The challenges we are addressing

**Poverty - Deplorable Higher Education - Income Inequality**

Myanmar is one of the poorest countries in the world, suffering from decades of mismanagement and isolation. In 2015, its GDP per capita was $1,203.50, life expectancy was 66.6 years and high school graduation rate was 37.6%. Myanmar lacks basic services, has crumbling infrastructure and an inadequate educational system.

After the military coup in 1962, Rangoon University (once the most prestigious university in Southeast Asia) was placed under government administration, which dictated curricula and course syllabi. The medium of instruction was changed to Burmese from English to keep the population from learning about the outside world, and the University was starved of funding. In 1989, its name was changed to Yangon University. In time, using a "divide and conquer" strategy, the University was split into multiple institutions, and many new universities were established in rural areas. For most of the 1990s, the government closed the University to prevent student activists from assembling. Today, Myanmar government university faculty members teach from textbooks and rarely undertake research, and students seldom attend classes. The degrees awarded are viewed with suspicion in Myanmar and are not recognized by international bodies.

The economist, Dr Aung Ko Ko, has noted that "the gap between the rich and the poor of Myanmar is the widest in the world." Most of its economy is controlled by "the ultra-rich" – 40 people who are worth between $30 million and $1.2 billion. The majority of these people and many of those additional people capable of affording private education tend to be opposed to reform, and the prospects are that this ten-
dency will continue so long as only the economic elite are capable of affording high quality education.

In 2012, President Thein Sein began to reform Myanmar and, in March 2016, Myanmar’s first democratically-elected government since 1962 took office. Although some progress has been made to advance the country, Myanmar’s economic and political development is beginning to stall due to a critical shortage of highly skilled people to undertake policy research, draft laws, manage the delivery of government services, provide medical care, oversee the maintenance of infrastructure, run businesses, educate future generations and lead civic organizations. Myanmar’s universities are in such bad shape that it will take generations before they are capable of addressing the shortage. The American University of Myanmar is uniquely-positioned to fill the gap and help develop the highly-skilled workforce needed to advance the Myanmar economy and society.

What is the American University of Myanmar?

Non-profit - Non-sectarian - Non-political

The American University of Myanmar (“AUM” or “the University”) was incorporated in Delaware, USA in November 2014 as a non-profit university with a joint American and Myanmar Board of Trustees. According to its Certificate of Incorporation, its purpose is “to establish, conduct, and maintain a non-sectarian and non-political university to be located in Burma (Myanmar) in Southeast Asia for the benefit of the people of Burma (Myanmar).” The University has been granted tax exempt status pursuant to section 501(C)(3) of the US
Internal Revenue Code. It has also received authorization from the US Department of Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control (Case No. BU-2015-319289-1) to operate in Myanmar. AUM is Myanmar’s only private non-profit university.

AUM’s vision is to be internationally recognized as Myanmar’s comprehensive research university known for the rigor of its academic programs grounded in the liberal arts, its respectful and open debate of well-reasoned ideas, its contributions to the improvement of the human condition and the advancement of Myanmar, and its knowledgeable, industrious, creative and ethically-minded alumni.

In January 2016, AUM launched a University Foundation Program to broaden the education of Myanmar students, introduce them to discussion-based learning and prepare them to attend AUM or a foreign university. A gender-balanced student body was recruited comprised of a diversity of religions (Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism and Islam) and ethnicities (Burman, Mon, Chin, Shan, Chinese, Rakhine and French). Eight of the nine students enrolled graduated and were transformed from passive into discussion-based learners. In spite of their religious and ethnic differences, they formed a supportive student body. All of them have either already secured admission to (with the award of full scholarships) or are awaiting decisions from universities.

AUM Graduates

AUM will soon be launching a Study Abroad Program and certificate programs. It is currently making preparations to apply to the Delaware Department of Education for degree-awarding authority. Once secured, it will begin by offering Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Master of Management degrees. Soon thereafter, it will broaden its offerings to include a range of undergraduate and graduate academic and professional degree programs.
AUM’s advantages

Viable - Relevant - Attainable

AUM offers distinct advantages over other means of higher education.

- Significantly improving Myanmar’s government universities would require the politically unacceptable replacement of faculty members, the costly renovation of facilities and acquisition of books and equipment and the time-consuming development of curricula, monographs and course syllabi.

- On-line distance education is not viable because of very poor Internet penetration and cultural opposition.

- In comparison to study overseas, AUM’s cost of attendance is less aided by a significant number of its students receiving scholarships, its curricula has been developed to meet Myanmar’s needs and there is no risk of “brain-drain.”

- The for-profit educational institutions currently operating in Myanmar, which usually rely on courses validated by foreign universities and moonlighting government university faculty members, are available only to those who can afford them and have very low graduation rates.

Our charitable benefits

Education - Access - Exemplar

AUM’s faculty members benefit their students and the Myanmar people generally through their teaching, research and publications. As the only university in Myanmar compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, AUM offers disabled Myanmar students a unique opportunity to pursue higher education. AUM promotes volunteerism among its faculty, students and staff for the benefit of Myanmar. AUM is also an exemplar of good governance and efficient management for government universities. AUM provides its employees health insurance, pension, family leave and other benefits allowing it to serve as a model for other employers in Myanmar. AUM also complies with US anti-discrimination laws, has recruited a diverse group of students and staff and has proven that people of different ethnicities and religions can collegially study and work together. This is a beacon for Myanmar society, which has experienced religious and ethnic divisions.
Why we need your support?

**Fulfill Potential - Ensure Democracy - Promote Development**

Considerable progress has been made towards establishing the University, but substantial additional funding is needed for the project to realize its potential. The results of the 2015 elections have created an urgent need for AUM to become fully operational. Myanmar desperately requires reform-minded highly educated people to effect government change and manage its economic development so as to ensure that its dramatic move towards democracy continues. Your support would allow AUM to seize quickly the opportunity presented by the election and help transform one of the world’s most troubled countries.

Giving opportunities

**Scholarships - Professorships - Facilities**

The American University of Myanmar offers a vast array of giving opportunities. Although it redistributes one-third of tuition revenue for scholarships, the share number of prospective students in poverty creates a need that this practice cannot alone meet. The funding of need-based scholarships is a top priority. The recruitment of senior faculty to the university is important as they will help set its tone, provide academic leadership and serve as mentors to junior scholars and students. The endowment of some key positions would help attract to the university some of the senior scholars needed. There are also opportunities to support the building of facilities including academic and administrative buildings, lecture theaters, auditoriums, laboratories, the University library, athletic facilities, dormitories, and campus gardens. These are some of the highest priorities for giving that the American University of Myanmar offers.
The American University of Myanmar is a non-profit, non-sectarian and non-political university, and has qualified for tax exemption pursuant to section 501(C)(3) of the US Internal Revenue Code. United States taxpayers can receive tax-deductions for donations to the University.

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