



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
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Sustainable  
Development  
Goals

Bangkok Office  
Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau  
for Education

# MTB MLE RESOURCE KIT

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## Including the Excluded: Promoting Multilingual Education



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# Overview of this MTB MLE Resource Kit

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Published in 2018 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

and

UNESCO Bangkok Office

1<sup>st</sup> edition: 2016

2<sup>nd</sup> edition: 2018

© UNESCO 2018

ISBN: 978-92-9223-556-7 (print version)

ISBN: 978-92-9223-557-4 (electronic version)



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Cover photos: © SIL International (Dai programme in China)

TH/IQE/16/035-800-Rev.

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Multilingual communities are among the most vibrant in Asia-Pacific and yet education systems in many countries rarely reflect this rich cultural and linguistic diversity in their classrooms. Children who are forced to learn in a language other than their mother tongue often face significant difficulties in accessing, completing and benefitting from formal education. Full access to inclusive quality education in the learner's first language is an essential condition for peace, sustainable development, poverty reduction, economic growth, decent employment, gender equality and responsible global citizenship. Unfortunately, most of the region's education systems fail to recognize or understand the role that bi/multilingual education can play in increasing enrolment, retention and achievement.

UNESCO Bangkok developed the *Advocacy Kit for Promoting Multilingual Education: Including the Excluded* in 2007 to help remove barriers for children from non-dominant language communities in accessing, completing and benefitting from a quality basic education. The Advocacy Kit was intended to serve as a tool that policy makers, education practitioners, specialists and ethnic minority language speakers could use to raise awareness on the importance of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB MLE). The kit has been widely translated, adapted and used throughout the region.

There have been many changes in the MTB MLE field in recent years as a result of new research studies, policy developments and implementation practices. There is much to share about MTB MLE. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides us with the ideal opportunity to do so. The original Advocacy Kit has been updated to reflect the new agenda and to make it more relevant to country efforts in planning, integrating and implementing SDG4-Education 2030 and other relevant SDGs within existing national plans and strategies.

This updated MTB-MLE Resource Kit is a comprehensive, in-depth and insightful tool emphasizing that the mother tongue approach is at the heart of inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all. It advocates making education systems more responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity and provides a plethora of insights and recommendations for developing MTB MLE programmes that respect the rights of children and learners. It also encourages readers to think about the importance of language issues and to investigate them further. This updated MTB MLE Resource Kit builds on research findings and experiences gained over many years by many organizations and individuals working in this field. It is my hope that

this Resource Kit will benefit policy makers, education programme planners and practitioners as well as community members by providing them with evidence, good practices and lessons learnt to aid in formulating policies and implementing MTB MLE programmes that will benefit ethnolinguistic minority children.



Gwang-Jo Kim  
Director  
UNESCO Bangkok



# Acknowledgements

The work of preparing this publication was genuinely participatory and involved many education specialists, experts and others from inside and outside the Asia-Pacific region. Their names are listed below, and UNESCO Bangkok would like to thank all of them for their contributions.

We sincerely thank members of the Asia Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group for their support during the development of the publication.

We gratefully acknowledge the sources used in the publication and encourage users to make use of them, as well.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who shared photos and to members of ethnic minority communities who agreed to have their photos shared with us.

Finally, a very special note of appreciation is directed to Dr. Susan Malone, SIL International, the main author of the publication. Kyungah Bang, Project Officer at UNESCO Bangkok, coordinated the project and ensured a quality completion of publication process. The report was edited by Sandra Mary Barron.

Listed below are the contributors who gave their valuable time and insights towards completing the publication. If we have inadvertently forgotten someone, please accept our apologies and appreciation for your valuable assistance.

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David Setiyee

Jim Owen

Dennis Malone

Joyce Patricia Bheeka

Diane Wroge

Kimmo Kosonen

Dinh Phuong Thao

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# Overview of this MTB MLE Resource Kit

For thousands of years, parents have used their mother tongue to communicate with and teach their young children at home and in the community. However it was not until the middle of the twentieth century, with UNESCO's publication of *The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education*<sup>1</sup>, that the benefits of mother tongue-based education were recognized internationally. A statement from the 1953 document later became one of the central themes in the Education for All (EFA) movement:

*We take it as axiomatic...that the best medium for teaching is the mother tongue of the pupil*  
(UNESCO, 1953, p. 6).

The 1990 World Conference on Education for All which took place in Jomtien, Thailand, marked the formal beginning of the EFA movement. At that conference, delegates from 155 countries agreed to make primary education accessible to all children and to reduce illiteracy around the world (UNESCO, 2015). Although “language” was recognized as a central feature of education, few of the documents from that conference promoted the use of children’s mother tongue (MT) in school.

“Education for All” was once again the focus in 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal. The 1,100 participants at that conference agreed that by 2015, all children should have access to primary education. Several statements in the “Dakar Framework for Action” recognized the importance of using students’ MT in the formal education system:

*Governments and all other EFA partners must work together to ensure basic education of quality for all, regardless of gender, wealth, location, language or ethnic origin. Successful education programmes require: (1) healthy, well-nourished and motivated students; (2) well-trained teachers and active learning techniques; (3) adequate facilities and learning materials; (4) **a relevant curriculum that can be taught and learned in a local language and builds upon the knowledge and experience of the teachers and learners;** (5) an environment that not only encourages learning but is welcoming, gender-sensitive, healthy and safe; (6) a clear definition and accurate assessment of learning outcomes, including knowledge, skills, attitudes and values; (7) participatory governance and management; and (8) respect for and engagement with local communities and cultures*  
(UNESCO, 2000, p. 17).

<sup>1</sup> See <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0000/000028/002897EB.pdf>

In 2007, UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education produced the first *Advocacy Kit for Promoting Multilingual Education, Including the Excluded*. It provided information about Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE), especially for school age children, as a necessary response to the EFA call for action in 2000.

However, even as the first Advocacy Kit was being developed, it was clear that the EFA movement was moving too slowly. This was confirmed by an assessment of progress in 2010, which found that countries were not likely to achieve EFA goals by the target date of 2015.

In September 2015, in a meeting at UN headquarters in New York, representatives from 193 nations set a new course of action when they pledged to support the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” The Agenda calls on all countries to work together to achieve seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) over the next fifteen years.<sup>2</sup>



Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Goal 4, which is to “*Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning*”, makes the point that

*Obtaining a quality education is the foundation to improving people’s lives and sustainable development. Major progress has been made towards increasing access to education at all levels and increasing enrolment rates in schools particularly for women and girls. Basic literacy skills have improved tremendously, yet bolder efforts are needed to make even greater strides for achieving universal education goals (United Nations, 2015).*

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

Everyone agrees that all children should have access to quality education. But how can that happen when education is delivered in a language that some children neither speak nor understand? This is the situation faced by many children from non-dominant language communities when they enter the formal school system. Forcing them to learn in an unfamiliar language creates an educational handicap that many cannot overcome.

The number of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE) programmes has increased in recent years, especially in the Asia-Pacific Region. The case study booklet in this MTB MLE Resource Kit describes programmes in Afghanistan, Nepal and Pakistan that are examples of what language communities can do to help their children prepare to enter and learn in government schools. It also describes programmes in the Philippines and Viet Nam, two of the growing number of countries in which governments support MTB MLE in the formal education system.

A variety of activities that are part of MTB MLE programmes in Asia, Africa and the Pacific are presented in the booklets for policy makers, programme implementers and community members. These examples provide evidence of the creativity and strategic thinking of the people who plan, implement and support MTB MLE, often in very challenging situations.

The good news is that MTB MLE works! Practitioners, parents and students have recognized the benefits of strong MTB MLE programmes and research from around the world has provided clear evidence of the same. Several examples of such research are found in the second part of the policy makers' booklet. More such research is certainly needed and we can hope that more will soon be forthcoming.

## Who Can Use this Resource Kit?

This MTB MLE Resource Kit is for people who are committed to the idea that all children have the right to quality education in a language they speak and understand. MTB MLE programmes that are sustained within the formal education system require contributions from all stakeholders, working together and supporting one another. The next three booklets were developed for three specific stakeholder groups: policy makers, programme implementers and community members. These three booklets, with the case studies, provide a "big picture" of successful MTB MLE programmes and suggestions for the roles each group can take as they plan, implement and maintain their programmes.

# How Can You Use this Resource Kit?

Each booklet is organized around key questions about MTB MLE that are frequently asked by policy makers, implementers and community members. Responses to each question include examples of specific activities that are part of successful MTB MLE programmes in a variety of contexts. Working together, stakeholders can identify the specific activities that are best suited for their own situation and make the best use of all available resources.

## Using the Glossary of Terms

The last part of this booklet contains a glossary of terms that are used in the booklets in this Resource Kit. Please consult this glossary to check the meaning of terms that might not be familiar to you.

## A Note for Translators

This MTB MLE Resource Kit was originally developed in the English language. But for it to be used widely, it will need to be translated into different languages and may be adapted to fit different contexts. For those of you who will be given the task of translating and adapting this kit, please remember the following important points. This kit is meant to be user-friendly. For this reason, it is written in an informal, conversational style, as if you were talking to a person rather than simply writing for her or him. You are encouraged to use this style in your translation, instead of using a formal, often overly complicated one.

In order to make this Resource Kit useable by the variety of people supporting MTB MLE, we have tried to avoid overly complex terms. However, some terms can be difficult to translate. For example, your language may not have specific terms for “mother tongue-based multilingual education” or “gender” but it is important to understand and translate them accurately. If you have difficulty with some terms, please check with professionals or agencies who may have already translated them. If educators in your country have not translated the terms (or if you think they have translated the terms inaccurately), check with other national and international organizations that work in these areas to see how they have translated them.

Please include the following statement in your edition: “This kit is a translation and adaptation of UNESCO’s MTB MLE Resource Kit [ISBN: 978-92-9223-556-7 (print version) and ISBN: 978-92-9223-557-4 (electronic version) © UNESCO Bangkok”. We seek your cooperation to send two copies of all translations and/or adaptations to the following address:

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# References

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# Glossary of Terms

<b>Bilingual</b>	The ability to understand and speak two languages.
<b>Biliteracy</b>	The ability to read and write two languages.
<b>Bilingual education</b>	An education programme in which two languages are taught as subjects and used as languages of instruction. This differs from monolingual education programmes that use one language for instruction and may teach one or more additional languages as subjects but do not use them for instruction.
<b>Dominant language and culture</b>	A language spoken by the dominant social group, or language that is seen as the main language of a country. In some cases, a language may have official or national status even though it is not used by a majority of the country's population.
<b>Early-Exit MLE programmes</b>	These are educational programmes that use the learners' mother tongue for teaching only in pre-primary or early primary grades but then move students into the official school language and out of their MT by mid-primary. Also known as "subtractive bilingual education" (subtracting the MT) as opposed to "additive bilingual education" (adding the official language while continuing to support the MT, at least to the end of primary school).
<b>Education for All (EFA)</b>	The name given to a 1990 UNESCO-sponsored effort among UN member states to provide access to education for all children by 2015. Although the member states made a largely successful increase in access to classrooms, much of that increase did not result in acceptable school achievement. As a result, in 2000 at a UNESCO-sponsored World Education Forum in Dakar (Senegal), educators identified "quality and inclusive education" as the primary goal.
<b>Ethnic minority</b>	A term applied to language and cultural groups that live in a multicultural context among groups that speak larger and more dominant languages.
<b>Globalization</b>	Refers to economic, cultural, and political relations among nations that have become more common as a result of increasing access to travel and communication.

