



International
Labour
Organization

Myanmar Centre for
Responsible Business

PRESS RELEASE

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‘THERE IS A CLEAR BUSINESS CASE FOR EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES’

On 21 November, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB) brought together around a hundred stakeholders from business, trade unions, disability organisations and government for a discussion of how to combat discrimination and promote employment of people with disability (PWD) in Myanmar. The meeting was an opportunity to hear from international experts and learn from the experience of other countries. Discussions covered the advantages and disadvantages of having compulsory employment quotas for people with disabilities, as well as other methods to improve accessibility to the labour market, such as job coaching and matching, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) targetted at PWD, and business champions for disability inclusion.

Rory Mungoven, ILO said ‘Myanmar has ratified conventions and adopted important new legislation on the rights of disabled persons. This meeting brings together the Government, disabled persons organisations, employers and trade unions to look at how this can now be translated into the workplace, to end discrimination and to create more decent work and training opportunities for disabled workers.’

Vicky Bowman, Director of Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business said *‘The business case for employing people with disabilities is well-established: it means more motivated staff, greater employee retention, a wider pool of talent – and customers– and a stronger brand for the company. But businesses in Myanmar need to become more ‘disability confident’, and people with disabilities need to be more confident that businesses are willing to be champions of equal access to the workplace. That was why we convened today’s discussion: we wanted to raise awareness of options, opportunities and best practice from elsewhere, and build links between disability organisations and potential employers’.*

From disability organisations, speakers included representatives of Myanmar National Association of the Blind, Myanmar Independent Living Initiative, Myanmar Autism Association, Myanmar Deaf Community Development Association, Shwe Minthar Foundation. Business speakers included Sule Shangri-La Hotel and KBZ Bank. International experts included Stefan Tromel, Senior Disability Specialist from the ILO Geneva office, Michael Jeewa, Joint Chief Executive, Asian People's Disability Alliance (APDA) UK and Cassandra Chiu, Director, The Safe Harbour Counselling Centre, Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum Singapore whose participation was sponsored by Parami Energy.

The multistakeholder workshop was preceded by a day's training on disability inclusiveness for business organised by MCRB with Dr. Sanjukta Choudhury Kaul of the International Business Program, Faculty of Business, BINA NUSANTARA University, Jakarta and Cassandra Chiu. MCRB is also working with Association for Aid and Relief (AAR) Japan to develop a Handbook for businesses in Myanmar on Employing People with Disabilities, which will be published in Burmese in early 2018.

Background

1. All the presentations and a report of the workshop will be available on www.mcrb.org.mm.
2. In September, MCRB published a Briefing Paper on Combatting Discrimination by Business and In the Workplace, available in English and Burmese.
<http://www.myanmar-responsiblebusiness.org/news/combating-discrimination-briefing-paper.html>
3. Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB) is a Yangon-based initiative funded by the UK, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, Netherlands and Ireland, based on collaboration between the UK-based Institute of Human Rights and Business, and the Danish Institute for Human Rights. The Centre was established to provide an effective and legitimate platform for the creation of knowledge, capacity and dialogue concerning responsible business in Myanmar, based on local needs and international standards, which results in more responsible business practices. It is a neutral platform working with businesses, civil society and government.
4. The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a specialized U.N. agency devoted to promoting social justice and internationally recognized human and labour rights, pursuing its founding mission that social justice is essential to universal and lasting peace. Since 1919, the ILO brings together governments, employers and workers of 187 member States, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men. ILO has had an office and program in Myanmar since 2002.

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