accommodation for persons with visual impairment all round Myanmar. These two schools provide inclusive education as well as vocational training. Semi-structured and in-depth interviews were held to obtain detailed information from both organizations. Both organizations offer similar vocational training: massage and basic computer training. Learning periods were nine months for massage training and three months for basic computer training.

Both organizations used Japanese massage techniques for their training programs. At the beginning, in 1998, Japanese massage experts initiated a one-year massage training course for training of trainers. They focused on using the Japanese massage technique and also invited trainers and trainees from different blind schools in Myanmar. The massage experts from Japan also visited the organizations yearly to give further support and skill-exchange programs. Both organizations wanted to promote Myanmar massage techniques but this proved unsustainable for various reasons. Basic computer training was designed by a trainer from the school with long experience dealing with and understanding teaching techniques for the visually impaired. The planner opted for Microsoft Windows 2007 which includes Braille publication, adaptive software for visual impairment and basic software installation. When trainees wanted to go on to advanced computer training, the schools negotiated with private computer training schools to provide courses, especially in music and recording.

The Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind school also provides domestic handicraft training for their inclusive education students. This course was offered as extra-curricular to enable the students to earn a little income from selling domestic products during their studies. The school provided

training and raw materials for domestic products - cotton door mats, bamboo mats, bamboo chairs and traditional kitchen tools. This training course was a part time, two-days per week, three year course. In terms of empowerment and participation, the school organized product competitions and awards, and sold the best examples as a form of encouragement. All students had a chance to learn, practice and exchange their ideas with their trainers.

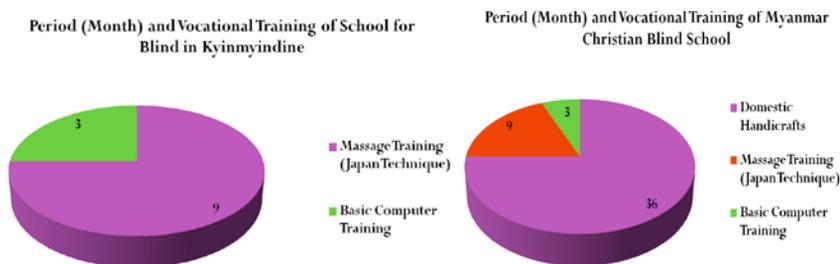


Figure 9: Type of training and learning Period

Criteria to Access Vocational Training for Disabled Persons

The usual qualification for access to vocational training was education level. All vocational institutions required adequate skills and education level. Even hair cutting/styling, silk screen printing and tailoring required primary education level. Some vocational training such as computer and electronics required high school level because the institution did not have time to teach basic terminology and language.

Disabled persons are very diverse; different persons have different requirements. We could accept only persons with physical impairment, and we have to look at the education level of candidates. We cannot accept all types of disabled persons in our training because we do not have enough resources and budget to deal with all of them (Head, Vocational Training School for Adult Disabled, June 14, 2013).

All the vocational institutions used local networks, journals and newspapers to advertise their courses.