<b>Government competencies</b>	Educational standards established by Ministries of Education that describe what students are expected to know and be able to do by the end of a course of studies; usually contained in a syllabus or curriculum guide produced by the MOE.
<b>Graded reading books</b>	Books that challenge students to achieve increasingly higher levels of reading proficiency.
<b>Heritage language</b>	The language of a person's ancestors and culture group.
<b>Implementation plan</b>	MTB MLE planning tool that places important activities in a framework to show at which point over a period years each one is to be initiated, carried out and completed.
<b>In-service teacher training</b>	Training provided for teachers already assigned to classrooms, usually to provide opportunities for them to review strengths and challenges, receive new resources and practice relevant instructional activities.
<b>International language</b>	A language that is widely used in communication internationally and between speakers of various mother tongues across national borders. English is the most common international language but Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), French, German, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese, Hausa and Kiswahili are also used internationally.
<b>L1, L2, L3</b>	Abbreviations for the first language (L1), second language (L2) and third language (L3) spoken by individuals and/or taught in school.
<b>Language and education policy</b>	An official government statement authorizing the use of one or more languages in education.
<b>Language development</b>	Part of language planning (see below). Language development of local languages focuses on both corpus and status planning.
<b>Language education</b>	Educational activities designed to promote understanding and skill in using languages for learning. This frequently includes oral language development in two or more languages, as well as literacy skills in two or more languages.
<b>Language of instruction (LOI)</b>	A language that is used for teaching and learning in an educational programme. This is different from "language as a subject" in which students learn about the way a language is structured and used for oral and written communication.

<b>Language of Wider Communication (LWC)</b>	A language that speakers of different mother tongues use to communicate with each other. Also called a <i>lingua franca</i> or trade language. At the national level, LWC is usually the national or official language. In multilingual situations of South-East Asia, LWCs are usually major regional languages that smaller ethnolinguistic groups use in communication with each other.
<b>Language planning</b>	The process of planning for the development and use of a language. Language planning can be divided into three parts: <i>Status planning</i> refers to decisions about which languages are recognized and used for official and educational purposes. <i>Corpus planning</i> refers to the development of writing systems, the standardisation of language use and the production of materials in that language. <i>Acquisition planning</i> refers to efforts to increase usage of a language within a given population.
<b>Language policy</b>	An official government statement that acknowledges one or more languages in the nation and mandates that they are to be used for specific purposes such as for government business, national education, and mass media. A specific language policy may give status and rights to certain or to all languages spoken within the borders of that nation.
<b>Language proficiency</b>	The ability to speak and use a language correctly and fluently for communication and learning.
<b>Late-exit MLE programmes</b>	Educational programmes that use two or more languages for instruction over the full course of primary education (grades 1-5, 1-6 or 1-8).
<b>Literacy</b>	The ability to use reading and writing for communication and learning. Usually refers to the use of written materials but can also refer to other forms of communication (Examples: computer literacy, cultural literacy, visual literacy).
<b>Local language</b>	Language spoken by people (usually their mother tongue) in a limited area and that may not be used or understood by people outside that group. Not usually used in reference to the dominant language. (Also see “Heritage language”.)
<b>Mainstream schools</b>	Schools in which the curriculum is designed primarily to meet the learning needs of students who are fluent in the official school language when they begin formal education.

<b>Minority language</b>	A language other than the dominant language(s) in a given society. In some places, a majority language (for example, Punjabi in Pakistan) may be referred to as a “minority language” in spite of the fact that it is the largest language spoken in the country. (Also see Non-dominant language.)
<b>Monolingual</b>	The ability to speak and understand only one language.
<b>Mother tongue</b>	First language or home language; the first language a child uses for communication in the home. MT and L1 are often used interchangeably. In some societies, children learn their father’s language first. Nevertheless, those languages are also referred to as “mother tongues.”
<b>Mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB MLE)</b>	An education programme for children who do not understand or speak the official school language when they begin school. MTB MLE students learn to read and write first in their mother tongue. They use their MT for learning as they learn to understand, speak, read and write the official school language (and additional languages according to the curriculum). They use both their MT and the official language for learning in later grades. The goal of strong MTB MLE programmes is that students will become fully bilingual, biliterate and bicultural and achieve a quality education.
<b>MTB MLE-specific curriculum</b>	Curriculum developed specifically for children who do not understand or speak the official school language when they begin school. MTB MLE curriculum is based on mainstream curriculum but adapted to meet the specific learning needs of MTB MLE students. Two major features are that 1) the students’ MT is taught as a subject and used as one of the languages of instruction to the end of primary school; and 2) students’ knowledge and experience, gained from their home and community, are recognized as important tools for further learning.
<b>Multilingual</b>	The ability to understand and speak two or more languages.
<b>Multilingual education (MLE)</b>	The use of two or more languages in the educational system. Often used interchangeably with MTB MLE. However, a programme that uses two or more languages but not the mother tongue of the students is “MLE” but it is not “MTB MLE”.
<b>Multilingualism and multiculturalism</b>	Terms used primarily in multilingual contexts in which linguistic and cultural diversity are recognized as a valuable resource.

<b>National language</b>	Language that is considered the chief language of a nation state. (Also see “Official language.”)
<b>Non-dominant language</b>	A language that does not have official recognition or status within a country. Minority languages often fit into this category as do (or did) several languages with very large numbers of speakers. Examples are Punjabi in Pakistan, Zulu and Xhosa in apartheid South Africa, Quechua in several Latin American countries.
<b>Official school language(s)</b>	The language or languages mandated by government for teaching and learning in school. Many countries in Asia and the Pacific have more than one official school language.
<b>Oral and written fluency/proficiency</b>	The ability to understand, speak, read and write a language at the level required to communicate and to learn and apply new concepts.
<b>Orthography</b>	The symbols and rules used to write a specific language.
<b>Official language</b>	One of the languages selected by national or sub-national governments to be used for specific purposes, including education. Example: Urdu is the official language of Pakistan while Sindhi and Urdu are official languages in Sindh Province of Pakistan. (Also see “National language.”)
<b>Official school language(s)</b>	The language that is to be used for teaching and learning in school. Many multilingual countries in Asia have more than one official school language.
<b>Pre-service teacher training</b>	The teacher education programme that prepares new teachers for their classroom teaching assignment.
<b>Policy makers</b>	In education, the officials responsible for setting, interpreting and revising educational policies for the education system.
<b>Pre-primary</b>	An educational programme for young learners before they enter Grade 1 of the formal system. Depending on the educational system, the programme may be called “preschool” or “kindergarten.”
<b>Primary school (lower primary, middle primary, upper primary).</b>	A common term to describe the initial level of education in a formal education system, usually applied to grades 1-5,1-6 or 1-8. “Lower primary” usually refers to Grades 1-2. “Middle primary” usually refers to grades 3-4 and “upper primary” can refer to grades 4-6 or 5-8.

<b>Script</b>	The type of symbols that represent a particular language. Examples of scripts used in Asia are Thai, Devanagari, Arabic and Roman.
<b>Second language (L2)</b>	Language that is not a person's mother tongue but one they learned after their first language. A person can learn a second language at home, in the community, in school, at work or in places where they need to interact with people outside their own linguistic group.
<b>Supervisors</b>	Educational officials responsible for visiting, evaluating and supporting teachers in the classroom.
<b>Transfer</b>	The process of using the knowledge and skills students have learned in one language to achieve the same knowledge and skills in another language.
<b>Transition</b>	In education, shifting the language used for instruction in school. In weak MTB MLE programs, "transition" means moving students out of their MT and into the official school language.
<b>Writing system</b>	The system used to visually represent a spoken language; includes the choice of script, choice of letters and symbols to represent the sounds or meanings of the language, and the choice of punctuation.

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# Booklet for Policy Makers

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2<sup>nd</sup> edition: 2018

© UNESCO 2018

ISBN: 978-92-9223-556-7 (print version)

ISBN: 978-92-9223-557-4 (electronic version)



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Cover photo: © SERVE, Afghanistan (Pashai girls happy to be learning in school, Afghanistan)

TH/IQE/16/035-800-Rev.

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# Introduction

This booklet for policy makers describes the purposes, benefits and principles for establishing Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE) programmes for children who are not yet fluent in the official language of education when they begin school. Why do UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, the World Bank, numerous international organizations and many national governments support MTB MLE? They support it because they have seen that it works! Here is what one well-respected researcher has written about bilingual / multilingual education:

*40+ years of research from countries around the world have provided a solid basis for planning bilingual education programs.*

*Bilingual programs have demonstrated “proof of concept” both for developing fluency and literacy in two languages for linguistic minority and majority students and for promoting academic achievement among subordinated group students... (Cummins, 2008).*

## Background to the current MTB MLE movement

In 1990, government officials from 155 countries met in Thailand for the first “World Conference on Education for All”. During that conference, they identified the actions that governments should take to ensure that all children and adults in their countries have access to quality education (UNESCO, 1990).

In 2000, government officials from 164 countries met in Senegal for the second “Education for All” (EFA) conference. Once again, delegates agreed on the activities that governments should take to support EFA. Special emphasis at the second EFA conference was on primary school-age children, including those who have traditionally lacked access to formal education (UNESCO, 2000).

Also in 2000, in a meeting at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in the USA, leaders of 189 countries agreed to work together to achieve eight “Millennium Development Goals” (MDGs) by 2015. Goal 2 called on governments to “Ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling” (United Nations, 2000)

By 2010, however, it was clear that few governments would achieve the Education for All priorities or Goal 2 of the MDGs by the target date of 2015. The Working Group on EFA identified the problem:

*The key message to emerge is that failure to place inclusive education at the centre of the Education for All agenda is holding back progress towards the goals adopted at Dakar. Governments have to do far more to extend opportunities to hard-to-reach groups such as ethnic minorities, poor households in slums and remote rural areas, those affected by armed conflict and children with disabilities (UNESCO, 2010, p. 8).*

Why did the EFA Working Group emphasize ethnic minority children in this document? Here is what they said:

*One reason that many linguistic and ethnic minority children perform poorly in school is that they are often taught in a language they struggle to understand. Around 221 million children speak a different language at home from the language of instruction in school, limiting their ability to develop foundations for later learning (Ibid. pp. 10-11).*

In September 2015, in another meeting at UN headquarters, leaders from 193 countries agreed to work together to implement seventeen “Sustainable Development Goals”. Goal 4 calls on all governments to “Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning” (United Nations Development Programme, 2015).

