

## myME Box & Portable Digital Classroom (PDC) for GlobalGiving.org ("Help out-of-school children and child labourers access education in Myanmar")

### **Summary:**

For the past decades, Myanmar (Burma) has been plagued by civil wars, military rule, quasi-democratic reforms, and widespread poverty, all of which have led to a severe humanitarian crisis.

On February 1, 2021, the military seized power from the civilian-elected government and declared a state of emergency just as Myanmar faced intensifying challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the UNDP & World Bank 2021, Myanmar's GDP could contract by 18%, the number of people living in poverty could double and over 50 percent of all children in Myanmar could be living in poverty by April 2022. Schools have been closed for more than one year and the number of out-of-school children and youth (OOSCYs) has increased dramatically from the 2.7 million figure in 2014.

Yet we have developed a practical, low-cost, easy to install and use solution to the pending education crisis: The **Portable Digital Classroom (PDC)** with **myME Box**—online and offline digital learning platform designed for OOSCYs.

In 2022-2023, Burma Humanitarian Mission will support 10 PDCs for OOSCYs living in rural and remote regions in Burma.

### **Challenge:**

The Myanmar military has been fighting the longest civil war since it gained independence from the U.K. in 1948. The western and north-eastern states in Myanmar are severely affected by these conflicts, with multiple rounds of inter-communal violence and fighting between the military and ethnic armies that forced hundreds of thousands of ethnic minorities, including Rohingya, to Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps and over a million have taken refuge in nearby countries, such as Bangladesh and Thailand.

Security issues and humanitarian crisis have worsened since February as the police and military opened fire on peaceful protesters and have since killed 1,058 citizens (including around 75 children), arrested over 7,992 protesters, forcibly disappeared over 100 persons, and tortured and raped an unknown number in custody (AAPP & HRW, 2021). Despite the junta's brutal campaign of terror and repression, the people continue to resist, especially over 200,000 teachers and education personnel participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) against the military regime. Currently, all levels of schools from kindergarten to university are closed and only less than 10% of the households in Myanmar can provide online learning to their children.

**Solution:**

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic arriving in Myanmar in early 2020, myME developed a digital learning platform called **myME Box**, which students can access with or without an Internet connection. The box contains a mini-computer housing a learning management system (LMS) and up to 512GB-worth of digital learning materials (eBooks, video lessons and assessments, life-skills stories, educational games, teacher reference and general knowledge content) based on myME's non-formal education curricula and other open-sourced sites (Khan Academy, UNICEF, Asia Foundation, TED and TEDed, Room to Read, Third Story Project, etc.).

Students can access the learning materials on the box through simple and user-friendly designed **myME Box** app from various mobile devices.

**myME Box** serves as a local content server with WiFi connection in the PDC, which consists of a projector, tablets, computer speakers, a projection screen and power strip. This equipment along with the **myME Box** fits inside a regular sized backpack, and the teacher can move around several community learning centers to setup a classroom anywhere in the country, especially in rural and remote regions where access to the Internet is inaccessible. These PDC pop-up classrooms are the only opportunity for OOSCYs in remote and rural areas, including IDP camps, to get access to education and learning.

**Long-Term Impact:**

Because Myanmar is one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia facing multiple emergencies, sending children to work is an undesired necessity for many families. Children are forced out of school to work at appalling and unhealthy environments for long hours every day to sustain their family and are deprived any form of education. **Myanmar Mobile Education Project (myME Project)** has been providing non-formal education and vocational skills to over 15,000 OOSCYs since 2014. Our innovative and human-centered design approach allowed OOSCYs to access quality education through our safe and welcoming mobile truck classrooms and now through **myME Box** digital learning platform. Thanks to myME, thousands of child laborers are now getting access to free education. With myME they learn math, computer, literacy and vocational skills as well as an opportunity to build self-esteem, empowering them to hope and dream for a better future—one where they might realize their potential—as is the right of every child. Additionally, they are becoming meaningful contributors to their family and to their community and society as they continue with life-long learning through **myME Box**.