

PRESS RELEASE

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‘More and More Businesses in Myanmar are hiring Persons with Disabilities’

In advance of the International Day of People with Disabilities (IDPWD) on 3 December 2019, which has the theme “THE FUTURE IS ACCESSIBLE”, Vicky Bowman, Director of MCRB congratulated the increasing number of businesses in Myanmar who are employing people with disabilities because they recognise it makes good business sense.

Vicky Bowman said “‘The Future is Accessible’ means that we must together look towards a future where the barriers which stand in people’s way no longer exist. This is a future where everyone can access a building without using stairs; where all children and students can access a mainstream classroom or vocational training, and where employees do not face challenges to commute to work on public transport.

That assumes, of course, that they have managed to obtain a job on equal terms with others, which often means overcoming discrimination and cultural stereotypes. They may also need assistive technologies, such as UNICODE-based ‘screen readers’ for visually impaired employees to be able to do jobs that use ICT.

That’s why we need businesses that have recruited employees with disabilities to inspire and challenge other businesses to become more ‘disability confident’. It is good to see that the number of such companies is growing in Myanmar and I hope it will grow still further in 2020.”

Since 2014 MCRB has been working with companies, government, non-governmental organisations and development partners to promote greater employment of persons with disabilities. This has included publishing a Handbook on “[Employing Persons with Disabilities](#)” which was launched on 3 December 2018 by MCRB and AAR Japan with the support of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and the Myanmar Federation of People with Disabilities (MFPD). Hundreds of copies of this have been distributed to government, business, and others, and the English version has already been downloaded over 1,000 times, with the Myanmar version almost 500 times.

MCRB has today uploaded the Myanmar version of the handbook as its first ever audio file for the visually impaired, prepared in cooperation with the Myanmar National Association for the Blind. The audio version are available here:

www.myanmar-responsiblebusiness.org/mm/resources/persons-with-disabilities-handbook.html

The Handbook includes many examples of companies such as **Blue Ocean** call centre, **KBZ Bank**, **Myanmar Apex Bank**, **Myanma Insurance**, **Novotel Yangon Max**, and **Sule Shangri-La** explaining how they have enhanced their productivity and the motivation of the teams by taking on employees with disabilities, and where the employee shared their story.

At an MCRB workshop in [March 2019](#) to raise business awareness about employment and disability - in particular human resources managers -participants were asked to nominate other businesses who were strong on disability inclusion in Myanmar. The company most commonly highlighted by participants was **KBZ Bank** for the job opportunities it provides to persons with disabilities and the 'reasonable accommodations' (adjustments) it offers them to support them in the workplace. In addition to KBZ and MAB, **CB Bank** was also mentioned, and other hotels praised included **Rose Garden** and **Melia**. Other companies mentioned were **Moe Yan** lottery, and **Mizzima Media** Group. Social enterprises **Hla Day** and **Yangon Bakehouse** were identified as providing livelihood opportunities and vocational training for persons with disabilities, particularly women.

Daw Hla Hla Htun, Human Resources Director of **Lotte Hotel**, who attended the March workshop said *"I was inspired by the experience that other hotels shared in the workshop about actively employing persons with disabilities, and thought that we needed to do the same at Lotte. Since we intend to employ graduates from AAR Japan, I contacted AAR Japan, who introduced me to one of the recent graduates from their computer training programme, a young woman with physical disability. I am pleased to say we employed her in June into our security team, and we are very happy with her performance. We hope to recruit more employees with disabilities, as we recognise the business case"*.

Background

1. MCRB, ILO and AAR Japan held Multi-Stakeholder Forums on disability and employment in November 2017 and March 2019. Businesses, persons with disabilities from Myanmar and international experts shared experience. Presentations and meeting reports are available on MCRB's website.
2. In December 2018, MCRB and Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR Japan) with the support of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR) and Myanmar Federation of Persons with Disabilities (MFPD) published a bilingual handbook to support employers wanting to recruit and retain persons with disabilities.
3. Myanmar has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and adopted the Law Protecting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2015 and bye-laws in 2017. Chapter 10 of the 2015 Law covers "access to employment for persons with disabilities" and puts obligations on employers. The Law makes it illegal to discriminate on the grounds of disability in relation to employment. In September 2017, the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was formed and eight Sub-Committees on health, education, employment, research, monitoring, women and children with disabilities, information and technology, disaster and other emergencies, were formed to provide support to the National Committee. MCRB is a member of the Employment Sub-Committee.
4. Myanmar is also a signatory of the Bali Declaration on the Enhancement of the Role and Participation of Persons with Disabilities as part of the ASEAN Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2011-2020) and the Incheon Strategy to 'Make the Right Real' for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific (2013-2022). The Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP) (Action Plan 4.1.6) commits to enabling greater access to TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) for underrepresented groups, including disadvantaged populations and people living with disabilities. Action Plan 4.1.3 includes a commitment to expand education access. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Rehabilitation (MSWRR), with the support of UNICEF, is drafting a national strategic plan to implement the "ASEAN Enabling Master Plan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" adopted at the 33rd ASEAN Summit in November 2018. The Myanmar National Strategy for Development of Persons with Disabilities (2016-2025) also links to the MSDP.
5. Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB) is a Yangon-based initiative funded by the UK, 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. It has been working on business and disability since 2014, in partnership with local organisations and also on wider issues of discrimination in the workplace.

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