COUNTRY REPORT FOR THE SECOND ASEAN JAPAN HIGH LEVEL OFFICIAL MEETING ON CARING SOCIETIES

Introduction

Myanmar is a Union State with the population of 53.2 millions, comprising 135 national races groups. The State permits and is rendering assistance to all faiths to observe religious festivals in accord with the traditions. The people of Myanmar are generous in charity and willing to help not only in religious affairs but also in public welfare in accordance with the teaching of culture, tradition and religion. In Myanmar, social well-being services, therefore, have been rooted since time immemorial including the services of orphanages, helpless older persons and disabled persons.

State's policy on social welfare has been based on equalization of opportunities for the vulnerable groups(or) the persons who are facing up social problems in Myanmar society. In line with the social policy, the government attaches a high priority to the welfare of children, youth, women, national races residing in remote areas, the disabled, the aged, the socially handicapped and the disadvantaged groups.

Nowadays, in order to emerge as a peaceful, modern and developed nation, Myanmar has laid down political, economic and social objectives. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement is performing social welfare services in line with the following Social objectives of the State in collaboration and cooperation with government organizations, non-government organizations and voluntary organizations

(a) Uplift of the morale and morality of the entire nation
(b) Uplift of national prestige and integrity and preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage and national character
(c) Uplift of dynamism of patriotic spirit
(d) Uplift of health, fitness and education standards of tile entire nation

The Objectives of the Social Welfare under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement are as follows:-

(a) To contribute towards the social objective "Uplift of health, fitness and education standards of the entire nation".
(b) To contribute towards the development of human resources.
(c) To assist those who are facing social problems.
(d) To take preventive measure to control occurance of social problems.
(d) To turn out voluntary social workers.
(e) To give assistance to the State in some way by implementing social development tasks and giving social assistance.

In this context, tile Ministry carries out the activities in order to achieve the aims to assist the vulnerable groups so as to reintegrate into the society through social work methods and to encourage the Non-Governmental Organizations to participate in national movement for social development.

Family Structure and Aging

Myanmar population totals 53.2 million. The average household consists of 5 persons living in an extended family environment. Households comprising of grandparents, parents, offsprings and grandchildren, can usually be found allover the whole country. In the Myanmar cultural text, parents are the first mentors of a child and the parents regard their children as "precious gems". Myanmar families respect duties between parents and offsprings and teachers and pupils in accord with traditional culture and religion. Since Myanmar society is made up of extended families, every elderly person receives care from their children, grandchildren and relatives.

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Services for the Care of the Aged, an important task for the family, are being implemented. Due to the extensive family system in Myanmar, aged persons are cared for in the family environment. Trends in population growth, changes in the structure and composition of the population, migration between urban and rural areas, and changes in the pattern of human consumption of natural resources must be integrated into all aspects of planning and policy making.

Myanmar population grows from 35.3 million in 1983 to 52.2 million in 2002 and expect to grow74.8 million by the year 2020. Present population growth rate is 2.02 per cent per annum. Over a half of its population is female.

Due to the declining trend of fertility and mortality Myanmar population age structure is shifting from young to old age structure. Proportion of population under 15 year of age decreased to 32.7per cent in 2002 from 38.6 per cent in 1983. The adolescent (15-24) population grows to 9.5 million in 2002 from 7.0 million in 1983. Although the size of the adolescent population grows, the population of that drops to 18.1 per cent in 2002 from 20.6 per cent in 1983.

The proportion of working age population (15-59) increased of 59.3 per cent in 2002 from 55.1 per cent in 1983. Contrary to the decreasing trend of adolescent population, the proportion of older population (age 60+)increased from 6.4 per cent in 1983 to 8.0 per cent in 2002.

Myanmar society is made up of extended families and every elderly person naturally receives care from their children, grandchildren and relatives. A large number of elderly people are now serving in important positions in NGOs, voluntary organizations, companies and business firms. Through active involvement in the social, economic and religious sectors of the country, they are able to continue to lead an active life in the society.

There is no serious problem in Myanmar as far as the affairs of older persons are concerned. High regard of the Myanmar society for older people, extended family type based on mutual dependence and cultural traditions and customs favourable to old age are important contributing factors in this regard. However, in preparation for implications of globalization, we will continue to make every effort to maintain the existing traditions, to raise public awareness of the important role older persons play in the society, to mobilize Government agencies, NGOs and voluntary organizations and the community to actively participate in carrying for the older persons.