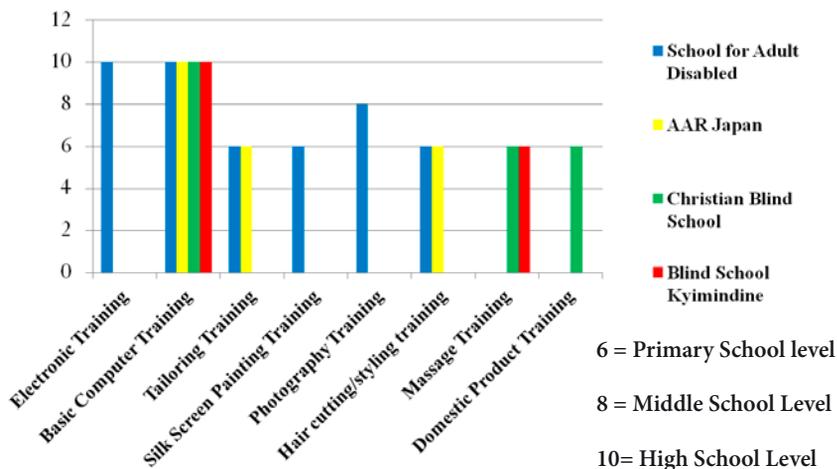


Figure 10: Educational Criteria to access a Vocational Training

Most vocational training for disabled persons in Yangon aims to solve the individual’s needs and challenges in the community. They focus on rehabilitation and independent living through providing education and vocational training. Their target is very specific on meeting basic individual needs rather than finding employment opportunities.

Actually, we do not specifically focus on employment opportunity in the private sector labor market, although we will provide a recommendation if an employer asks for one. According to our mission, we aim to provide vocational training to enable trainees to start their own business in their community. In this way, we empower individuals to have strong self-confidence and to be able to stand on their own feet. (Head, Vocational Training School for Adult Disabled, in-depth interview)

This approach was shared by AAR Japan.

We also have some experience of engaging with garment factories. However, they cannot provide employment opportunities for disabled persons at the moment. According

to the feedback from our trainees, they have faced many challenges in the private sector from their co-workers. This is why we stick to our strategy of providing trainees with a small grant to begin their own business. It also gives them a chance to grow up and use their potential to live independently in society with human dignity. (Officer, AAR Japan, in-depth interview)

However, not all graduates gained adequate skills and enough budget to start their own business. The vocational training design, structure and system are inadequate to prepare graduates for self-employment in the world outside. The organizations have to evaluate their impact and re-assess their mission and achievements in order for trainees to succeed in the market.

Job Preparation for the Disabled by Vocational Institutions

Job preparation is one of the most important components leading to employment opportunities. Different institutions adopt different approaches. The two government institutions had a lack of job preparation for their trainees, who had great difficulty in finding jobs or establishing their own businesses. The institutions did not have any local networking with private business groups, non-governmental organizations or independent donor agencies.

Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind set up a sheltered workshop for students to undergo basic domestic and handicraft training. Advanced trainees produce traditional kitchen products and sell them in charity bazaars at the school, and NGO and embassy fundraisers. In this way, the trainees earn a small income from their products. The school also established a massage center in the school, for advanced trainees from the massage course. Meanwhile, the school had a good network with private massage centers in Yangon. Graduates from massage training can opt for employment either at the massage center at the school, or at a private massage center. Male trainees find it easier to secure a job in a private massage center than women; in the latter case the business owner has to prove non-involvement in women trafficking, prostitution and gambling in order to get a licence. This is usually too much trouble for the owners. As women cannot easily find employment they mostly prefer to work in the sheltered workshop. AAR Japan established two model tailoring shops

and recruited three or four qualified trainees as employees. The shops mainly used Japanese tailoring designs and techniques, and set low prices. The shops were basically funded by AAR Japan, and the employees got a regular monthly income from the organization. AAR Japan also provided technical and material support, and small grants for trainees who wanted to set up shop in the community. The amount of the grant depended on the size of the business and the repayment plan. The organization makes grants available to all successful graduates from the training program, regardless of sex. Seventy percent of graduates have been able to start their own businesses or group businesses in the community.

Job Preparation for the Disabled by Different Stakeholders

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with private companies which had signed up to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies. It was clear that the companies concerned had no established policy to recruit disabled persons, and that the government did not offer any incentive for such recruitment by companies.

Employers were concerned with the accommodation of disabled persons in the workplace. They did not have an additional budget for providing a barrier-free environment, additional transport or awareness training for other staff. They felt unable to take on those responsibilities and did not have any idea about the capabilities of disabled persons. They had a lack of awareness on disability and no experience of engaging disabled persons as employees.

The companies drew attention to the lack of disability-related law, policy, rules and regulations for the private sector.