All the booklets in this MTB MLE Resource Kit support the EFA goals for inclusive education, focusing specifically on education for children in minority or non-dominant language communities. It is based on the recognition that “Education For All” will not truly be “for all” until children from every language community have access to schooling in a language they speak and understand. This booklet also explains the principles and processes that help students in strong MTB MLE programmes to become fluent readers and writers in their mother tongue (MT) and in the official school language(s).

As noted by UNESCO, the benefits of MTB MLE go beyond education. Strong, well-planned MTB MLE programmes also help to support national development and build social cohesion:

*Education has a vital role to play in building resilience against violent conflict. Schools in the twenty-first century need above all to teach children what is arguably the single most vital skill for a flourishing multi-cultural society – the skill of living peacefully with other people...  
...Awareness of religious, ethnic, linguistic and racial diversity should not be banished from the classroom. On the contrary, diversity should be recognized and celebrated (UNESCO, 2011, p. 23).*

This booklet has two parts. **Part One** describes the purposes, benefits and essential features of MTB MLE for children who do not hear or use the official school language at home. Questions that are frequently asked about MTB MLE serve as headings in each section. Answers are based on lessons that have been learned from experiences in planning and implementing MTB MLE programmes around the world. **Part Two** presents a summary of recent research relating to MTB MLE and lessons we can draw from that research.



# Part 1: Purposes, benefits and essential features of MTB MLE

*When students have solid knowledge developed in their mother tongue, they can learn Vietnamese faster and better. The MOET has assigned its best and most experienced specialists to work on the Action Research on MTBBE in cooperation with UNICEF, and we recognize that this approach is an effective solution for ethnic minority education (Le Tien Thanh, Director, Primary Education Department, MOET, in UNICEF 2012. p. 6).*

## Q1 What is the educational situation for children in many minority language communities?

Children from minority language communities often face significant educational challenges:

- If they have access to a school—many do not—their teachers use a language they do not understand and they are not allowed to use their home language or mother tongue (MT) in the classroom or on the school grounds.
- If their school has textbooks—many do not—they are written in the official school language and focus on the dominant culture. The students' own knowledge and experience, gained at home and in their community, are excluded from the classroom.
- They are expected to learn to read and write in a language they do not yet understand.
- They are expected to learn new math, science and other concepts in a language they do not understand or are in the process of learning.

For these students, school is an unfamiliar place teaching unfamiliar concepts in an unfamiliar language. Teachers who do not speak the students' home language may think their students are "slow" because they have trouble understanding the lessons. Without support from their teachers, many students become frustrated and discouraged. The fact that more than 50 percent of the world's out-of-school children come from minority language communities is not surprising when we consider the difficulties that those children encounter in schools that use only a dominant language.

This was the problem in the Philippines before 2009 when the government officially recognized and supported MTB MLE in the formal education system. When parents in one language community were asked how their children were doing in school, they reported that

*The children feel out of place. They ask us questions at home in our language that they were ashamed to ask in the classroom because the teacher speaks to them only in Filipino and English* (Parent of a Grade 1 child in the Philippines; in Malone, 2001, p. 10).

When teachers use only the official school language in the classroom, the unspoken message for minority language children is that their home language is not “good enough” to be used in school. When lessons focus on the dominant culture and ignore all that the students know and have experienced in their home and community, the message is that their own culture and their life experiences have no value. Of course, some minority language students do manage to succeed in spite of the many barriers to learning in dominant language-only schools. But the cost is too high for too many of them. To be successful in the dominant language and culture they must abandon their own.

## Q2 What are the challenges to MTB MLE and what has been done to overcome them?

People who support MTB MLE in different parts of the world encounter many challenges as they try to plan and implement strong programmes. Here are a few of the challenges:

- People think that MTB MLE is not necessary. (“Everyone in this country understands the school language. It’s our national language!”)
- People think that MTB MLE is impossible. (“There are too many minority languages!” Or, “Some languages do not have an alphabet!”)
- There is no language and education policy that provides official support for MTB MLE so local, district or provincial officials who do not understand its purpose and benefits can force schools to cancel their MTB MLE programmes.
- There is an MTB MLE policy but it allows only weak programmes that move students out of their MT and into the official language too quickly. As a result, students do not have time to build the strong foundation in reading and writing their MT that will help them learn the official language(s) and other subjects successfully.
- There is an MTB MLE policy and it does allow for strong programmes but it does not provide the necessary funding or assign responsibility for planning and implementing the programme components that are necessary for success and sustainability.

As noted, these are only a few of the many challenges to MTB MLE. The good news is that people involved in MTB MLE programmes have identified strategies to overcome the challenges, even in difficult situations. As you read this booklet and others in this MTB MLE Resource Kit, you will learn about some of the creative ways that policy makers are working with programme implementers and community members to develop and sustain strong and successful MTB MLE programmes.

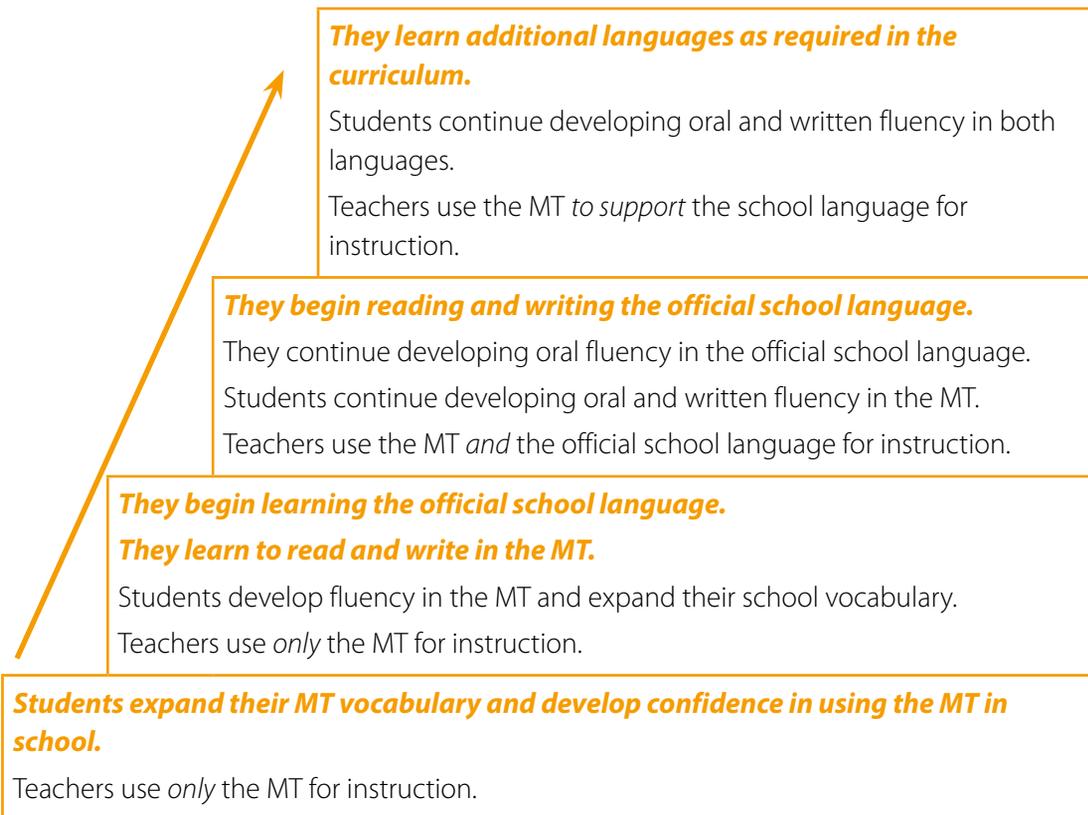
### Q3 How does MTB MLE help minority language children achieve a quality education?

When children begin their formal education, they bring with them the language, knowledge and skills that they have learned from parents and others in their home and community. All of these are essential resources for helping them to achieve success in school.

Students in “mainstream” schools who use the official school language at home can learn to read and write in that language because they already understand it. MTB MLE students, who do not hear the official language at home, learn to read and write in their MT—the language they know best. As they gain confidence in reading and writing their MT and have achieved a basic level of oral fluency in the official school language, they are ready to begin reading and writing that language. As noted in the introduction to this booklet, there is no longer any argument among researchers regarding the benefits of bilingual and multilingual education. MTB MLE students who achieve fluency in reading and writing their MT are prepared—and have the confidence—to transfer their literacy skills to additional languages.

Language education in well-planned six-to-eight year MTB MLE programmes (ideally one or two years of pre-primary and six years of primary school) follows a step-by-step process. This process is based on the principle that underlies all good education: ***We learn best when we can use what we already know to help us understand what is new.*** Because MTB MLE students know their MT when they begin school, it is their foundation for learning other languages. MTB MLE students may take longer than mainstream students to achieve fluency in reading and writing the official school language, but they achieve success ***because they understand.***

The step-by-step diagram below displays the essential features of language education in successful MTB MLE programmes. As noted above, students continue learning and using their MT throughout primary school as they also learn other languages. The diagram (starting at the bottom step) thus includes MT as subject and as language of instruction from the first year (pre-primary or Grade 1) to the last year of primary school.



Progression for teaching languages as subjects and using them for instruction in MTB MLE.<sup>1</sup>

Following is a short description of the main features (in orange) of each step in the diagram, starting at the bottom and moving to the top.

**Students expand their MT vocabulary and develop confidence in using the MT in school.** Small children quickly learn to enjoy school when they can use their MT to talk about things they know and do every day. They develop confidence in using their MT for learning when their teacher introduces new concepts in the MT and then encourages them to share ideas, work together to solve problems and report on what they have done. They expand their MT school vocabulary when their teacher introduces new MT terms gradually and always in a meaningful way.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Malone, 2010.



Mon students are active learners. (Thailand)  
© Foundation for Applied Linguistics, Thailand

**They learn to read and write in their MT,** beginning with short and simple stories about people and places that are familiar and interesting to them. They learn how letters are put together to make words and how words are put together to make sentences. Their teacher encourages them to create their own “picture stories” even before they can form letters and spell correctly—the first step in becoming confident and creative writers. They also practice writing MT letters, words and then sentences neatly and correctly.



Kom student reads a MT story on the chalkboard. (Cameroon)  
© SIL International, Cameroon



Rajbanshi pre-primary students find words in poster stories. (Nepal)  
© SIL International, Nepal

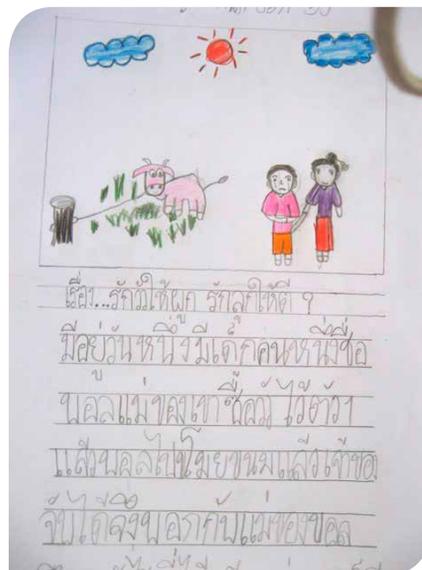
**They begin learning the official school language** when their teachers introduce it using activities that make language-learning fun. Teachers use a carefully constructed plan that adds new words and phrases each day, always building on what the students know to help them learn new words and new sentence constructions.