Types of Social Welfare Services

The Social Services are being carried out through three main strategies of prevention, care and rehabilitation. Present social services carried out by the Department of Social Welfare are as follows:-

(a) Early Childhood Care and Development Services
(b) Children and Youth Welfare Services
(c) Women Welfare Services
(d) Care of the Aged
(e) Rehabilitation of the Disabled
(f) Rehabilitation of Ex-drug Addicts
(g) Grants in Aids to Voluntary Organizations
(h) Public Welfare Service

Social Welfare Service for The Elderly and Disabled

The Department of Social Welfare is carrying out Care of the Aged and rehabilitation of the disabled by implementing community based and institutional based services with cooperation of GOs, NGOs and INGOs.

Care of the Aged

According to the religious teachings, cultural traditions and social code of conduct, Myanmar people have high regard for the older people. To them, to look after the older people is a noble and meritorious deed of which they are proud. Social problems concerning the older persons are rarely because of the still existence, of extended family life in which the parents, grandparents, sons and daughters and the grandchildren live along with together. However, the religious organizations the voluntary organizations and the individual well-wishers have established homes for the aged who are in need, since 1898. At present, a total number of (40) registered homes for the aged exist throughout the country .

These homes for the aged provide food, clothing, shelter, health care services and general care to the older persons so that they are able to perform their respective religious rites and lead a peaceful life. Moreover, the Department of Social Welfare provides rice, funds for food, clothes and salary of the administrators of the homes for the aged every year.

The International Day of Older Persons, which falls .on 1st October, is observed yearly in Myanmar In observance of the International Day of Older Persons, ceremonies are held at all levels throughout the country. Various other activities such as donation of meal for one day to homes for the aged and launching of awareness campaigns in mass media in accordance with the motto "Towards a Society for All Ages" are carried out. At the ceremonies held in observance of the Day, cash donations are made to the older persons from homes for the aged and those elder persons talented in various fields are honored.

Rehabilitation of the Disabled

With a view to take part in production by using trained remain parts of body to get self-reliance, and not to be a burden and to become a valuable citizen for the family and the State, the Department of Social Welfare has established disabled schools based on the kinds of disabilities to give necessary rehabilitation to the persons with disability.

Two training schools for the blind from the age of 6 to 18 years was established by DSW. In which, the primary education was provided with Braille. In accordance with the integrated education, some of the blind students are given access to get middle and higher education at the normal schools together with normal children. Vocational trainings such as cane and bamboo work, massage and other trainings such as music and sports are being provided for the blind students. In cooperation with the Myanmar Disable Sports Federations, talented blind athletes who were brought forward from the National Disabled Sports " competitions, were selected and sent them to take part in the disabled sports competitions held in especially South Asia and Pacific Region. The blind athletes won prizes in respective competitions.

The NGOs and the private personnel have established three training schools for the blind and DSW has provided grants in aids to the schools,. The opening of one school for the blind in the upper Myanmar was completed.

One Special Training School for the physically handicapped children and mentally retarded children from the age of 6 to12 was established by DSW in Yangon. In the school, the inmates are being provided with special education and daily living skills. Some normal intellectual disabled children are being attended in the primary, middle education in order to continue high school and higher education in mainstream schools. Some mental retarded disabled children are being trained basic vocational training aiming to continue advanced vocational training in the vocational training school for adult disabled.

For adult disabled from the age of 18 to 45 years, a vocational training school was established to provide suitable vocational training in accordance with the individual's kind of disability. Furthermore, in this school, military disabled personnel are also being provided with appropriate vocational training in cooperation with DSW and the Resettlement Directorate of the Ministry of Defence. Tailoring, offset printing, silk-screen printing, photography and electronic services can be learnt in this school.

A training school for the deaf children from the age of 6 to 18 years was established in Mandalay providing with sign language (or) communication skill and vocational trainings of agriculture, livestock breeding and silk-screen printing. Hearing aids are also being provided to the deaf children. At present, pre-primary education for the deaf children from the age of 3 years is being initiated in this school in order to get education opportunity in early age.

In the light of public awareness raising on disabled persons, the disabled sports competitions, arts competitions, song competitions and football match of the blind have been held yearly, and annual commemoration ceremony of International Day of Disabled persons falls on 3rd December has been also accelerated in order to get self confidence for the disabled.