We offer employment opportunity for people from all walks of life. Any individual can apply for any position that matches their educational level, skills and experience. However, I have not had any experience of disabled persons applying for job positions in my company. I used to donate to disabled centers but I have not been approached to recruit disabled persons. If the vocational training schools are able to train skillful disabled persons and establish sheltered workshops for them, through these we can recruit skillful employees for our

company. However, the enforcement of law and government policy is the best way to push private business to include disabled persons in their companies (Chairman, ShweTaung Business Groups, June 23, 2013).

In general, the study found that the private sector is not prepared to take on disabled persons because there is no law, policy or government regulation to ensure their safety and protection. Even some companies with a CSR program for marginalized people cannot yet provide employment opportunities for the disabled.

In addition discrimination is strongly embedded in government sector recruitment. Vacancy announcements by the Myanmar Civil Service Board clearly mention that positions are only for people with no physical health impairment. One of the CSR companies suggested that:

The government has to set up a law for the disabled. Especially in employment opportunity in the labor market, they have to recruit disabled persons for suitable positions in their organization before encouraging private business to do so. The government has to be a role model in the employment of disabled persons.

Employment for Graduated Trainees

This is difficult to measure because many of the vocational training institutions have no records of their trainees' subsequent employment. Recording, follow-up planning, and monitoring and evaluation are weak.

Most vocational training aims to improve self-reliance and promote independent living in society. Some organizations also set up sheltered workshops and offer small grants for trainees to establish small businesses or group businesses. However, some trainees also enter the private business sector. In focusing on different types of vocational training, basic computer training matches with employment opportunities in copier and publishing shops, massage training matches employment opportunities in private massage shops, and tailoring training matches employment opportunities in garment factories.

However, personal qualities are also important. One of the experts consulted said that:

The most important qualities for those seeking employment opportunities are the ability to manage a variety of work and of co-workers, a desire to work, appropriate work habits and attitude, the ability to follow guidelines, willingness to learn, punctuality, familiarity with job expectations and relevant occupational skills. How much effort is embedded in a disabled person is very important in getting a good job (Expert in vocational training, semi-structured interview).

After graduating, most trainees prefer starting small businesses rather than taking up employment, because employment in the private sector demands an educational background and work experience which they lack. People who have experience in formal employment sometimes found it uncomfortable.

I am visually impaired and a website developer. I studied basic computer in the Blind School in Kyinmindine. I got a job through information from my friend. I didn't know which companies wanted to include and encourage the disabled in their workplace. Networking and negotiation is important. When I worked there, I could complete my tasks faster than my colleagues. My colleagues looked down on me and did not give me any help. I worked there for more than a year, but was not happy and resigned. Now, I work as a recording engineer for one of DPOs. I feel happy and comfortable there because we are all disabled and understand our challenges and assist each other (U Soe, in-depth interview).

Although some trainees are able to establish individual businesses with grants from the vocational institutions, the funds are very limited and not accessible for everyone, their skills are not always adequate and they may be unable to compete in the market long term. Thus, many trainees are unemployed after they graduate.

“I underwent vocational training in the Vocational Training School for Adults with Disabilities. Now I have come back to

Yangon to take an advanced computer course. But learning computer skills from that institution is very basic and not adequate for a job in a private publication shop, or to start one's own shop. I do not have investment money and more than a year after graduation I am still unemployed. (Soe, in-depth interview).

Vocational training for the disabled is not effective. Most trainees do not gain sufficient knowledge of their subject to secure employment. They understand that they need extra knowledge and skills to start an individual or group workshop in the community. Discrimination at work is another reason why more disabled persons choose to start their own businesses.

I used to work at one of the garment factories in Hlain Thar Yar Industrial Zone as a helper. I had graduated from tailoring training at AAR. Sometimes, I was double assigned by line manager and colleagues. They always looked down on me and discriminated against me in the workplace. I could not put up with it for long and resigned. After that, I got a small loan from World Vision International Myanmar and ran my own small shop with some of my colleagues from the garment factory. I can earn some money every day and feel comfortable with my small business. (Daw Su Naing, in-depth interview)

A job searching or assisting service is needed in vocational training institutions to engage with the private sector and strengthen collaboration and partnership. The institutions and DPOs also need to provide disability awareness training for employers and employees where disabled persons work. Most disabled persons want to work in a comfortable environment which is why many of them opt for starting their own or group businesses.