When students demonstrate that they are ready, teachers begin asking questions in the official school language about familiar topics that students can answer in single words or short phrases. Their answers gradually get longer, and soon they can use their new language to talk about a variety of topics relating to their everyday life. As they build their “everyday” vocabulary in the official language, they also gain an understanding of its basic grammar. The entire process aims to help students learn the language through meaningful interactions rather than by repeating and memorizing words and phrases that they do not understand.



Patani Malay students listen and respond to commands the official school language. (Thailand)  
 © Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand

**They begin reading and writing the official school language.** When students have learned to read and write their MT and have a basic level of fluency in speaking the official school language, they begin transferring their reading and writing skills to the school language.



Pwo Karen G2 student's story in Thai, the official school language. (Thailand)  
 © Foundation for Applied Linguistics, Thailand



Parkari G2 students create stories in Sindhi, their first official school language. (Pakistan)  
© Sindh Literacy and Development Program, Pakistan

**They learn additional languages as required in the curriculum.** Many MTB MLE students are required to learn three or more languages in primary school. The process for learning each new language follows the same basic steps as for learning the official school language.

Below are the other essential features of MTB MLE classrooms:

**Teachers use *only* the students' MT for instruction in early primary (usually to the end of Grade 2).** Young MTB MLE students learn successfully and gain confidence because they use their MT to learn and apply new concepts as they are also learning to speak, read and write the school language.

**Teachers use the MT *and* the official school language for instruction in middle to upper primary (usually Grades 3-5).** When students have gained confidence in using the official school language to talk about familiar topics, teachers use it with the MT for teaching math, science and other academic subjects:

- They introduce a new concept in the MT and provide an activity that helps students understand it.
- They carefully introduce 1-3 important academic terms (examples in English: solar system, planet) relating to the new concept in the official school language. Then they use the terms as they briefly review the concept, speaking carefully and checking that students understand. They provide a short team activity relating to the new concept and encourage students to use their new language as they work together.
- They finish the lesson with a short review of the concept in the MT, checking again to make sure students understood the concept.

**Teachers use the MT to support the official school language in the final year of the programme.** Teachers introduce and teach concepts in the official school language and encourage students to use it as they do activities together. Teachers continue to speak carefully to help students understand. They introduce 1-3 new terms relating to the lesson that students will need to know as they continue into higher grades. Then teachers finish the lesson by using the students' MT to check for comprehension.

The year-by-year schedule below is an example of the way this process might look in a seven-year MTB MLE programme for children who have at least some exposure to the L2 outside of the classroom.<sup>2</sup> You will notice that the students (age 5) begin learning to read and write in their MT in pre-primary.

Grade	Pre-Primary	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Languages as subjects	Oral L1	Oral L1	Oral and written L1	Oral and written L1	Oral and written L1	Oral and written L1	Oral and written L1
	Begin L1 literacy (2 <sup>nd</sup> semester)	L1 literacy Introduce oral L2	Oral and written L2				
Languages for teaching	L1 only	L1 only	L1 only	L1-L2-L1	L1-L2-L1	L1-L2-L1	L2-L1

In summary, MTB MLE students achieve success in school because...

- The language and culture, knowledge and experience they bring from their home and community are the foundation for learning when they begin school. Each grade builds on the knowledge and skills that they have already learned to help them understand new concepts and learn new skills.
- They gain confidence in using one or more official school languages through activities that are meaningful and enjoyable. By the end of primary school they are prepared to use the official school language(s) to continue learning in secondary school and beyond.

<sup>2</sup> L1: first language or MT; L2: official school language (MTB MLE students' 2nd school language)

## Q4 How does MTB MLE support gender equity?

In spite of international efforts to improve gender equity in education, girls in many countries are still more likely than boys to lack access to a quality education. Girls from language minority communities are the most disadvantaged of all:

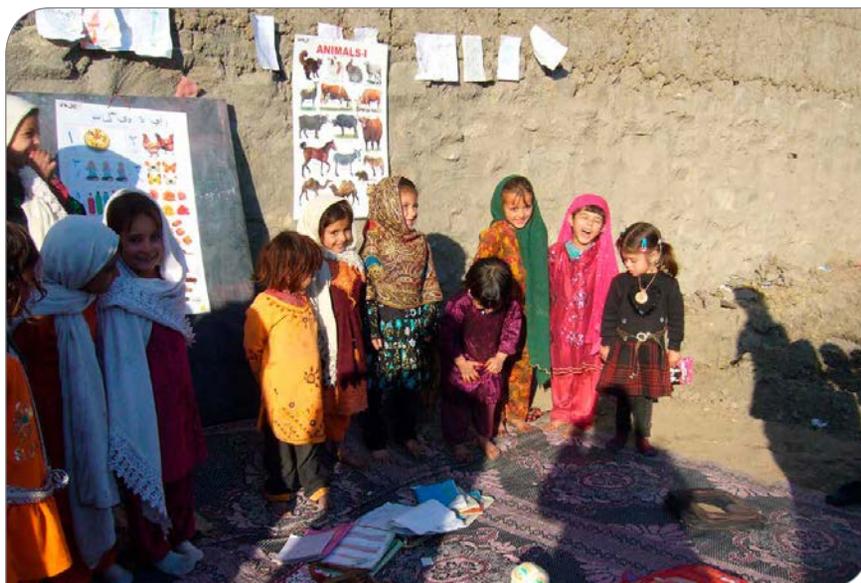
From UNESCO:

*Women and girls are disproportionately represented amongst the world's most marginalized people. In developing regions overall, despite improvements since 1990, many millions of girls are still not in school. Nearly two-thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate people are women, and a high proportion of these are from ethnolinguistic minority communities.*

*Women from minority groups are often particularly excluded from opportunities to improve their situations. They suffer the "compound" impact of discrimination based on gender and discrimination based on ethnic, religious or linguistic diversity (UNESCO Bangkok, 2012, p. 24).*

MTB MLE provides specific benefits for girls from minority language communities because

- When girls are able to use their home language in school, they gain confidence in their ability to *learn* and to *use* what they learn.
- MTB MLE encourages communication between parents and teachers. Parents are able to visit their daughters' school and meet their classmates, teachers and other school staff. This helps parents feel more confident that their daughters are in a safe learning environment.
- As girls build confidence in their ability to learn and to communicate what they know, they are encouraged to take leadership in the classroom and to help other students who might have learning problems. Successful interactions in the classroom build girls' confidence in their ability to take responsibility outside the classroom.



Pashai girls happy to be learning in school. (Afghanistan)  
© Serve, Afghanistan



Patani Malay G2 student explains a lesson to her classmate. (Thailand)  
© Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand

## Q5 How does MTB MLE support social cohesion and national development?

None of the 196 nations recognized in the world today are truly monolingual. Multilingualism is the norm, even in those countries that recognize only one official language. In the past, policy makers may have assumed that “development” was possible only if all citizens used a single language. Most language and education policies from those years required teachers to use only the officially recognized language for teaching. Teachers were even told to punish students who used their home language in the classroom or on the school grounds. Since then, many educators have realized that dominant language-only classrooms do not support “Education for All”. Many policy makers have realized that language-exclusive education does not necessarily teach students to respect people from different backgrounds or prepare them to contribute positively to national unity and development. In fact, a study of language policy in Africa concluded that:

*...political stability, peace, poverty reduction, economic development, and fully functional institutions require the recognition of linguistic and cultural plurality as indispensable resources (Wolff, 2011. p, 47).*

There is now broad agreement that, with increasing globalization, countries that affirm and support multilingualism and multiculturalism are more prepared to deal with social, cultural and religious differences in their own country and in other countries. Well-planned and well-supported MTB MLE programmes encourage students to be proud of their heritage language and culture and prepare them to interact successfully with people who look, talk, act and believe differently than they do.

## Q6 Does MTB MLE cost more than single-language education to implement and maintain?

Policy makers, especially in low-income countries, may assume that MTB MLE is much more expensive than education that uses only one language. However, if we compare the cost of MTB MLE with the social and economic costs of inadequate or failed education for children from minority language communities, it is clear that MTB MLE is a wise long-term investment. Here is what researchers found about costs and benefits of bilingual education in Guatemala:

*The benefits of bilingual education for a disadvantaged indigenous population as an investment in human capital are significant. Students of bilingual schools in Guatemala have higher attendance and promotion rates, and lower repetition and dropout rates. Bilingual students receive higher scores on all subject matters, including mastery of Spanish. The efficiency of bilingual education is confirmed by a crude cost–benefit exercise. A shift to bilingual schooling would result in considerable cost savings because of reduced repetition. The higher quality of*

*education generating higher promotion rates will help students complete primary education and will substantially increase completion rates at low cost. The costs saving due to bilingual education is estimated at \$5 million, equal to the cost of primary education for 100,000 students (Patrinos and Velez, 2009, p. 1).*

Although MTB MLE does require additional “start-up” funding, the amount is far less than is sometimes assumed. With respect to reading materials, for example, experiences in many countries have shown that glossy pages and multi-coloured illustrations are not necessary and, in fact, are often a distraction for children from non-print environments who are just learning to read. The most important feature of reading materials for early primary grades is that they are in the students’ MT, about topics that are familiar and interesting to them and with simple illustrations that they understand. Black and white line drawings and paper covers are fine if students like the stories and recognize the people in the pictures.



Dai KG2 students love reading their MT stories. (China)  
© SIL International, China

In summary, MTB MLE is more cost effective than monolingual education in multilingual countries because it reduces high repetition and dropout rates for children from minority language communities. When all factors are considered, it is safe to say that

*...supporting effective MT based programs in multiple mother tongue languages is a better investment than continuing to fund an education system that is failing to educate children in any language. The cost of inattention to language is that millions of dollars will continue to be wasted on education programs that are ineffective—and millions of children will lack access to a quality education (Phlepsen, 2011, p. 4).*

## Q7 What are the essential components of successful and sustained MTB MLE programmes?

A study of MTB MLE programmes that have been established and sustained within formal education systems reveals that all successful programmes include the same basic components. The diagram below places the components in a circle to emphasize that activities relating to each component often take place at the same time and most will continue, often in cycles, throughout the life of the programme.



Responsibility for planning and implementing MTB MLE is usually divided among policy makers, education officials, NGO representatives, school principals, teachers and community members. If MTB MLE is to succeed, policy makers' input and clear directions are essential, especially for these components:

**Preliminary research.** Policy makers identify the organizations and/or individuals who will be responsible for conducting preliminary research in each language community. They ensure that the research provides clear answers to questions like these:

- What language(s) do students in each school understand and use at home? <sup>3</sup>
- What national, regional and local resources can be mobilized to support MTB MLE?
- What national, regional and local factors might delay or hinder programme implementation and sustainability?

