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# Paper on the History and Current Status of Sports for the Disabled in Myanmar

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## 1. History and Current Status of Sports for the Disabled in Myanmar

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### a) Brief Introduction about the country

Myanmar is located in Southeast Asia region and covers an area of 677,000 square kilometers (261,228 square miles) ranging 936 kilometers (581 miles) from east to west and 2,051 kilometers (1,275 miles) from north to south. It is made up of 135 national races with 51 million population.

### b) Governmental Supports for People with Disabilities in Myanmar

The Government of the Republic of Union of Myanmar appointed the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement as focal ministry for development and inclusion of people with disabilities in collaboration with other ministries and has adopted and/or implemented the followings;

- 1958 – Firstly enacted the Law on Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities. But, it was just on paper and not implemented well by the government.
- 1959 – The Ministry of Health established and operated the National Rehabilitation Hospital for People with Disabilities.
- 1983 – The Ministry of Health implemented the Community Based Rehabilitation Program for People with Disabilities in cooperation with World Health Organization.
- 1994 – The National Government implemented the Celebration on the International Day of Disabled Persons and is still doing it till now yearly in every December at national level.
- 2004 – The Ministry of Education adopted the Inclusive Education Policy which also encourages the disabled children to access education in mainstream schools.
- 2009 – The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement implemented a National Survey on Disability which covers the whole country in random.
- 2010 – The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement adopted the National Plan of Action for People with Disabilities.
- 2011 – The Government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- 2012 – The National Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was drafted by Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement in together with Disabled People Organizations in Myanmar.
- 2012 – The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement involved and participated in adopting and declaring the Incheon Strategy and Asia-Pacific Decade for Persons with Disabilities (2013-2022).
- 2014 – The National Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was approved by Upper House (Amyotha Parliament).
- 2014 – The Ministry of Health opened the School for Prosthetics and Orthotics in Yangon by the support of The Nippon Foundation.
- The Government constructed and has been operating 2 Blind schools, 2 Deaf schools, 2 Schools for Disabled Children and 1 Vocational training school for physically disabled adults.

### **c) Movements and Efforts of People with Disabilities and their Organizations in Myanmar**

From 1975 to till now, persons with disabilities initiated and established several groups and organizations in their own and have been fighting for their rights. There are about 12 organizations of persons with disabilities including blind association, deaf association, physically handicap association. Also there are about 10 international organizations and 2 local organizations working for disability issue in the country. As tangible efforts and achievements of disabled people organizations in Myanmar;

- 2009 – Conducted the first Self-Help Groups’ Conferences in Yangon.
- 2010 – Held the first Community Based Rehabilitation Conference for People with Disabilities in Yangon.
- 2010 – Advocated to government to ratify the UN Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities.
- 2012 – Work together with Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and drafted the National Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- 2013 – Approached and advocated to Union Election Commission for the electoral and voting rights of citizens with disabilities.
- 2014 – Organized and implemented the first National Conference on Disabilities
- 2014 – Established the Myanmar Council of Persons with Disabilities at national level.
- 2014 – Hosted and organized the ASEAN Disability Forum inviting Japan, India, Australia and 10 ASEAN member countries.
- 2014 – Hosted and celebrated the first ASEAN Festival of Disabled Artists inviting all ASEAN member countries.

### **d) Supports and Assurances of Japan**

In 1999, Association for Aid and Relief (AAR-Japan) constructed and opened the Vocation Training Centre for Disabled Adults and has been providing Computer trainings, Hair cutting trainings, Sewing trainings and Community Based Rehabilitation Services in Myanmar till now. Japan International Cooperation Agency-JICA also has been supporting for developing National Sign Language for Deaf People and running of National Rehabilitation Centre where produces prosthetics and orthotics. The Nippon Foundation funded and sponsored for the first ASEAN Festival of Disabled Artists hosted in Myanmar in 2014. Besides, The Nippon Foundation has been supporting one disabled people organization called Myanmar Independent Living Initiative-MILI for their activities for people with disabilities in Myanmar.

### **e) History of Sports and Domestic Sports Events for the Disabled in Myanmar**

Sport program for the disabled in Myanmar had started since 1975. Initially, Ministry of Social Welfare in collaboration with Ministry of Health took the leadership for disabled sport activities from 1975 to 1989 and sent disabled sportsmen to FESPIC Games in Japan, Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia and competitions in other oversea countries. From 1989, Myanmar Paralympic Sports Federation took the leadership for all sports programs and activities for the disabled and has been organizing the National Para Games yearly till now. Annually, about 400 Athletes with disabilities representing different ministries and disabled people organizations fight for about 280 medals in national game. In 2004, Special Olympics Myanmar was born by the facilitation of Special Olympic Asia-Pacific and supervision of Ministry of Sports and is now doing domestic Special Olympics events and movements locally. At the same time, Myanmar Paralympic Sports Federation and Special Olympics Myanmar have sent the disabled athletes to International Paralympic Games, FESPIC Games, ASEAN Para Games and Special Olympics internationally.