Women with disabilities and tailoring training mostly establish their own tailoring shops in their communities, but sometimes go into the garment industry. Similarly, both men and women from hair cutting and design training started their group businesses with small grants from their vocational training institution and their own contribution. Graduates from computer and electronics training had to find jobs or could also set up on their own. Private massage centers recruited male graduates.

Economic Hardship of Households

Disability issues affect the family (Brown et al. 2006). Having a child with disability has forced many mothers to give up work, as they do not have the time or energy to work while caring for their children. It is disproportionately the mother who loses opportunities for investment in education, work and social participation. If both parents are unable to work, their ability to save sufficiently for their family's survival and future is greatly reduced. The National Disabled Survey pointed out that 85 percent of persons with disabilities are jobless. Households with disabled persons were mostly dependent on casual labor, enjoyed less livelihood diversity, and had fewer costly assets and higher rates of economic dependency than households with no disabled members.

According to the Intergrated Household Living Assessment (IHLA) and the Myanmar Disability Survey, poverty rates for households who do not have a disabled person in their family are 23.8 percent, while for families who have a person with disabilities it is 37.3 percent. Women with disabilities are extremely marginalized and a household with a woman with disabilities is classified as seven times more vulnerable (Social Policy and Poverty Research Group, 2012).

Disabled Persons' Rights

Community support for the participation of the disabled in daily life is limited. In part this is due the widely-held traditional belief that disabilities are penalties for bad deeds perpetrated in a previous life. People with disabilities are viewed as abnormal and inferior. In terms of social functioning, education, and recreational and religious activities within their communities, most disabled persons face discrimination. These negative attitudes are the main barrier to securing equal rights. Article 19 of UNCRPD recognizes:

the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community... to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live ...to have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services... and for community services and facilities for the general population to be available to them on an equal basis and to be responsive to their needs.

When discussing employment for disabled persons, employers suggested that before introducing national laws and policy enforcement, sheltered workshops should be organized to upgrade skills development, personal development and social skills for disabled persons. Graduate trainees on the other hand suggested that vocational training should offer small funding opportunities, job coaching programs and job consultation for disabled persons to enter the labor market. Most of them agreed that skill development and the ability to live independently were essential.

Most educational institutions for people with disabilities in Myanmar are long term institutions and under the control of separate organizations. People with disabilities do not have the right to choose or the right to address what they need. They are pushed into the institution by society. Therefore, independent living, the right of people with disabilities in society, is one of the vital points to discuss in a rights-based approach era. (Nay Lin Soe, in-depth interview, MILI, 2013).

Independent living means that every person has the potential and the right to self-determination. Disabled persons want the same freedoms, families, study opportunities and jobs in-line with their education and abilities, as the non-disabled. Education is an urgent need to advance these objectives.

Further Opportunity from Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Myanmar

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) promotes economic growth and contributes to poverty reduction – but not for everyone. It raises the incomes of high-income workers but excludes low-income workers (Te Velde & Morrissey, 2004). For developing countries, Foreign Direct Investment is a significant source of private capital (Mirza et al., 2004). There are three possible indirect links between FDI and poverty reduction in developing countries apart from ‘socially responsible’ investment which may directly benefit the poor, but there is a lack of systematic evidence of their effects (Mallampally & Sauvart, 1999). The study found that disabled persons and DPOs expected to gain benefits from FDI, not only from the companies that create job opportunities but also from economic reforms based on respecting human rights for all. The

rule of law is important to promote, protect and empower disabled persons to secure employment opportunities. A newly democratic country such as Myanmar will need to practice democratic innovation in policy formulation including a people-centered approach, engaging with representatives of the community.