**Realistic implementation plan.** If policy makers are responsible for an MTB MLE pilot programme, they set the time frame for the pilot and ensure that it is implemented in a language community that has an established alphabet and MT speakers who can serve as teachers. After the pilot programme, policy makers identify the criteria for expanding the programme to new schools and then new languages. They also identify the agencies and organizations that will develop the expansion plan.

**Acceptable alphabets.** Policy makers identify institutions and/or organizations that will support communities in creating new alphabets (if the language has not previously been written) or revising existing ones if the alphabet is outdated or MT speakers find it too difficult. Policy makers also ensure that there is a process in place for testing, revising and approving new or revised alphabets.



Gawri student reads letters and words on his MT Alphabet chart. (Pakistan)

© Forum for Language Initiatives, Pakistan

3 A “language map” that identifies schools with students from only one or two language communities is a valuable resource for planning an MTB MLE pilot project and later for expanding the programme to new schools and then new languages. A report of the language mapping project in Viet Nam can be found at [http://www.unicef.org/vietnam/resources\\_20765.html](http://www.unicef.org/vietnam/resources_20765.html)

**Curriculum and instructional materials.** Policy makers provide clear directions regarding MTB MLE curriculum, focusing specifically on these points:

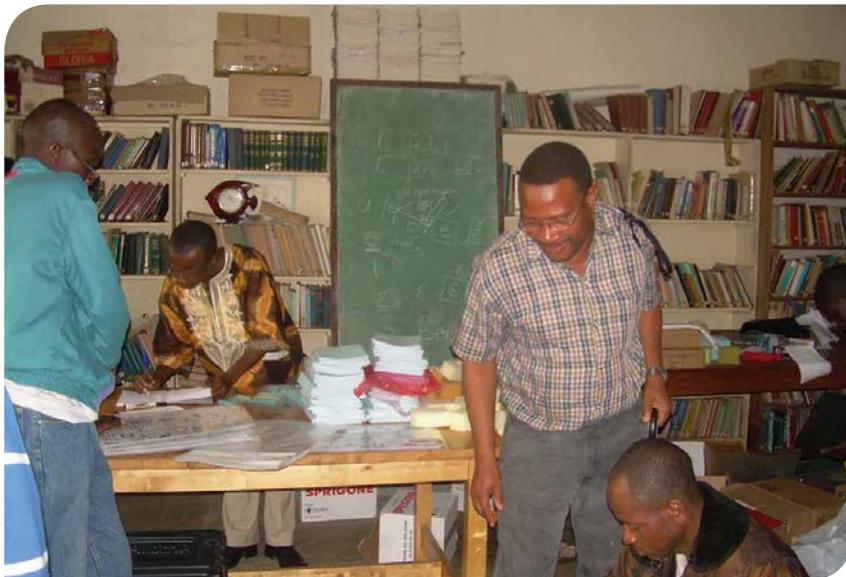
- Teachers use *only* the MT for instruction in early grades. They use the MT *and* the school language for instruction in middle to upper primary and they use the MT to *support* the school language in the final year of the programme. (See the language education example above.)
- Students' MT is taught as a subject (listening, speaking, reading and writing) from the first year of the programme to the end of primary school. The MT is the first language of literacy and provides the foundation for learning to read and write other languages.
- The curriculum provides time for students to gain a basic level of oral fluency in the official school language before they are expected to read and write it.
- Tests for math, science and other academic subjects are given in the language(s) used for instruction for that subject. When the students' MT and L2 are both used for instruction, tests include items in both languages so they are assessing students' knowledge of the *subject*, and not their L2 ability.
- Mainstream and MTB MLE learning competencies for all academic subjects except the official language(s) are the same for all primary grades; only the language of instruction is different. (Again, see example above.)
- Grade 1-5 learning competencies for the official school language are adjusted to allow more time for MTB MLE students who must learn to understand and speak the language before they can read and write it.
- Mainstream and MTB MLE learning competencies for the official school language are the same only in the last year of primary school.
- Instructional materials, based directly on the MTB MLE curriculum, are developed for each grade and provided for each teacher in the programme. Since MTB MLE teachers are bilingual and biliterate, *their teaching materials can be written in the official school language.*

**Reading and learning materials.** Policy makers ensure that capable and respected MT speakers from the minority language communities are identified and equipped to develop graded reading materials and other classroom materials in the students' MT. Policy makers also ensure that sufficient numbers of those materials are printed and distributed to each classroom and that there are safe storage containers to keep them.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> A resource for developing MT graded reading materials can be found at <http://bloomlibrary.org/landing>.



Chakma experts create classroom materials in their language. (Save the Children, Bangladesh)  
© Save the Children, Bangladesh



LLEME teachers prepare to take graded MT reading materials back to their classrooms. (LIBTRALO, Liberia)  
© Liberian Translation and Literacy Organization, Liberia

**Teacher recruitment and training.** Policy makers provide clear directions for recruiting and training teachers for MTB MLE:

- Teachers who are fluent in the students' MT and understand and speak the official school language are recruited for MTB MLE schools in their language area.
- MTB MLE-specific pre-service teacher training courses are developed and incorporated into regular teacher training programmes in established institutions.
- MTB MLE teacher trainees do their practice teaching in their home areas and in schools that understand and support MTB MLE.
- MT teachers are assigned and encouraged to remain in their home language area and in schools that understand and support MTB MLE.
- Supervisors are responsible for providing regular in-service training.<sup>5</sup>



Dai teacher demo with Big Book. (China)

© SIL International, China

5 A resource for institutionalizing teacher training can be found at [http://www.sil.org/sites/default/files/files/institutionalizing\\_teacher\\_training\\_for\\_mtb\\_mle\\_12-2011.pdf](http://www.sil.org/sites/default/files/files/institutionalizing_teacher_training_for_mtb_mle_12-2011.pdf) (Note that you must have Adobe Reader to view this document.)



LLEME in-service training. (Liberia)  
© Liberian Translation and Literacy Organization, Liberia

**Monitoring and evaluation.** Policy makers assign responsibility for assessing MTB MLE students' progress as well as programme components such as pre-service and in-service training and materials. They give specific attention to these points:

- Supervisors make regular visits to each MTB MLE classroom and provide written documentation of their observations.
- Testing for each subject each year is in the language that teachers use for instruction in that subject.
- Each component of the MTB MLE programme (the circle diagram on p. 16) is evaluated during and at the end of the pilot phase and as the programme expands.<sup>6</sup>
- People responsible for implementation use programme evaluation results to make necessary adjustments to the programme as needed, and specifically at the end of the pilot and at each stage of expansion.

**Supportive partnerships.** Policy makers foster an atmosphere of cooperation among all supporting agencies—government, NGOs, universities and others—in working with local communities to develop and sustain strong programmes.

6 An example is UNICEF's end-of-pilot evaluation of the MTB BE pilot project in Viet Nam. See [http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index\\_90456.html](http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_90456.html)



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National and international organizations jointly sponsored the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Language and Education in 2016.

**Supportive MTB MLE policy.** Policy makers understand that successful and sustained MTB MLE requires a strong and supportive language and education policy. They begin with a carefully planned pilot project in a limited number of languages and schools and use the knowledge gained in that process to develop the long-term policy. In addition to the issues described in the paragraphs above, policy makers ensure that their national language and education policy includes these points:

- A clear statement of the school years that will be included in the programme: Beginning in Pre-primary (if possible) or Grade 1 and continuing to the end of the last year of primary school.
- A clear statement that after the pilot project is successfully completed, MTB MLE will be incorporated into the formal education system with a clear statement of responsibility for developing the expansion plan.<sup>7</sup>
- Criteria for selecting the minority languages that will be used in the programme as it expands.
- A clear statement regarding the rate of expansion after the pilot project (needed to guard against too-rapid expansion, which leads to loss of quality and programme death.)
- Identification of the department within the Ministry of Education that will have overall responsibility for MTB MLE.
- Clear directions to ensure that the necessary financial support will be available to implement and sustain the programme as it expands to new schools and new languages.

<sup>7</sup> A resource for planning MTB MLE expansion can be found at [http://www.sil.org/sites/default/files/files/planning\\_for\\_mtb\\_mle\\_program\\_expansion.pdf](http://www.sil.org/sites/default/files/files/planning_for_mtb_mle_program_expansion.pdf)

## Q8 Can it be done? Can strong MTB MLE programmes be established and sustained?

Throughout the world, and in spite of many challenges, the number of MTB MLE programmes is growing. The lesson we can learn from those experiences is that when government agencies work in partnership with non-government organizations and language communities, they *can* develop and sustain strong MTB MLE programmes. And surely, when “Education for All” also includes children in minority language communities, the results will be worth the effort.

*Multilingual education is, at its best, (1) multilingual in that it uses and values more than one language in teaching and learning, (2) intercultural in that it recognizes and values understanding and dialogue across different lived experiences and cultural worldviews, and (3) education that draws out, taking as its starting point the knowledge students bring to the classroom and moving toward their participation as full and indispensable actors in society—locally, nationally, and globally (Hornberger, 2009, p. 2).*

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# Part 2: Research-based answers to questions about mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education<sup>8</sup>

## Introduction

This part of the booklet for policy makers presents research relating to MTB MLE programmes in several parts of the world. The purpose is to answer questions that you as policy makers might ask as you are planning for MTB MLE in your country.

Several issues relating to MTB MLE research are worth noting at this point:

1. Most of the MTB MLE research in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific is quite recent. MTB MLE programmes have been established for many decades but there is little information about the educational outcomes of those programmes because student assessment results are not available.
2. Many communities with MTB MLE programmes lack funding so they cannot afford to support a large number of schools. Even when programme leaders provide careful documentation, the number of students included in the research is small—sometimes very small.
3. The most extensive research on MTB MLE has been completed in the USA and Canada but research evidence from these countries is often less convincing to policy makers in other parts of the world.

<sup>8</sup> This part of the policy maker's booklet was written by Stephen Walter, PhD., Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics, Dallas Texas, USA

Fortunately, the number of research studies relating to MTB MLE is increasing. This section presents information from studies of programmes in five countries—Cameroon, Guatemala, the Philippines, Viet Nam and Thailand.<sup>9</sup> The information presented here aims to provide answers to the following questions:

- Does MTB MLE help students learn the official school language?
- Does it help students achieve grade-level competencies in other academic subjects?
- Does it prepare students for secondary schooling?
- Does it help girls achieve academic success in primary school?

## Q1 Does MTB MLE help students learn the official school language?

Three studies, from the Philippines, Thailand and Cameroon, help to answer this question. The studies examine the results of student assessments in two kinds of schools in each country. (Note that in each country, students in both kinds of schools use the same MT at home)

- MTB MLE (or simply “MLE”) schools in one language area that use the students’ MT plus the official school language<sup>10</sup>
- Non-MLE schools in the same language area that use only the official school language

Over a period of up to six years, researchers assessed students’ progress in both kinds of schools and in more than twenty different field settings to compare students from MLE and non-MLE schools.<sup>11</sup> Each year they assessed all the students using tests that were based on government-approved curriculum. All the tests included at least one section that evaluated students’ proficiency in the official school language.

