Expanding Social Protection for the vulnerable: Social Pension and Disability Allowance

Godfred Paul - 12 June 2019
The context

- Older people and persons with disabilities in Myanmar are vulnerable in different, intersecting ways.

- No specific government policy, plans or budget for social protection of vulnerable people. Had a very fragmented form of social protection before 2014.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>4,474,408</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>1,833,070</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>566,602</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By 2050:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>60 - 69</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>70 - 79</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>80+</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 m PWDs (4.6% of total population) (2014 Census)
The foundation

- Trusted relationship with Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement since 2004
- Regional and global experience on social protection
- Strong experience in older people-led community-based programmes
- Focus on older people’s issues, including income
- Evidence-based findings on older people in Myanmar
- Inter-sectionality of Ageing with Disability
- Trusted relationship with LIFT since 2009
Strategic approach

- Build national social protection capacity and understanding
- Generate lessons and experience on cash transfer delivery
- Launch a feasibility study on social pensions and a policy brief on social protection
- Build staff capacity at the Department of Social Welfare
- Ensure older people and persons with disabilities participate
Achievements by HelpAge

- Piloted community-based identification of persons with disabilities
- Piloted cash transfer for older people and persons with disabilities in Dry Zone (2015-18)
- Successfully piloted electronic cash transfers and shared findings (2018)
- Developed and implemented Inclusive Self Help Group model
- Older women’s empowerment and decision making roles
DSW’s Achievements

- Elderly Law passed (2016)
- National Committee on Ageing appointed (2017)
- National Social Protection Strategic Plan, including social protection and older people’s self-help groups
- Big increase in government budget allocation & spending on social protection since 2016
- Creation of SP Division within DSW and rapid expansion of social protection programme (2017)
- Universal social pension started 2017 for 90+ (40,872 people)
- Eligibility age reduced to 85 in October 2018, increasing coverage to 168,578 people
- Costed SP Sector Plan 2018-2022, includes social pension and ISHGs (2018)
- Appointed high-level National Social Protection Committee and Working Committee (2018-19)
Achievements

Estimated Government Budget for National Social Pension

In Million Kyats

- 2014-2015 FY: ~0
- 2015-2016 FY: ~117
- 2016-2017 FY: ~358
- 2017-2018 FY: ~4570
- 2018-2019 FY: ~20400
Future plans

As per Costed SP Sector Plan

- Lower the social pension eligibility age to 80 years
- Increase the social pension amount to MMK 15,000
- Start the disability allowance at MMK 15,000
- 40% of cash transfers delivered electronically by 2020
- Form 800 new ISHGs
- Greater public awareness on social protection
- Continue to support systems and institutional strengthening of social protection with other DPs
- Pilot an electronic cash transfer for persons with disabilities in five townships
Challenges and opportunities

- Increase in budget allocation by MoPF?
- Implementation capacity, system and institutional arrangement of the Government as the programme expands?
- Can Myanmar's states and regions engage with social protection to help decentralise the system?
- Integrating data and building management information systems?
“Now, I am receiving 10,000 kyats social pension from the Government, and before that I received from HelpAge from 2017 to 2018. I use the money on medication, food and to donate to the monastery. My son and daughter-in-law care for me but I know I cannot ask for everything I want. By receiving this social pension money, I can spend it when I need something.”
Daw Than, 88
"It is difficult to walk because of my short toes caused by leprosy. I am unable to work to get income. I rely on the disability allowance for my living. I spend it on food and I try to cover my daily costs. By receiving this allowance, I feel happy and peaceful. I have an income even though I can’t work. That is why I don’t need to rely on the villagers all the time.”

Daw Aye Byine, 71
A big THANK YOU to LIFT from Myanmar’s older people and persons with disabilities!