Investors are encouraged to adopt Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies. Some investors are already committed to the UN Global Compact¹⁷ which is mainly based on CSR.

At the Myanmar Investment Commission, the first question we ask is “is there any Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) attachment to your application, and if so how many CSR programs will be implemented in the area?” When they invest in our country, they have to take social responsibility for local people (Presidential Economic Advisor, semi-structured interview).

In the manufacturing and service sectors, foreign direct investment is encouraged by the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development. If existing local capacity cannot accomplish new projects, importing the capacity might be the solution.

There would be more employment opportunities in Myanmar with foreign investment, and the country’s economy would develop more with higher production. (consultant of Economic and Transportation Minister, Dr. Maung Aung).

The government has to ensure equal rights in the national development plan. Disability should be included and recognized as a priority issue for the national poverty reduction plan. There is a clear relationship between disability and poverty. Many development programs forget to include people with disabilities as a mainstream priority. Poverty pushes disabled persons into vulnerability and exclusion from social participation and decision making (DFID, 2000). CSR programs may be a new way of opening up employment opportunities for disabled persons, alongside an appropriately-designed and

¹⁷ <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/>

effectively-implemented national level program to ensure their inclusion in poverty reduction. A lack of understanding as to what is and what is not classified as a disability, and a lack of qualified people and knowledge about supporting and accommodating disability in society, are delaying the development of a strong foundation on which to build an inclusive society.

The new Myanmar government aims to achieve a new poverty reduction milestone in 2015. To achieve this, employment is crucial. The contribution of FDI to poverty reduction will depend on how the gains from FDI are spread into poor communities. As the poverty reduction strategy does not clearly provide for the disabled, the capacity of DPOs to deal with donor agencies should be upgraded: joint programs between DPOs and international development actors should be established to ensure the needs of disabled people are taken into account in development planning, infrastructure and evaluation of development.

Evaluating the Rights-based Approach in Myanmar

Do the Myanmar National Constitution, policies and development strategies really follow human rights requirements as set out in UNCRPD, the Bali Declaration, the Incheon Strategy and the education for all policy? In particular the equal right of the disabled to participate in the labor market?

In fact there are many barriers faced by disabled persons who want to participate in the labor market. Those barriers are shaped by weaknesses of national policy, regulations, infrastructure and human behavior. Even though the government has ratified rights for disabled persons, implementation is very weak. Government institutions accept and the Department of Social Welfare believes that international agreements should be adhered to by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Resettlement. But there is a lack of awareness of the international agreements, the national constitutional rights and the national policy concerning the rights of the disabled. For example the Department of Labor's national employment policy does not provide for the employment of disabled persons in either the government or private sectors.

Furthermore, cooperation among different departments is very weak. When the Department of Social Welfare conducted disabled inclusive workshops and seminars for government officials from different departments,

decision level officials did not participate. The Union Civil Service Board was still using discriminatory words against disabled persons in their vacancy announcements: persons with disability could not apply for any of the advertised positions, even if they were qualified. Myanmar is not practicing the equal rights to education, health care and employment specifically mentioned in the UNCRPD and other international documents. There are no economic incentives for companies to recruit disabled persons. Tax deductions and economic benefits could have encouraged companies to do this. Government institutions at least should serve as a role model in the recruitment of the disabled in order to promote democratic values, equality and justice. The government should follow current rules and regulations relating to the disabled. The rights-based approach of the international human rights documents is not being implemented. Disabled persons still have challenges to surmount at the individual, community and national levels if Myanmar is to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, the national poverty reduction strategy and an inclusive society for all.