Inter-sector Collaboration

It is the traditional religious and cultural custom for the Myanmar to ever contribute voluntary service in social development activities. According to local needs and situations, the contribution of social services has been made by the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with the collaboration of community. The NGOs are basically mobilized and organized by socially oriented mass of the people depending on local situations, their needs and community response. They are established and operated with their own potentialities, financial resources and initiatives. At present, with the encouragement of the Government there have been abundance of NGOs in Myanmar: national as well as international NGOs. Since they are based on local knowledge, experiences and enthusiasm, they have advantages of doing quite a lot of social development activities which are complementing or supplementing the Government social programmes activities. They occasionally undertake survey, more or less fulfill local social conditions and support Government agencies on specific needs.

A number of community supported day-care centres and pre-primary schools have been encouraged and established with the cooperation and collaboration of NGOs, utilising the services of personnel trained by the Department of Social Welfare. Similarly, in order to promote Care of the Aged technical guidance and supervision are provided to NGOs so that they may be able to systematically establish homes for the aged.

Professional Support and Welfare Promotion of the Elderly

The Department of Social Welfare encourages to the voluntary organizations in implementing social welfare services for elderly in terms of technical know how and finical assistance. For the technical know how, the Department provides various training programmes for the capacity building of the care givers and administrators. Concerning with finical assistance the Department subsidies salary, rice and necessary assistance.

In carrying out social welfare services, there are three types of implementation. Governmental implementation, Non-Governmental implementation and co-implementation of GOs and NGOs. In this regard, social services are carried out not only by the Department of Social Welfare but also religious and voluntary social organizations. As a cooperation activities, the DSW has made grants in aids programmes to voluntary organizations.

150 voluntary youth development centres, 4 voluntary schools for the blind, 1 voluntary school for deaf children, 40 homes for the aged and 10 voluntary vocational training schools for women are provided by the State with rice, fund for food, clothes and salaries of the administrators of the institutions. Moreover, 424 voluntary pre-primary schools are being provided with cash and technical assistance.

The Department of Social Welfare is carrying out services for the elderly with the cooperation of GOs, NGOs and INGOs. The Department of Social Welfare is focal points for the elderly persons and coordinating agency for the implementation of services for the elderly persons. The main partnerships are Ministry of Health, Ministry of Man Power and Population, Ministry of Education.

Social Welfare Administrative Structure and Organization

Administrative Organization Structure at National Level, State and Local Level

The DSW is one of the Government organization under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. The Department is entrusted with the responsibility to organize and implement work programmes for social services at the national level in accordance with the social objectives of the State. To meet the objective of Social Welfare Department there are altogether 14 States and Divisional Offices under the DSW. The Department supervises not only Government institution but also non-government Organizations as well.

The Budget and Manpower

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement allocated the Budget to the Social Welfare Department for implementation of social welfare services. The Department also provides finical assistance to Non-Governmental Organizations. As regards manpower the Department employs a total of 2281 persons in different capacities in the year 2004-2005. The Department trained and produced voluntary social workers through various training programmes and workshops.

Relationship between the National and Local Government in Social Welfare Administration

In Social Welfare Administration, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement is a national policy making body whereas the Local Governments in States and Divisions have to implement the social welfare programmes activities according to the social objectives laid down by the State in order to achieve the objectives of the Department.

Capacity Building

The Department of Social Welfare established the Social Welfare Training School that provides social work method and practice to service providers and voluntary social workers in order to implement social welfare services effectively and systematically. Training for administrators and service providers are given to administration and care of the elderly. The Department supervises and guides the home for the aged so that they are able to provide quality service for elderly through community awareness and institutional approach.

Conclusion

In line with the cultural heritage of Myanmar the social activities which have been in existence since the ancient days, are being developed in momentum through using modernized techniques.

It can be seen clearly that social activities are being increased in accordance with the extensive needs of human being in daily life. In order to address these social issues, the State has performed necessary cooperation with not only NGOs but also INGOs, UN agencies and other relevant Organizations.

Myanmar, as a member of ASEAN, will make further coordination and cooperation with ASEAN member countries implementing social activities in accord with ASEAN Vision. By doing so, social activities will be promoted not only in Myanmar but also in ASEAN region through mutual coordination and cooperation among GOs, NGOs, INGOs, UN Agencies and ASEAN.