In coincide year with ASEAN chairmanship, 2014, Myanmar hosted 7<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Para Game in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Ngwe Saung cities with the purposes of promoting friendship, equality and unity among the participating ASEAN countries: Brunei, Burma, Cambodia,

Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

In the beginning, there was only 5 sorts of sports for the disabled in Myanmar: i) Swimming, ii) Volleyball, iii) Table tennis, iv) Badminton and v) Athletics, but now has promoted into 12 sorts of sports in total: additionally, Player-Football, Blind- Football, Basket Ball, Chess, Boccia, Lift and Arrow-shooting.

**f) Pass Records in the International Sports Events for the Disabled**

From 1975 to date now, Myanmar Disabled Sportsmen/women were achieved 246 gold, 218 silver and 188 Bronze from oversea games and made positive images for their mother country. The following table is a detail evidence of successes and achievements of Myanmar Disabled Athletes internationally.

Year	International Games	Host Country	No. of Athletes Sent	Achievements			Total
				Gold	Silver	Bronze	
1975	FESPIC Game	Japan	33	3	1	-	4
1978		Australia	11	16	15	1	32
1982		Hong Kong	20	4	3	4	11
1986		Indonesia	-	-	-	-	-
1989		Japan	15	8	9	10	27
1994		China	22	4	7	14	25
1998		Thailand	29	7	16	18	41
2002		South Korea	20	4	13	4	21
2006		Malaysia	26	6	3	6	15
2010		China	20	-	-	1	1
1984		International Paralympic Game	USA	9	1	1	2
1992	Spain		1	-	-	-	-
2008	China		3	-	-	-	-
2012	UK		2	-	-	-	-
2001	ASEAN Para Game	Malaysia	31	43	23	11	77
2003		Vietnam	26	24	12	11	47
2005		Philippines	22	29	13	4	46
2008		Thailand	25	14	16	21	51
2009		Malaysia	25	14	19	7	40
2011		Indonesia	35	11	9	14	34
2014		Myanmar	269	34	26	36	96
2005	Special Olympics	Singapore	12	7	11	5	23
2006		Thailand	10	-	-	-	-
2006		China	6	3	5	2	10
2007		China	15	2	5	-	7
2009		Thailand	12	-	-	-	-
2019		Singapore	14	2	6	7	15
2011		Greece	15	5	3	7	15
2011		Cambodia	10	-	-	1	1
2013		Australia	20	5	2	2	9
2014		Vietnam	8	-	-	-	-

## 2. Organization and Development of the National Paralympic Sports Federation of Myanmar

Myanmar Paralympic Sports Federation was officially formed at national level on October 18, 1989. In general, the Ministry of Sports currently oversees all the sports activities in Myanmar with the slogan, "Myanmar sports - the world to conquer." Myanmar Paralympic Sports Federation is now stand as one of the 36 Sports Federation under Myanmar Olympic

Committee taking care by Ministry of Sports. Its' objectives are to improve self-confidence and health conditions of persons with disabilities and promote their inclusion in society. Myanmar Paralympic Sports Federation has been organizing the National Paralympic Games for the disabled yearly since 1989, and implementing sports trainings, local sports events and fundraising activities for the disabled in Myanmar and participating in abroad countries' activities. Under the supervision of Ministry of Sports and facilitation of Special Olympics Asia-Pacific, Special Olympics Myanmar was established on October 14, 2004 as Sub-Branch of Myanmar Paralympic Sports Federation and has been doing Special Olympics movements for persons with mental disabilities in Myanmar, including coaching clinics, trainings, competitions both at provincial and national level and participating in other countries' activities. Vice President of Myanmar Paralympic Sports Federation, Myo Myint said; the sports events are aimed to uplift the standard of disabled sports, to turn out the highly qualified disabled athletes for the International and ASEAN Level Competitions and to train and integrate people with disabilities for their better life through sports.

Under the guidance of Ministry of Sports, Myanmar Paralympic Sports Federation coordinates with Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Defense. The annual budget for national games by Federation was about 50,000 USD for last fiscal year and the Ministry of Sports and local sponsors financially support it.

Myanmar Paralympic Sports Federation is affiliated to international sports organizations and now a member in International Paralympic Committee, ASIAN Paralympic Committee, Fespisc Sports Federation (till 2006), ASEAN Para Sports Federation and Special Olympics International.