Conclusion

Most vocational training courses for the disabled are very similar whether run by government or non-governmental organizations. Courses are explicitly focused on a center-based approach rather than being adapted to the local context and market demand. The participation of the disabled in curriculum design is very limited. Most of the organizations aim to support a rehabilitation program rather than market-oriented vocational training. The basic vocational training provided does not inculcate adequate skills for participation in the labor market. The vocational training emphasizes rehabilitation to access educational opportunities, health care and basic vocational training, with insufficient focus on independent living and encouraging disabled persons to become decision makers in the community

There are different challenges embedded at organizational level, vocational training level and individual level. Most vocational training for disabled persons suffers from a lack of human resources, limited budgets and material. The training programs are project oriented and mostly focused on the quantitative rather than the qualitative. Evaluation of results - a basic requirement for vocational planning and curriculum development - is deficient.

Vocational training for the non-disabled in Yangon used various mechanisms to provide employment opportunities for their trainees. The organizations relied on vocational experts and vocational trainers. They had a flexible budget for vocational trainers to access up-to-date skills, knowledge and experience. They aimed to succeed in concrete timeframes and encouraged their trainees to take internships in partner enterprises. During training, extra information about employment opportunities in the labor market was provided. They had a good networking relationship with employment agencies to find jobs to match the skills, knowledge and capability of their trainees.

Non-governmental training organizations included enhancement of basic education and adapted local context into their implementation processes. They focused on life skill training, vocational training and financial management training for extremely poor and uneducated people. They aimed to produce employable graduates. They valued the inherent capacity of trainees and set up small loan programs for them, so that they could start their own businesses in their locality if they were unable or unwilling to enter into formal employment.

The current economic trend in Myanmar is based on education supported by skills and experience. Without adequate education, it is very difficult to enter the very competitive employment market. Various strategies or mechanisms are needed to make vocational training for persons with disabilities effective.

Chapter 5

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

Summary of Findings

Job preparation - Department of Social Welfare

The vocational training institutions focus on rehabilitation and basic vocational skills. They do not upgrade trainees' basic education, a sine qua non for employability. Nor is the vocational training adequate: to become employable trainees have to pay for additional training from private vocational institutions. Cooperation between the institutions and the private enterprise sector is very weak. Course design does not include effective practical programs, internship programs and job coaching programs to make trainees competitive in the labor market.

There are no government incentives or encouragement for the private sector to employ disabled persons. DPOs and companies founded by disabled persons do of course recruit disabled persons, but other companies mostly do not, either from lack of awareness of the nature of disabled persons, or because of discrimination.

In the public sector there is a ban (with very limited exceptions) on the employment of disabled persons, under the policy of the Union Civil Service Board.

Vocational institutions cannot do much to upgrade the structure and system because budget allocations and funding sources are very limited.

The institutions do provide some employment in sheltered workshops, and through grants/loans to trainees to set up their own businesses.

Job preparation - NGOs

AAR Japan offer employment in their two model tailoring shops, and a small loan program for those who want to set up their own businesses.

The School for the Blind in Kyimyindine and Myanmar Christian Blind School focus on both education and vocational training. They provide inclusive education in close cooperation with the Department of Education. Trainees who are sufficiently physically strong have a chance to learn massage, and male graduates can find employment in massage shops. Basic computer training for persons with visual impairments was also included, using adaptive software and Braille. The schools had connections with private computer training institutions for graduates who needed more advanced training.

Children's Education

Children with disabilities are excluded from mainstream education. There are not enough special schools or specialist staff to prepare disabled children for integration into mainstream schools.

Discrimination, social abuse and neglect

These challenges exist in the disabled person's own family and communities as well as in the regional and national levels of the bureaucratic system. Some disabled persons who found employment in the private sector left their jobs because of discrimination from fellow-workers. Women and children with disabilities are especially vulnerable. The participation level of disabled persons in normal life is very low which leads to further isolation and lack of self-confidence. Social stigma discourages them from achieving their potential.

Infrastructure

There is a lack of handicap-friendly environments in school and workplaces, and in public transport, roads and communications.

Disabled People Organizations

DPOs try to implement livelihood programs for disabled persons in different ways, but without adequate funding, organizational capacity and concrete livelihood strategies they are not able to prepare disabled persons for participation in the labor market.