The results in Figure 1 (p. 29) show students’ progress in learning the official school language. Note that

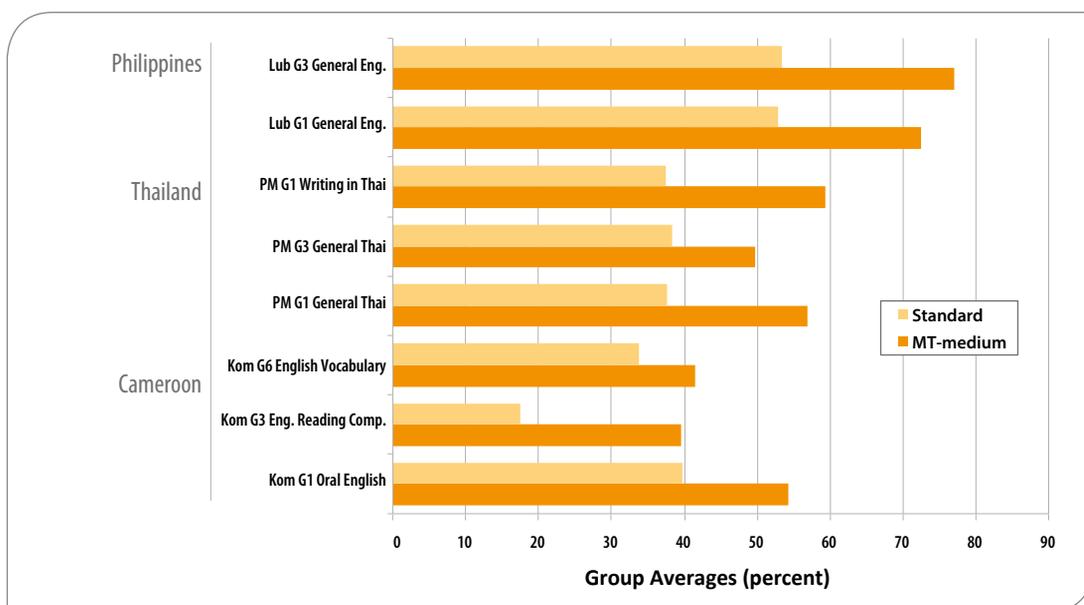
9 The author limited this report to these five programmes because (1) he had personal knowledge of how the data were collected or (2) he had done previous work on the data so knew how it could be used to answer the four questions that guide this report. Other information exists but is not publicly available or there is insufficient information about how testing was done and data analyzed.

10 See Part 1 of this booklet for more about teaching the MT as a subject and using it for instruction in MTB MLE schools.

11 One study from Grade 4 in the Patani Malay programme in Thailand is not included in Figure 1. That study compared Grade 4 students in their ability to use standard Thai. Since the results for Grade 4 students in both MTB and non-MTB MLE schools were significantly different than their results in Grade 3 and Grade 5, the team set aside the grade 4 result as being non-typical.

- ‘Lub’ stands for *Lubuagan*, a language spoken in northern Luzon in the Philippines;
- ‘PM’ stands for *Patani Malay*, the primary language in the southern provinces of Thailand;
- Kom is the name of the language spoken by the Kom people in Cameroon;
- ‘Eng’ stands for *English*, the official school language in Cameroon and the Philippines;
- The letter ‘G’ stands for *Grade*;
- “General”, as in “Lub G3 General Eng” means that the assessment covered several basic language tasks;
- The lightly shaded bars show the performance of children in non-MLE schools;
- The darker bars show the performance of children in the MTB MLE schools.

**Figure 1:** Comparison of MLE and non-MLE programmes with respect to students’ proficiency in the official school/national language



The results shown in Figure 1 seem to be typical of what happens when MTB MLE students are compared with non-MLE students from the same MT community on their ability to use the official school language: Children in MLE classes consistently show an advantage of 30-60 percent over students in the same grades in non-MLE classes.

In Figure 1, the result for Kom G1 Oral English (the official school language) is the most reliable of these comparisons because the research team used the same assessment to test students each year for three years. Approximately 300 Kom students in the MLE schools and in the non-

MLE schools were tested each year—a total of approximately 1,800 students. Many people were surprised that even on this measure of oral English, MLE students did much better than students in the non-MLE (English-only) schools.

The greatest difference shown in Figure 1 is in “Kom G3 Eng” reading comprehension. UNESCO and others have repeatedly found that African children in non-MLE schools consistently take 4-5 years to gain basic reading skills. About two-thirds of the students in the Kom MLE schools were reading English—their second school language—by the end of grade 2. This means that the Kom MLE students scored more than twice as high on the assessment of English reading comprehension as the Kom students in non-MLE (English-only) schools.

These and other research data show consistently that using the MT in school does NOT reduce students’ ability to learn and use the official school language. Instead, teaching them to read and write first in their MT, through instruction in the MT, helps them learn to speak, read and write the official school language more quickly and with better comprehension.<sup>12</sup>

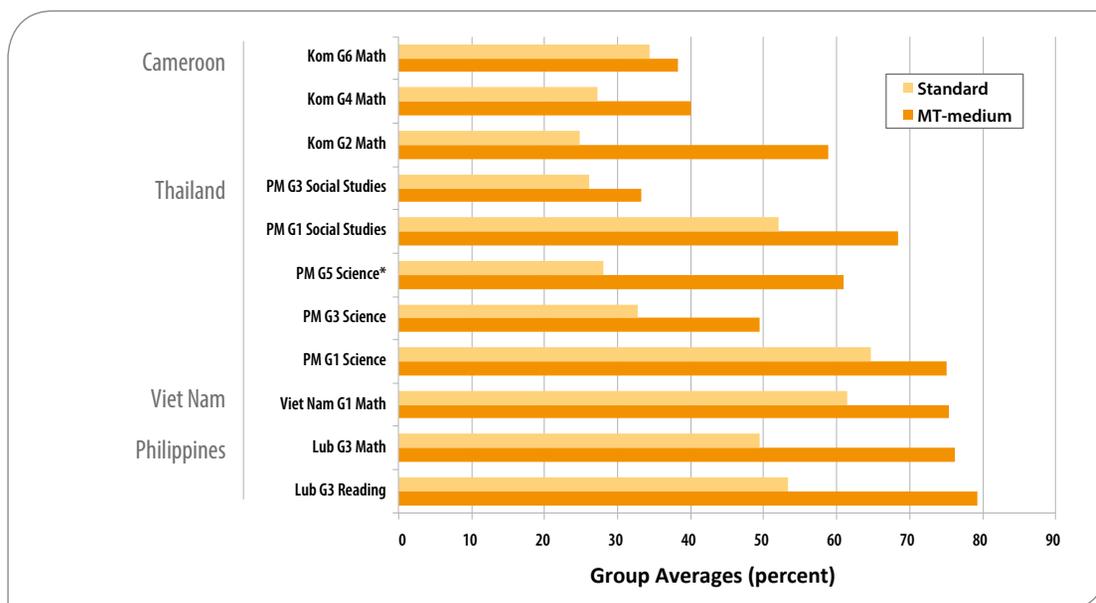
## Q2 Does MTB MLE help students achieve grade-level competencies in other academic subjects?

Some people think that non-dominant languages cannot be used in school because they lack the academic terms that students need in order to learn subjects like science, history, mathematics, literature and social studies. Part 1 of this booklet describes the importance of teaching academic terms in middle and later primary. A separate booklet on Implementation describes the process for introducing academic concepts in the MT and then introducing the matching academic terms in the official school language. This prepares students to continue learning the concepts as they move into middle and upper primary grades and to use both the MT and official language for learning.

Is the lack of academic terms in the students’ MT a problem for MLE students in early primary grades? To help answer this question, Figure 2 displays research that compares MLE students and non-MLE students’ assessment results in math, social studies and science.

<sup>12</sup> Part 1 of this booklet helps to explain why and how MTB MLE helps students gain proficiency in speaking, reading and writing the official school language.

**Figure 2:** Comparison of MLE and non-MLE students in learning academic content



*\*Note: The results for "PM G5 Science" show the percentage of students who received a passing grade (50 percent or higher) on the Grade 5 science assessment.*

When we compare the performance of the two groups of students, it is clear that MTB MLE students have consistently done better than students from their language community who attend non-MLE schools. The advantage for MLE students is generally between 15 and 50 percent. It should be noted here that in the research literature on educational innovations in western countries, improvement rates of 5 to 10 percent are usually considered very acceptable. Improvement rates greater than 20 percent, especially in a large population, are surprising. Many/most people would have difficulty believing that improvement rates of 50 percent are possible.

The Kom math scores in grades 2, 4 and 6 provide an important lesson to policy makers. In this programme (an "early-exit" programme<sup>13</sup>), MT instruction stopped at the end of grade 3 and instruction in grades 4, 5 and 6 was in English only. At the end of Grade 3, children in the twelve Kom MLE schools had an average math score of just under 60 percent. In grade 4, after a full year of instruction in English-only classrooms, the average score for this group dropped to 40 percent and after grade 6 the average score dropped to 38 percent. The move from MLE to English-only classrooms reduced the performance of those children by close to 50 percent.

13 "Early-exit" programmes use the MT for instruction for three years or less and then take students out of their MT and use only the official school language for instruction. Late-exit programmes use MT-only for instruction in early to mid-primary and then use a mix of the MT and official school language for instruction. The research literature provides solid evidence that late-exit programmes are educationally more effective than early-exit programmes.

Meanwhile the math scores for children who had been in English-only classrooms for all of their basic education gradually increased from 24.9 percent in grade 2 to 34.3 percent in grade 6. This very slow rate of improvement might reflect their slow process of learning English well enough to understand the content of their classes.

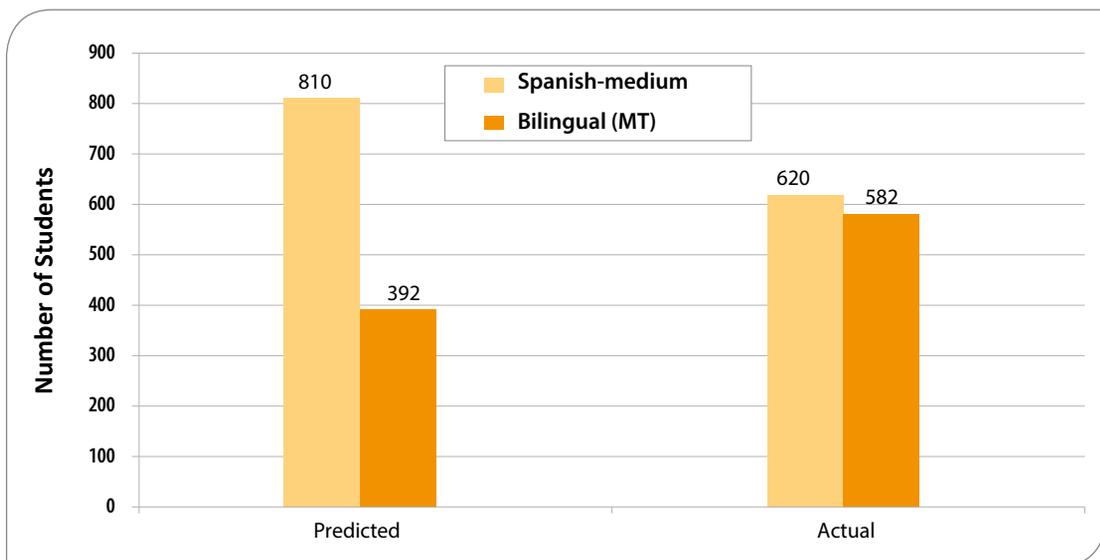
**To summarize:** Research relating to this question shows us that MT instruction does *not* delay children’s academic progress in early education. In fact, we see the opposite. Children in MLE schools learn more than students from their same language community who attend non-MLE schools. An important point from the Kom research is that students in the early-exit MLE programme suffered educationally when they moved to English-only instruction after Grade 3.

