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SUCCESS STORY:

Transforming Lives Through Employment for People with Disabilities

Ko Yan Bo is 30 years old and lives with his family in Amarapura Township, Mandalay Region in central Myanmar. He contracted polio when he was two years old and has lived with the effects ever since. He sells government lottery tickets to earn money, but says, "I've always wanted to help other people with disabilities (PwD) during my free time. I heard about The Leprosy Mission Myanmar (TLMM) through A Lin Thit, a disabled people's organisation, as I am a member."

In February 2018, he joined an 8-day training course to become a job placement coach with TLMM. The TLMM programme provides training and education to attendees across a range of areas, from disability inclusion and rights, to conducting social and economic vocational assessments. It also equips the coaches with advocacy and negotiation skills to help them support other PwD in obtaining improved employment opportunities.

After the training Ko Yan Bo became a job coach in Amarapura, along with one other coach, Ko Soe Lwin Aung. As coaches they support other PwD in their area through coaching, advice, direct assistance and networking, helping PwD in finding new employment or increasing their income. Initially, they conducted a survey in their allocated area to identify potential PwD to support. Since they started working, five out of the 45 PwD in Amarapura have increased their income or found work.

Ko Yan Bo shared one particular story: "U Myint Soe Aung lost his legs during an accident. He used to sell lottery tickets like me, though he ultimately had to shut his business down because of difficulties over cash flow. He also repairs bicycles in the village, but this is not a good business. I helped him to link with A Lin Thit to borrow money to restart his lottery business. He received almost 400,000 MMK as a loan from A Lin Thit. After he reopened his lottery ticket business with additional support and knowledge about sales and marketing he now earns around 70,000 MMK in profit each month."

Ko Yan Bo also shared the challenges he faces in his job. He said, "As job coaches, we need to know the individual we are helping very well to find a suitable job for them. We need to know their skills, family background, health status and education. Our target is to find job opportunities for four PwD per month. It is not easy to reach the target. We need cooperation from other people. The important thing is the PwD themselves need to be motivated to find work."

The DaNa Facility is supporting the TLMM project, through funding from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), to provide inclusive employment opportunities for PwD in Yangon, Bago and Mandalay. By 2020 the project aims to support over 1,000 PwD benefit from access to employment and improved incomes and to see a corresponding 20% reduction in the unemployment rate of people with disabilities in those regions.



Ko Yan Bo speaks at the Job Coach Review Workshop in Mandalay