Recommendations

Government institutions

- Implement the disabled rights set out in the national constitution, the national education policy and the international conventions which the government has ratified.
- End discrimination against the disabled in public sector employment.
- Include the disabled – usually among the poorest of the poor - in the national poverty reduction plan.
- Do not deny disabled children their education. There is a need for more special schools, and more teachers qualified to teach the disabled. Where necessary the infrastructure of normal schools should be modified to create a handicap-friendly environment.
- Encourage the private sector to recruit disabled persons, eg through tax reliefs and/or a quota system.
- Make people aware of disabled persons' rights; of the fact that they can contribute to the country's economic growth; and discourage discrimination.
- Strengthen cooperation between the Department of Social Welfare, the Department of Education and the Department of Labor. Networking in the shape of monthly meetings and other information sharing mechanisms should be initiated, attended by officials at appropriate decision-making levels.

- Allow disabled persons to enjoy the additional adaptive vocational training provided under the Human Resource Development Program of the Ministry of Education, regardless of higher educational requirements. This would enable disabled persons to access foreign language, accounting and advanced computer training without spending their own money.
- Encourage the participation of the disabled in policy initiatives; they best understand the real situation of their lives.
- Make available additional funding to enable vocational training institutions to provide a better service.

Vocational Training Institutions

- Make the employability of graduates your first priority.
- Include pre-vocational training in all your courses: basic literacy and numeracy, social and life skills, independent-living skills.
- Ensure that the design of vocational training courses takes account of the skill requirements of the trainees, the local context and the demands of the local employment market.
- Include marketing and financial management training.
- Make job coaching programs available for graduates.
- Set up networking and cooperation with the private sector, including internship programs.
- Continue with sheltered workshop and small grants programs.
- Learn from vocational training institutions for the non-disabled, which have good course design and arrangements for helping trainees into employment.

DPOs

- Seek additional funding from donor agencies.
- But first ensure that staff are properly informed about what agencies are available, which agencies are likely to help, and how to put forward proposals in an appropriate and acceptable form.

- Ensure that staff are competent to put additional funds to good use.
- Join with disabled persons to campaign for their rights, including with donor agencies.
- Join with vocational training institutions in providing disability awareness training for employers and employees where disabled persons work

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Appendix

There are references in this book, which was written in 2013, to the preparation of a Disabled Rights law. The law has since been enacted as The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law, 2015 (30/2015).

The Act has not yet been implemented; implementation is to be the responsibility of a National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is expected to be established in 2018. The State Vice-President will chair the committee, with the chairperson of the Myanmar Federation of Persons with Disabilities as vice-chair. Nineteen disability representatives are to be appointed.

The Act provides *inter alia* for the following actions:

- The establishment of training schools for the disabled
- Equal employment opportunities
- Tax incentives to encourage the private sector to employ more disabled persons

Secondary legislation is also in preparation, which is expected to prescribe a quota for the employment of disabled persons in larger organizations.

There is thus some reason to hope that some of the recommendations in this book will be implemented before long.

Participation of People with Disabilities in the Myanmar Labor Market

Salai Vanni Bawi

This study aims to explain how access to job opportunities for people with disabilities in Myanmar can be increased, to improve the living standards and incomes of the disabled, and boost their self-esteem.

Under human rights conventions, disabled persons should have equal rights to access public facilities and live independently in society. However, in Myanmar, despite the government having signed up to the conventions, disabled persons still struggle to access education, vocational training, job opportunities and income improvement. Rights need to be implemented.

This study analyzes the design of vocational training courses and their outcomes. The writer interviewed staff at vocational institutions for persons with physical and visual impairments; potential employers; disabled persons; and key informants from Disabled People Organizations, private vocational schools and relevant government sectors. Deficiencies in vocational training and basic education need to be remedied if disabled trainees are to become employable in the new labor market of a rapidly transforming Myanmar. The role of the state is also crucial in providing opportunities for disabled persons.



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