### 3. International and Domestic Aids for the Sports for the Disabled in Myanmar

Although Myanmar is affiliated with or a member of international and regional sports federations, Myanmar Paralympic Sports Federation haven't got any financial or physical supports from them yet. Till now, Myanmar received little assistances from following countries or organizations.

Sr.	Oversea Countries/Organization	Supported Areas or Items
1	Japan	Donated Wheelchairs for Basketball Sport
2	China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided <b>coach</b> training for Goal ball</li> <li>• Technical support for constructing stadiums</li> <li>• <b>Support for ASEAN Para Game in Myanmar</b></li> </ul>
3	Korea	50 Sports type Wheelchairs
4	Thailand	Provided <b>coach</b> training for Wheelchair Basketball
5	Malaysia	Provided <b>coach</b> training for Sitting Volleyball
6	Special Olympics International	Financial support for <b>organizing and implementing</b> sports trainings and organizational development (about 5,000 USD yearly)
7	Global Treasure Bank	Financial Support (about 50,000 USD)
<b>China is the biggest donor among them above.</b>		
Year	Local Organizations	Supported Areas or Items

2004-2009	Shine Hope Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Support for Domestic Competitions</li> <li>• Local Volunteers for Trainings and Games</li> </ul>
2010	City Mark Shopping Mall	Donated about 15,000 USD for constructing of Centre for Intellectual Disabled
2010	Skynet TV Channel	About 20,000 USD for general activities of disabled sport
2012-2014	Ooredoo Myanmar	About 50,000 USD for general activities of disabled sport

Regarding support from Myanmar government, Ministry of Sports has funded for building and sustainable running of North Dagon Sports Training Centre with 500,000 Square feet and Playground with 180,000 Square feet. Besides, the Ministry provides financial supports for organizing domestic Paralympic Games yearly and sending Myanmar Athletes to oversea Games or Competitions. Last year, the Ministry funded for all sports trainings of 270 Myanmar Athletes to enter ASEAN Game.

In 2014, the Government of Union of Myanmar spent lots of money for hosting 7<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Para Games in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon.

Ministry of Defenses also donated 13 Sports Wheelchairs to the Federation in 2014.

General Secretary of Myanmar Paralympic Sports Federation, Mr. Pitar said that the Federation is now preparing to apply funding from South Korea and ask trainings to China.

In fact, Myanmar haven't received lots of aids or supports from international community comparing with neighboring countries.

#### 4. Expectation for the Assistance from the Japanese government for Myanmar in related with the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Game

Myanmar fully expects from Japan to invite lots of Myanmar athletes and support for their costs for 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Game. Particularly, Myanmar Athletes and Coaches need following assistances from the Japan government.

Sr.	Kind of Support or Assistance	For (target)
1	Sports type Wheelchairs	Myanmar Athletes
2	Sports equipment and materials	Myanmar Coaches and Athletes
3	Trainings for Coaches	Myanmar Coaches
4	Sports trainings in line with 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games	Myanmar Athletes
5	Financial supports for trainings and preparations of Athletes targeted to 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games	Myanmar Athletes
6	Financial and Technical support for upgrading of existing sports training centres and constructing of new ones	Myanmar Paralympic Sports Federation

7	Financial support for implementation of vocational training centres and job replacements for Athletes	Myanmar Athletes
8	G to G Seminars on Disabled Sports	Ministry of Sports
9	Experience Exchange Visits between two National Paralympic Sports Federations of Japan and Myanmar	Myanmar Paralympic Sports Federation
10	Supports for developing literatures related to disabled sports	Myanmar Coaches, Athletes and general Public

## 5. Others

According to recent statistics from a 2009 National Disability Survey conducted by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement of Union of Myanmar, 2.32% of country population is living with disability in Myanmar. This would translate that 1.3 million are persons with disabilities in Myanmar. At the same time, if we calculated it as WHO estimation, 15% (7.5 million, based on the country population of 51 million) would be persons with disabilities in the country.

Continuously the government figures show that around 70% of them have mobility difficulties, the rest having sensory or mixed impairment. Of note, people with disabilities were significantly less likely to be in following current situations;

- 53% of Children with disability can't go to primary school yet
- 85% of Persons with disability are jobless
- 62% of Families with disability are landless
- 54% of Families with disability are living with bamboo hut
- 74% of Disabled persons can't access information on disability services
- 80% of Disabled persons do not aware about their rights

Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) are amongst the most vulnerable of the disadvantaged groups of people in Myanmar. Most of them receive little or no development assistance. Rehabilitation services such as physiotherapy, special education, vocational trainings are extremely limited in the country. At the same time, principal caregivers mainly mothers and family members of PwDs lack the very basic skills required in caring for their family member(s) who are disabled.