### Q3 Does MTB MLE prepare students for secondary schooling?

Research evidence on this question is still scarce. In order to collect the necessary information, researchers need to follow the progress of individual students for five or six years after they finish primary school. Fortunately, there is data from two research studies, one from Guatemala and one from Cameroon that help to answer this question.

In 1999-2000 two researchers conducted a survey of four secondary schools in Guatemala that had mostly indigenous Mayan students. The researchers asked the Mayan students whether the primary school they attended for their basic education provided instruction only in Spanish or in some combination of Spanish and their MT. The survey produced 1,202 usable responses. The results are reported in Figure 3.

**Figure 3:** Primary school background of Mayan children in secondary schools



Based on official enrollment information from the Guatemala Ministry of Education, approximately 33 percent of Mayan students attend bilingual (MT & Spanish) schools. Based on that information, we could predict that, of the 1,202 Mayan high school students who responded to the survey, about 392 would come from bilingual or MT-medium schools. In Figure 3, this is what “Predicted” means at the bottom of the graph on the left side.

In the survey however, 582 of the 1,202 students said they came from bilingual schools. (These are the numbers in the “Actual” column in Figure 3.) These statistics show us that bilingual education raised the rate for attending secondary school by **48 percent** among Mayan students.

In the case of Guatemala, it is a bit difficult to know which factors—academic, psychological, emotional, political or a combination of these—were most important in preparing the Mayan students for secondary education. Also, we know that some teachers in the ‘bilingual schools’ use more Spanish than MT for teaching. Even so, the effect of bilingual education schools for the students is highly significant in showing the relationship between bilingual and multilingual education in primary grades and higher rates of participation in secondary education.

In Cameroon, the Kom experimental study followed Kom students’ progress through six years of primary school (2006-2013), even though the MTB MLE students had moved out of their MT and into English after Grade 3. At the end of primary, all students can take a competitive exam to qualify for secondary school. When researchers analyzed the results of those exams, they found that, among the Kom children who qualified for secondary school, 70 percent came from the Kom MLE schools while only 30 percent came from the English-only schools.

Even though the number of Kom children who finish primary school in just six years is quite small, the percent of Grade 6 Kom students who did well on secondary qualifying exam is quite large. From research evidence on mother tongue-medium education we can assume that Kom students’ advantage would have been even greater if their MLE programme continued to the end of Grade 6 rather than ending at Grade 3.

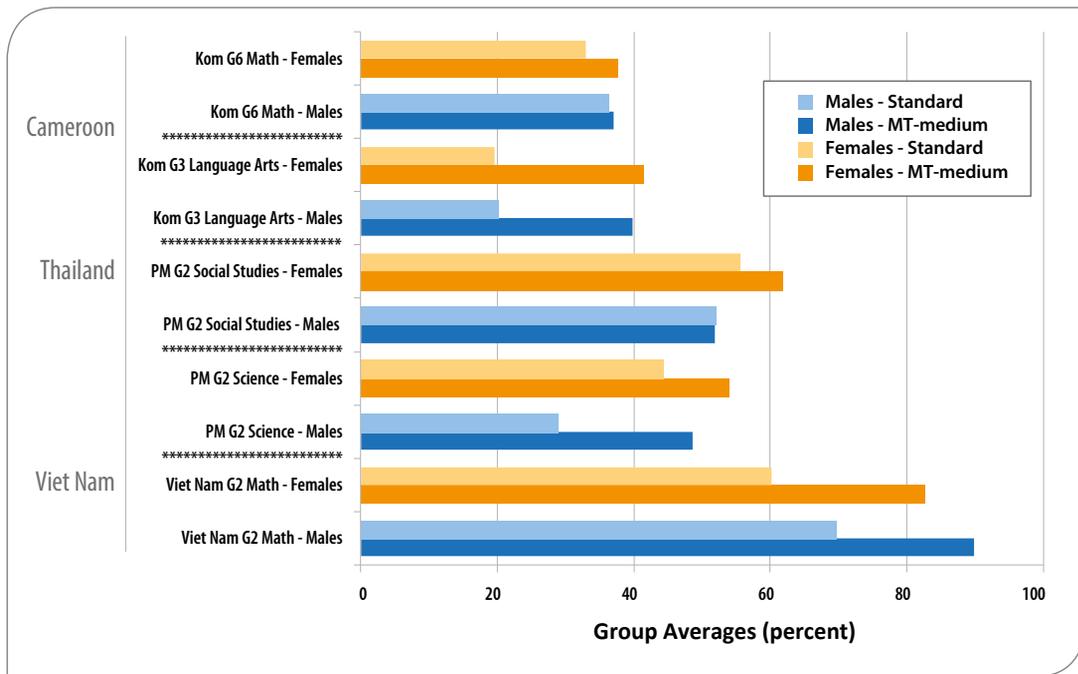
**To summarize:** While more research evidence is needed on this topic, the information we do have shows that MTB MLE does increase the probability that students will move on to secondary schooling.

# Q4 Does MTB MLE help girls achieve academic success in primary school?

In this section researchers looked for evidence that MTB MLE helps girls succeed in primary grades. Over the years, research studies have indicated that girls normally do just as well as boys in school when they can use their own language for learning in early grades. There is some evidence that MLE schools may help girls more than boys with respect to achieving academic success in early grades.

Figure 4 (below) presents the results of assessments from three countries—Cameroon, Thailand and Viet Nam. Results are divided between girls (orange) and boys (blue). As before, the more lightly shaded bars show performance in non-MLE programmes (labeled “standard”) and the darker bars show performance in MLE schools.

**Figure 4:** Boys and girls in MLE and non-MLE programmes



In all cases, girls in MLE schools did better in learning academic content than girls in non-MLE schools. In Figure 4, we see that girls in mother tongue schools made the most dramatic gains in Kom G3 Language Arts and Vietnam G2 Math. The smallest gains were seen in Kom G6 Math. The Patani Malay (PM) programme is interesting in that girls did better than boys in most subjects even in standard schools.

**To summarize:** The research studies that are available at this point show that MTB MLE does help girls to achieve academic success in primary school. We can assume as above, that as more girls achieve academic success in primary school, the doors to secondary education will also open to them.

## Final comments

The evidence is quite clear that forcing children from minority language communities to attend schools that do not let them use their MT for learning leaves those children educationally, economically, politically, and socially marginalized. Ultimately, implementing MTB MLE is a choice between two costs. One is the social and economic cost of leaving a significant part of the population undereducated, year-after-year. The other is the economic cost of implementing MTB MLE programmes that have been proven effective in meeting the educational needs of children from minority language communities. Only one of those two choices is likely to enable multilingual nations to achieve quality education for all.

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for Education

## MTB MLE RESOURCE KIT

Including the Excluded: Promoting Multilingual Education

# Booklet for Programme Implementers

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Published in 2018 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

and

UNESCO Bangkok Office

1<sup>st</sup> edition: 2016

2<sup>nd</sup> edition: 2018

© UNESCO 2018

ISBN: 978-92-9223-556-7 (print version)

ISBN: 978-92-9223-557-4 (electronic version)



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Cover photo: © Foundation for Applied Linguistics (Mon children in their Mon-Thai MTB MLE programme, Thailand)

TH/IQE/16/035-800-Rev.

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# Introduction

This is the third of five booklets in the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE) Resource Kit. The first booklet provides an overview of the major issues relating to MTB MLE from an international perspective. The second one identifies the role of policy makers whose support is essential if MTB MLE is to be implemented and sustained within formal education systems. This third booklet presents insights for the people who will be responsible for implementing MTB MLE programmes. It describes the essential features of strong programmes in which students' mother tongue (MT) is the foundation for learning the official school language(s) and other subjects in school. The fourth booklet describes the actions that community members can take to ensure that the local programme affirms their heritage language and culture and provides a good education for their children. The fifth booklet presents case studies of MTB MLE programs in five Asian countries.

Questions that people often ask about MTB MLE are used as headings for each section of this booklet. Answers to the questions are based on lessons learned from MTB MLE programmes around the world. Examples from a variety of programmes demonstrate the creative ways that people are working together to plan, implement and sustain MTB MLE programmes that help students learn successfully and achieve their educational goals.

## Q1 Why is MTB MLE needed? What problem is it meant to solve?

The purpose of education is to help children gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes they will need to be productive members of their community and responsible citizens of their country. To be successful in school, students must achieve the learning competencies prescribed in the government curriculum for each subject and each grade. But students cannot achieve those competencies if they cannot understand the language their teachers use in the classroom.

For students who do not learn or use the official school language at home, school is frightening at first, then frustrating, and finally discouraging. This explains why so many children in minority language communities are not in school. In 2005, the World Bank reported that, *"Fifty percent of the world's out-of-school children live in communities where the language of schooling is rarely, if ever, used at home"* (World Bank, 2005, p. 1). That percentage has not decreased and, in fact, has grown, in spite of efforts by UNESCO, UNICEF, other international agencies and organizations, some governments and many minority language communities to improve the situation.

Many parents, educators, and researchers are aware of the problems that students experience when they are not allowed to use their home language in school. Let's look briefly at several of the problems and then at the way that MTB MLE provides the solution for each one:

**Problem:** Students are expected to understand and use the official school language for learning from the first day of school, even though they do not use it at home. Eventually, students may learn to copy, repeat and even memorize their teacher's words and sentences. But without understanding, they are not able to use the words and sentences to build new knowledge. A researcher in India described this kind of situation in 2005:

*The children seemed totally disinterested in the teacher's monologue. They stared vacantly at the teacher and sometimes at the blackboard where some [letters] had been written. Clearly aware that the children could not understand what he was saying, the teacher proceeded to provide even more detailed explanation in a much louder voice.*

*Later, tired of speaking and realizing that the young children were completely lost, he asked them to start copying the [letters] from the blackboard. "My children are very good at copying from the blackboard. By the time they reach Grade 5, they can copy all the answers and memorize them. But only two of the Grade 5 students can actually speak [the school language]," said the teacher (Jinghran, 2005, p. 1).*

**MTB MLE solution:** In strong MTB MLE programmes, teachers use their students' MT as one of the languages of instruction to the end of primary school. UNESCO explains why that is beneficial:

*The language used in teaching is of central importance for enhancing learning. It is necessary to bridge home and school experiences by using the children's mother tongue(s) as the medium of learning and teaching in the school. This helps children to develop necessary tools and literacy skills in order to move forward and acquire another language. (UNESCO, 2007, p. 19).*

**Problem:** Lessons and textbooks focus on the dominant culture and ignore the knowledge and skills that ethnic minority students have learned at home and in their community. As a result, young students cannot use what they already know to help them understand what they are expected to learn in school.

