



PRESS RELEASE

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Funding to improve economic opportunities for people with disabilities launched in Myanmar

The Leprosy Mission Myanmar and the DaNa Facility to work together to improve economic opportunities for people with disabilities in Bago, Mandalay, and Yangon.

Taungoo, Myanmar: The Leprosy Mission Myanmar (TLMM) and the DaNa Facility have signed a 2 and a half year matched grant agreement as part of a UK Government Department for International Development (DFID) funded programme to improve the economic opportunities for around 1,000 people with disabilities and people affected by leprosy living in the Bago, Mandalay, and Yangon regions.

Dr. Zaw Moe Aung, TLMM Country Leader, said, "It is exciting to begin working on this project with support from DFID especially as it builds on and scales up past interventions. We are excited to help people with disability and people affected by leprosy obtain equitable access to micro-finance and employment in different sectors, including agriculture. With this project, we hope to contribute to realising the effective implementation of the 2015 Law on the Rights of Persons with Disability in Myanmar!"

Speaking on the announcement Dr Gail Marzetti, Head of DFID Burma, said, "It's an honour to be supporting this truly innovative Leprosy Mission Myanmar project through the matched funding that the DaNa Facility is providing. The work TLMM is undertaking providing training, education and introducing innovative micro-finance products and inclusive agricultural practices for people with disabilities is pioneering work.

She added: "Improving the lives and economic opportunities of people with disabilities is not only the right thing to do, it is also the smart thing to do, because when you make sure that everybody in a country can realise their full potential you make sure that your country and its economy can start to realise its full potential as well."

People with disabilities and people affected by leprosy in Myanmar face many physical, attitudinal, communication, and institutional barriers, which result in significantly less opportunities for economic empowerment, even more so than other marginalised groups who do not face disability.

This innovative project has three main components: removing barriers to employment for people with disabilities in both rural and urban communities; removing barriers to access to micro-finance for people with disabilities; and removing barriers to buying and selling at marketplaces for people with disabilities.

Increasing accessibility in these three arenas is groundbreaking in Myanmar, and this project will establish, for the first time, good practices and tools that will enable other groups and micro-finance organisations to roll out inclusive practices within their own operations and communities here in Myanmar. An additional focus in this pioneering project will be placed on assisting women affected by disability and leprosy, either as a mother of a child with a disability or leprosy, or as a person with a disability herself.

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About **TLMM**: TLMM is a non-profit organisation that has been in operation in Myanmar for over 100 years. Its mission is to create a barrier free Myanmar for people with disabilities and people affected by leprosy, focusing on providing holistic support to people affected by leprosy and disability as part of an inclusive approach to development. The key implementing component for disability rehabilitation are the Disability Resource Centres (DRCs) that are placed in 7 States and Regions throughout Myanmar, which provide a local resource base for people with disabilities and people affected by leprosy to access rehabilitation.

About **BRAC**: BRAC is the largest and most successful Southern development organisation, and has unique experience of bringing solutions to development challenges to scale in Bangladesh. Our mission internationally is to adapt these solutions to address challenges in other developing countries. BRAC is currently operating in eleven countries across Asia and Africa. In Myanmar, BRAC operates a micro-finance plus approach and, so far, \$18.17 million has been disbursed to over 40,000 women with an average loan size of \$255. BRAC Myanmar, MFI has 35 branch offices and it will supply collateral-free micro loans to farmers and small enterprises (specifically to people with disabilities identified by TLMM).

About **Enablement**: Enablement is a well-known not-for-profit agency in the field of disability and development based in The Netherlands. Enablement is known for its expertise in the field of capacity building in especially Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) – “a multi-sectoral strategy that empowers persons with disabilities to access and benefit from education, employment, health and social services. CBR is implemented through the combined efforts of people with disabilities, their families and communities, and relevant government and non-government health, education, vocational, social and other services” (WHO, ILO, UNICEF, IDDC). CBR is Enablement’s preferred strategy to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and Enablement promotes CBR through innovative training, evaluation, research and development. Enablement constantly tries to bridge the gap between academic and government bodies and grassroots practitioners. Enablement has expertise in providing courses in disability, inclusive development, training of trainers and lobby and advocacy, in a variety of countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe.

About the **DaNa Facility**: The DaNa Facility is a UK Department for International Development (DFID) funded 4.5-year programme, established in May 2016 as one of three components of DFID’s wider ‘Business for Shared Prosperity’ (BSP) programme. The DaNa Facility, implemented by DAI Europe and KPMG, supports inclusive economic growth and private sector development in Myanmar through responsible and sustainable business growth, investment and trade.