



## SOCIAL POLICY & POVERTY RESEARCH

# BULLETIN

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### Poverty and Disability in Myanmar: why empowering persons with disabilities will reduce national poverty

**What is known:** disabled people make up 15-20% of the world's poor

**What this paper adds:** in Myanmar, poverty rates for households with one or more persons with disabilities are 37.3%, over 1.5 times higher than for households with no persons with disabilities  
Over 16% of all poverty in Myanmar is associated with disability



*Figure 1: globally, persons with disabilities are more likely to be poor*

**Background:** The links between disability and poverty have been well documented, with persons with disabilities known to have increased rates of chronic poverty<sup>1</sup> both in developed<sup>2,3</sup> and developing countries<sup>4,5</sup> although data is not consistent between countries. Persons with disabilities were reported to have lower rates of education<sup>6</sup> and employment<sup>7</sup>, and households with a person with disabilities had higher rates of expenditure on healthcare and fewer assets. <sup>8</sup>Data from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Vietnam demonstrates higher rates of poverty amongst households with disabilities, with 30.8% and 20.2% respectively of households with PwDs being in poverty<sup>9</sup>. However, concerning disability and poverty in developing countries, the World Disability Report concludes that 'The evidence is less conclusive for poverty status measured by asset ownership, living conditions, and income and consumption expenditures' and recommends further research on 'the causal relationship between poverty and disability'.

<sup>1</sup>Metts, Robert (2000) Disability Issues, Trends and Recommendations for the World Bank, World Bank.

<sup>2</sup>Zaidi A, Burchardt T. Comparing incomes when needs differ: equalization for the extra costs of disability in the UK. *Review of Income and Wealth*, 2005,51:89-114

<sup>3</sup>She P, Livermore GA. Long term poverty and disability among working-Age Adults. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 2009,19:244-256

<sup>4</sup>Lwanga-Ntale C (2003) Chronic Poverty and Disability in Uganda. Cornell University

<sup>5</sup>Filmer D. Disability, poverty and schooling in developing countries: results from 14 household surveys. *The World Bank Economic Review*, 2008,22:141-163

<sup>6</sup>Loeb M et al. Poverty and disability in Eastern and Western Cape provinces, South Africa. *Disability & Society*, 2008,23:311-321

<sup>7</sup>Mitra S, Sambamoorthi U. Disability and the rural labor market in India: evidence for males in Tamil Nadu. *World Development*, 2008,36:934-952

<sup>8</sup>Trani J et al. Disability in and around urban areas of Sierra Leone. London, Leonard Cheshire International, 2010

<sup>9</sup>Braithwaite J, Mont D. Disability and poverty: a survey of World Bank poverty assessments and implications. *ALTER – European Journal of Disability Research / Revue Européenne de Recherchesur le Handicap*, 2009, 3(3):219-232