Assistive devices are not produced in local; cost is high and not available to buy anytime, anywhere. Due to poverty, many PwDs can't effort to buy it. They are also facing barriers of inaccessible environment, exclusive systems and negative attitude of communities towards their disability. The dignity of them is threatened because of these conditions. In general, the public information and service providers lack awareness/information on disability issue. The design makers and architects have no knowledge/ information for the accessible buildings and places which can be used by disabled persons too. So disabled people especially wheelchair users and white cane users cannot access any buildings and public places as others. And the policy makers have no perfect awareness/information to set up the inclusive systems which can be benefit to disabled persons too. Therefore, most of disabled people cannot go to mainstream schools, cannot work at public & private sectors and cannot participate in community & social activities equally as other people.

Moreover, most of PwDs are still out of many development programmes. The main cause for that is that most of developmental stakeholders (GO & NGOs) have no adequate information and awareness on disability issue. Yet some of the implementers have strong desire to do for PwDs, their effort is often in vain because they have no awareness & capacity on disability issue.



And as our country is a Buddhist country so that most of its social and traditional ways of thinking is based on Buddhist philosophy. According to that philosophy the current life conditions are benefits of several causes did in the past life: most of the believers strongly accept and agreed with it. In the same way, the bad factors of current life such as disabilities, congenital deformity, and accidents are caused by the sins of previous life and no one else could survive from those until the sin are removed. Additionally, all kinds of disability are only individual conditions that could not be intervened with other ways for recovery, most people believe like that. As the result, disabled are seen as very poor persons and their lives have no potential to develop like others. Generally, the historical perspective of Myanmar disabled were the same above and the less interest of disabled people's families, the public and other sectors on the betterment of disabled may be rooted by mention statement. Almost the processes of communities and development sectors towards them are still strongly based on 'Charity approach'.

Based on government survey, 53% of disabled children can't go to schools. The figure shows that nearly one in every two disabled child in Myanmar never attended school, compared to a national primary enrollment of 84%. In terms of gender, the proportion of female PwDs who never attended school was higher than the proportion of male PwDs who never attended school. Of note, the relative proportion of PwDs in rural setting who never attended school is lower in rural than in urban areas. Although ministry of education adopted the inclusive education policy in 2004, it is not properly implemented. Particularly children with disabilities are still away from benefit due to negative attitude of some teachers & family members, no disability awareness raising program for education staffs & families, no accessible teaching curriculum & methodologies in schools, inaccessible roads and school environment, etc. At the same time, families have difficulties to charge the cost for schooling of their disabled children due to poverty.

In term of employment, 85% of PwDs are jobless and the rest are engaged in family business, casual labor or government sector. The reasons are poor skill of PwDs, negative attitude of employers, inaccessible work environment and no quota employment system in the country. There is only one vocational training school in each side of both government and non-government organization side; and kinds of vocational training are also very limited.

In term of involvement of PwDs themselves in disabled people organizations, only 2.5% of them ever been engaged in those organizations. There are now 12-disabled people organizations and about 24 small self-help groups of PwDs in the country, however, it is too small to cover all PwDs in 14-regions and states. Majority of PwDs are unaware of their fundamental rights, not empowered and limited in leadership skills. Generally, the voice of PwDs is too silent.

Poverty and Disability situation are influencing each other in the country. Most PwDs are poor. 70% are living in the rural areas, where poverty is much more intense. For a country like Myanmar, poor nutrition, dangerous working and living conditions, limited access to health care, poor hygiene, inadequate information about causes of impairment, and natural disasters contribute to the creation of disabilities. At the present, there are only one government rehabilitation hospital and 7-non-government organizations inside country those who are mainly working for PwDs. But their services and coverage area is very limited.

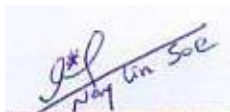
As result, people with disabilities are living with poverty, left behind from every developmental process and being exclusive from mainstream society. They are facing difficulties and barriers and can't enjoy with their fundamental human rights yet. Even though Myanmar government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2011, its' implementation is not coming as real yet in the country.

As "sport" is a tool to empower people with disabilities and promote their social inclusion, we should support more in this area. "Sport" can improve the self-confident of disabled people, show their talent and ability and make their physical and mental healthier and live long life. And, it can make more friendship and collaboration among athletes between the countries. It supports for peace, justice and inclusion of societies. Besides, the "sports" can open the eye of public and

raise awareness on disability. If the countries work and promote together the sports for the disabled, it's sure that finally we would be able to enjoy with rights-based, barrier-free and inclusive society for all.

*(The facts, figures and information of this paper are based on the source of Myanmar Paralympic Sports Federation)*

Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nay Lin Soe". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

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