

# The Leprosy Mission Myanmar disability project

## Disability in Myanmar

Myanmar has significant potential for inclusive growth. It is one of the fastest growing economies in the world, has abundant natural resources and a strategic trade location. Yet it remains one of the poorest countries in Asia, with 46% of people living in poverty or close to it. This produces particular difficulties for groups excluded from the economy and in particular people with disabilities.

People with disabilities in Myanmar face many barriers to participating in society and specifically in meaningful economic activity. Therefore they are often robbed of the opportunity to achieve their full potential within both society and the economy. They face physical, attitudinal, communication, and institutional barriers which exacerbate their exclusion. In addition to preventing people with disabilities from living a full life and contributing meaningfully to their communities, this exclusion deprives Myanmar of the significant economic activity that their participation could contribute to the country.

Despite Myanmar ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and establishing the Myanmar Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (MLRPD), the necessary implementation regulations have not been officially published. The TLMM project will support employers and employees in fulfilling the requirements of Myanmar law and assisting Myanmar in meeting its UNCRPD commitments and mapping out a sustainable model for the inclusion of people with disabilities in the economy and society as a whole.

## The project

The Leprosy Mission Myanmar (TLMM) project is designed to support the inclusion in meaningful economic activity of people with disabilities, particularly women, through education, training, innovative micro-finance products and inclusive agricultural practices in the Mandalay, Bago, and Yangon Regions of Myanmar. By 2020 the project aims to see over 1,000 people with disabilities in target townships benefit from access to employment and improved incomes

and to see a corresponding 20% reduction in the unemployment rate of people with disabilities in the target townships.

The DaNa Facility is a U.K. Government funded Department for International Development (DFID) programme. In 2017 it undertook its Economic Empowerment Window (EEW) grant programme which sought competitive proposals from NGOs and not-for-profit organisations for innovative projects focused on economic inclusion. As part of the EEW TLMM was awarded matched grant funding for its project. Funding for the project is set to run from October 2017 through to June 2020.

## Implementing Partners

The Leprosy Mission Myanmar (TLMM)  
Enablement BRAC

## Project Activities

The project will focus on five key streams of work to break down the barriers to employment and economic activity that people with disabilities face in Myanmar

## Understanding equality and value

A major focus of the programme will be educating people with disabilities on their rights and their value as humans to help remove attitudinal barriers they face. This is essential as without activities specifically targeted towards empowering people with disabilities, mainstreaming activities can fail as those with disabilities might not have the awareness or confidence to take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

## Recognition as equal citizens

Ensuring that employers and other stakeholders are sensitised to the needs and concerns of people with disabilities in the project area is crucial to the success of the project and contributes to the removal of attitudinal barriers. To assist with this, businesses and CSOs within the project area will be supported with 9 months of inclusion coaching from a Disability Inclusion Advisor.

## Equipped and skilled for employment

Discrimination in the education and vocational training systems in Myanmar mean many people with disabilities haven't attended school or learnt the skills necessary to find employment.

This component will equip people with disabilities to both find formal employment and to manage self-employment through capacity building and coaching in essential skills ranging from job interviewing techniques to managing assets and finances.

## Accessible employment and income-generating activities

Removal of physical barriers that prevent participation for people with disabilities is essential for the success of the project. As such the project will pilot the development of adapted tools and work places alongside the development of a fully accessible marketplace within the project areas. It will also produce a marketplace inclusion guidebook and a manual for the production and use of adapted tools for widespread use.

## Accessible financial products

The project will pilot the development of a 'supported approach' to micro-finance and develop an innovative micro-finance product suitable for the needs of people with disabilities. The team will adapt BRAC's Graduation Approach to fit the specific needs of people with disabilities in Myanmar. People with disabilities will receive asset support, technical training on how to manage these assets, and periodic home visits to provide additional technical and business skills and track progress. In the development of an innovative micro-suitable finance products, BRAC will work closely with people with disabilities in target townships to identify the needs of people with disabilities not qualifying for mainstream micro-finance, and assess the necessary adaptation of the current micro-finance product.

## Innovation

The broad range of challenges being tackled by the project means that it will be highly innovative, with nearly all aspects of the project being pioneered for the first time in Myanmar, especially as the agriculture and finance sectors are relatively untouched by disability awareness or services. By

introducing innovative accessible micro-finance to people with disabilities the project aims to change the landscape for people with disabilities by building entrepreneurial and financial skills, adapted tools and work spaces and creating stigma-free access to marketplaces and organisations.

## Locations

Burma's 'Dry Zone' has a high concentration of people with disabilities, including people affected by leprosy, as well as significant agricultural employment opportunities. In choosing geographic location, the existing infrastructures of TLMM and BRAC were factored in with a view to finding logistical and cost efficiencies. Based on these criteria, the following locations were selected:

- **Bago Division** - Phyu, Kyauktaga, and Taungoo
- **Mandalay Region** - Chanmyathazi, Pyigyitagon, Amarapura, Meiktila
- **Yangon Region** - Hlaing Tha Yar

## BUDGET

The DaNa Facility budget: **£523,913.**

Partner matching funding: **£275,208.**

Total intervention value **£799,121.**

Financial match-funding provided by BRAC will be used to pilot accessible micro-finance. TLMEW and TLMNL will provide in-kind match-funding. TLMEW will be providing oversight throughout the project cycle, will be responsible for highlighting best practice within the project, and dissemination of learning across the leprosy, disability and development networks that it is involved in. TLMEW will also involve other project partners in this process. TLMNL will also provide oversight throughout the project cycle as well as expertise in monitoring tools and facilitating workshops.