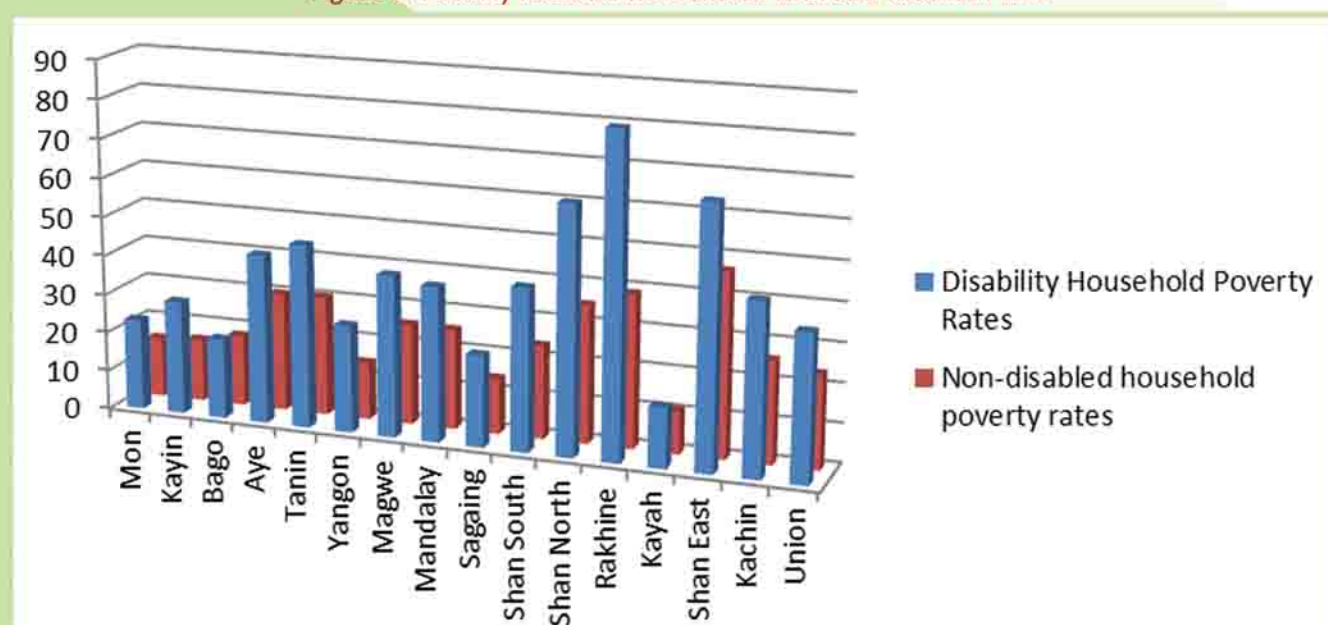
**Method:** this study undertook secondary analysis of data collected from 18,000 households nationwide by UNDP for the 2nd Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in 2009-2010, and the National Disability Survey of 108,000 households conducted by The Leprosy Mission International and the Department of Social Welfare in 2009-2010. Using comparative values for rates of two key economic factors at household level as proxies for poverty (landlessness and reliance on casual labour as main income source), relative poverty rates for households with one or more persons with disabilities, and rates for households with no persons with disabilities were calculated. Rates were calculated based on relative differences at State and Region level of these two factors in households, and projections were made based on prevalence of disability, average household size and overall poverty rates for that State/Region. Due to small sample size of both IHLCS and Disability Survey data for Chin State, findings were unreliable and therefore excluded from the overall projections.

**Findings:** Overall poverty rates in Myanmar are 25.6%, resulting in an estimated 2,718,000 households in poverty. Of these, 439,700 are households with one or more Person with Disabilities (PwD). Nationally, poverty rates for household with no PwD are 23.8%, compared to poverty rates for households with one or more PwD of 37.3%. Overall, 10% of all households have one or more person with disabilities, but 16% of all poor households have one or more person with disabilities, indicating that 16% of all national poverty is associated with disability.

*Table 1: State and Region Disability and Poverty statistics*

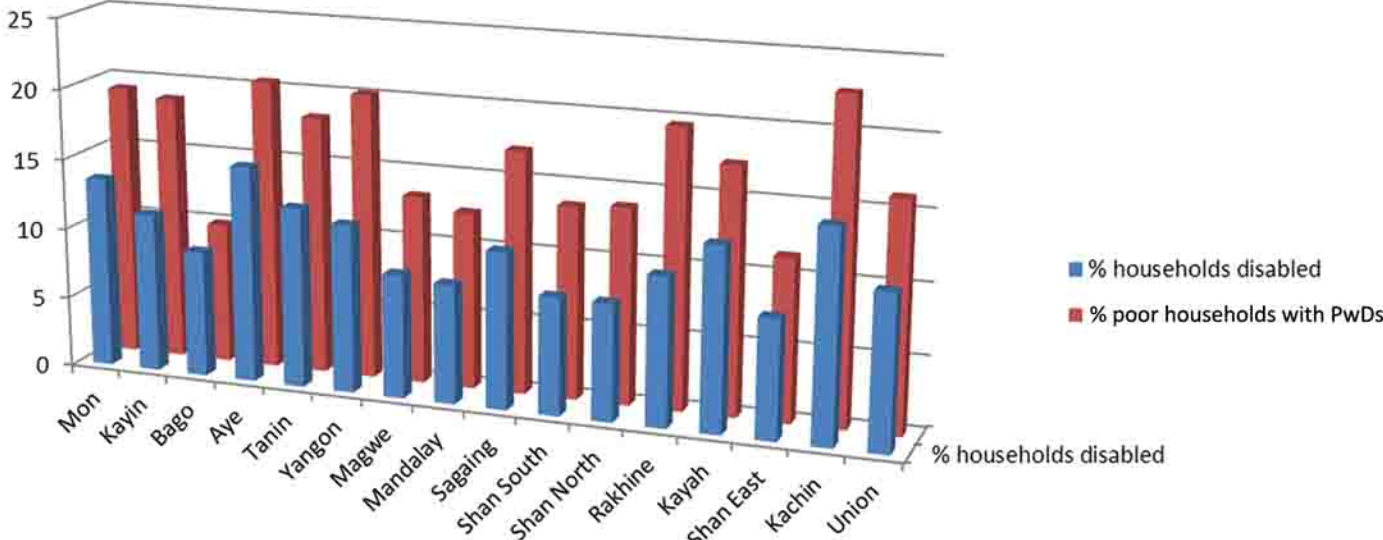
	Mon	Kayin	Bago	Ayeyawaddy	Taninthayi	Yangon	Magwe	Mandalay	Sagaing	Shan(S)	Shan(N)	Rakhine	Kayah	Shan(E)	Kachin	Union
PwD Poverty rates (%)	23.2	29	20.4	43.2	46.8	27.4	41.2	39.4	23.4	41.4	62.9	81.8	15.3	66.2	43.6	37.3
No PwD poverty rate (%)	15.2	15.9	18.1	30.2	30.5	14.6	25.7	25.4	14.1	23.7	35.1	39	10.8	46.8	26	23.8
Ratio PwD: non (poverty)	1.52	1.87	1.13	1.43	1.53	1.88	1.61	1.55	1.66	1.74	1.79	2.10	1.42	1.41	1.68	1.57
% households with on or more PwD	13.5	11.3	8.9	15.3	12.7	11.9	8.7	8.4	11.1	8.3	8.2	10.5	12.9	8.4	14.9	10.9
% poor households with one or more PwD	19.3	18.8	9.94	20.5	18.2	20.2	13.3	12.5	17.1	13.6	13.8	19.7	17.4	11.5	22.7	16.1
National Share of poverty associated with disability (% of national poverty)	0.50	0.19	0.47	3.98	0.97	1.33	1.01	2.09	0.65	0.65	0.84	2.62	0.02	0.19	0.61	16.1

*Figure 2: Poverty rates for households with and without PwDs*



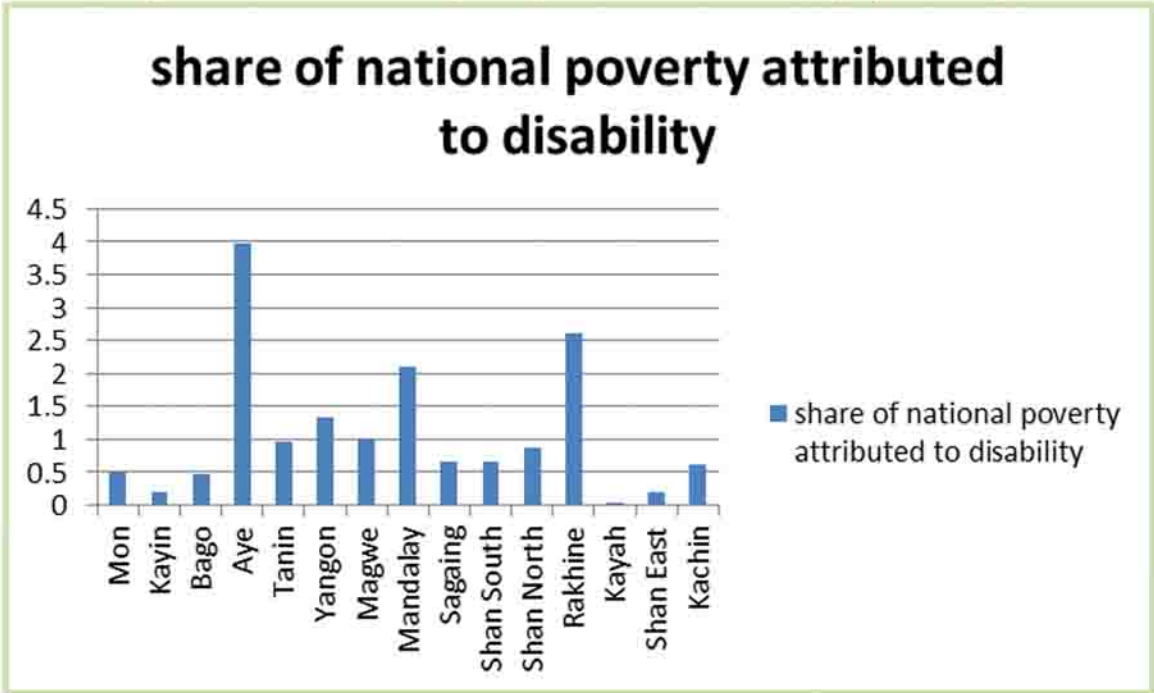
At State and Region level, both absolute and relative rates of poverty amongst households with and without persons with disabilities differ significantly.

Figure 3: Relative Poverty rates of households with PwDs



The extent to which disability results in significant inequity in terms of poverty also differs, with some States and Regions (such as Kayah State) having relatively low overall background poverty rates, but significant inequities in poverty rates between households with and without persons with disabilities. In terms of absolute poverty rates amongst households with PwDs, the rates are highest in Rakhine State, Northern and Eastern Shan States, Kachin State and Taninthayi Division. However, in relative terms (the extent to which a person with disabilities confers extra disadvantage) the rates of inequity are highest in Rakhine State, Kayin State and Yangon Division.

Figure 4: National share of poverty associated with disability by State/Region



Overall, the contribution of disability to National poverty (reflected by high poverty rates, high disability rates and large populations) was largest in Ayeyawaddy Division, Mandalay Division and Rakhine State. Overall, if 15,000 households with persons with disabilities from the States and Regions where disability contributes most strongly to poverty incidence were selected for livelihood enhancements and lifted out of poverty, the national poverty rate would be reduced by 0.5%.

**Conclusions:** Households with persons with disabilities contribute a disproportionate amount to national poverty, with significant variation between States and Regions. Targeting households with persons with disabilities in States and Regions where the relative contribution of disability is high can result in significant poverty reduction.

### Key references:

● **UNDP (2010)** Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in Myanmar 2009-2010. Yangon, Myanmar

● **The Leprosy Mission International/Department of Social Welfare (2010)** First Basic National Disability Survey 2009-2010. Yangon/Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

● **Griffiths M (2011)** Gender and Age related impact of Disability on Household Economic Vulnerability: analysis from the REVEAL study in Myanmar. World Report on Disability Research Symposium, Sydney December 2011

[http://sydney.edu.au/health\\_sciences/disability-symposium/papers/posters.shtml](http://sydney.edu.au/health_sciences/disability-symposium/papers/posters.shtml)



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