**MTB MLE solution:** Teachers are fluent in the students' MT and share their cultural background. They use examples from everyday life to help young students understand new concepts. When their teachers encourage them to talk about and apply new ideas and skills, students gain confidence in their ability to learn successfully. Also, when the community language is used in school, parents and other community members are more likely to become involved in classroom activities and help to link the school curriculum to community knowledge and practice.

Sawdo Japakiya is the parent of a kindergarten student attending Ban Prachan School in the Patani Malay MTB Bilingual Education programme in Thailand. He described his child's development in speaking and reading the MT and Thai since starting school:

*In observing my child, I have found that he enjoys his study. When he gets back from school, he follows all of his teacher's instructions, such as doing homework and drawing. ... Nowadays, when going shopping at the market, he often asks me to buy him books or drawing notebooks on which he can write for fun. He enjoys studying.<sup>1</sup>*

**Problem:** Students are expected to learn to read and write in the official school language before they have learned to understand and speak it.

**MTB MLE solution:** Students learn to read and write in their MT. At the same time, they begin learning to understand and speak the official school language. When they have developed confidence in reading and writing their MT and can understand and speak the official language, teachers help them transfer their literacy skills to their new language. The Asian Development Bank tells us why that process is successful:

*A large body of evidence from different countries, as well as advances in the field of cognitive neuroscience, show that children who have access to mother tongue based multilingual education (MTB MLE) develop better language skills in their mother tongues as well as national languages (ACDP Indonesia, 2014, p. 3).*

To summarize, strong MTB MLE programmes that are planned and implemented carefully result in students who are

**Multilingual.** They are confident in using two or more languages for learning in school and for interacting with people within and outside their home community.

**Multi-literate.** They read and write with understanding in both or all of their languages.

**Multicultural.** They maintain their love and respect for their home culture and community and interact confidently and respectfully with people who look, talk and believe differently than they do.

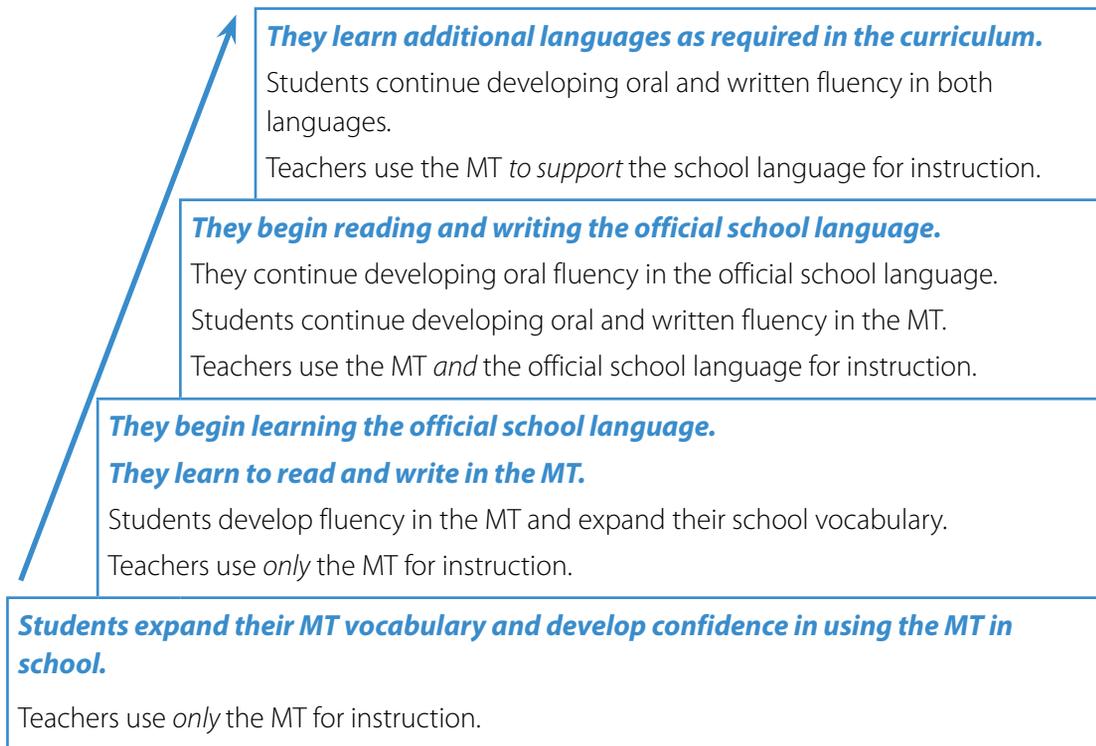
**Successful learners.** They achieve their educational goals and develop a life-long love of learning.

1 Translated from Pratyta To-Itae: Southern News, Isra Institute. *Beginning the Third Year of Bilingual School: The Answer for Children's Education in the Southern Border Area*. Sunday, 03 January 2010 19:10.

## Q2 How do MTB MLE students learn to read and write their own language and one or more additional languages in school?

All children begin school with knowledge and skills that they have learned from parents and others in their home and community. Among the skills they bring to school is their ability to communicate and learn in their MT. Their language is an essential resource for learning other languages and for learning math, science and other school subjects. Because they already know their MT, it is the best language for them to use in learning to read and write. When students gain confidence in reading and writing their MT and achieve a basic level of oral fluency in the official school language, they are ready to begin reading and writing that language.

The diagram below displays the MTB MLE process for helping students gain fluency and confidence in speaking, reading and writing their MT, then the official school language and then other languages as required in the curriculum. As you read the diagram, starting at the bottom and moving towards the top, you will see that each step in the learning process becomes the foundation for the next step.



Step-by-step process for teaching languages as subjects and using them for instruction throughout primary school<sup>2</sup>

2 Adapted from S. Malone, 2010.

This diagram does not assign a specific grade to each step because the rate of progression depends on several factors, including the number of languages that students need to learn in primary school. The main point is that students should achieve success *at each step* in the language learning process so they build confidence in their ability to understand, speak, read and write *both* or *all* their school languages.

Following is a short description of the main features (in blue) of each step in the diagram, starting with the bottom step.

**Students expand their MT vocabulary and develop confidence in using the MT in school.** Young children use their MT to communicate with friends and family long before they begin their formal education. Their first language-learning task in school is to expand their MT vocabulary so they can use it correctly and confidently in a variety of situations within and outside the classroom.

Teachers help students build oral fluency when they read MT stories to the students and then ask questions that require the students to think and talk about what they heard. They assign projects in which students work and talk together in teams to solve problems and then report on what they did and learned. Teachers encourage students to ask questions and then they provide clear answers so that students understand. They introduce new MT vocabulary terms so that students understand the meaning of the new terms and can use them for further learning.

Here is what researchers tell us about the importance of encouraging young students to use their home language in the classroom:

*Research suggests that young children's ability to use language and to listen to and understand the meaning of spoken and written words is related to their later literacy achievement in reading, writing, and spelling (National Early Literacy Panel, 2009, p. 2).*



Mon students in Kindergarten Year 1 are eager to share their ideas using their MT. (Thailand)  
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**Students learn to read and write in their MT.** Teachers introduce students to reading and writing in their MT—the language they know best—because

*... the purpose of reading is understanding. And understanding is achieved when children make connections between what they read and the knowledge that they already have acquired. Children who have no access to reading materials that build on what they already have acquired, whether language, culture, or geography, are seriously disadvantaged (Prouty, 2009, pp. 17-18).*

MTB MLE teachers use a “dual approach” to help their students learn to read and write in their MT. Students learn the letters of their alphabet and the language sounds associated with each letter. They use that knowledge as they practice reading words and sentences correctly. They also practice writing letters, words and sentences correctly and neatly.

As students learn to sound out words and write sentences correctly, teachers also help them understand that reading and writing are meaningful activities. They give students simple stories in their MT about familiar people, places and activities and encourage them to use the pictures on each page to “read” the stories to each other. They also encourage students to write their own stories—using their own invented spelling systems—and share the stories with a partner. Teachers continue to use this “dual approach”, focusing equally on accuracy and meaning, to help students gain fluency and confidence in reading and writing their MT. Here is what educators said about this dual approach at an MTB MLE curriculum development workshop in Ethiopia:

*We are trying to focus more on meaning and not just on accuracy in the new materials we are preparing. Many times our children don't manage all four skills [hearing, speaking, reading, writing] because this one—the focus on meaning—is missing. ... We have to strengthen speaking and thinking skills and free writing that will make them strong.*

The coordinator of an MTB MLE programme that uses the dual approach in northwestern Pakistan said this about their students after just two years of MTB MLE:

*Students from our MTB MLE schools can read and write after completing two years of pre-school while those from government schools cannot read and write, not even in Grade 5.*

**Students begin learning the official school language.** Students begin learning the school language through “hear-see-do” activities that help them develop their oral vocabulary. At first, teachers call out simple commands such as “Stand up” or “Point to the door.” Students listen and observe the teacher say the commands and do the actions several times. Then they listen again and they do the actions. The teacher adds new words and phrases each day according to a carefully constructed lesson plan.



Patani Malay KG2 students identify MT letters and words. (Thailand)  
 and Dai KG1 student—already an artist and creative writer. (China)  
 © Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand and © SIL International, China

Teachers often report that after three to five weeks, they observe students giving commands to each other on the school grounds during recess. At that point, teachers begin asking questions that students can answer in one or two words. The questions gradually require longer responses and soon students are able to use their growing vocabulary to talk about a variety of topics that are very familiar to them. Teachers also use meaningful question-and-answer times to help students develop an understanding of the basic grammatical features of their new language.



Dan children (Liberia) and Mon children (Thailand) listen and respond to their teacher's commands in the official school language.  
 © Liberian Translation and Literacy Organization, Liberia and © Foundation for Applied Linguistics, Thailand

**Students begin reading and writing the official school language.** When they have learned to read and write their MT and when they are able to understand and use the official school language for “everyday” communication, students are ready to begin reading and writing in that language. Teachers help students learn the official language alphabet and the sounds associated with each letter. They encourage students to think about the way they learned to read and write their MT and apply that knowledge to reading and writing their new language. Teachers, education officials and especially parents are happy when they see how quickly students gain literacy skills in the official school language when teachers follow this process.



Pwo Karen G2 student's story in Thai, the official school language. (Thailand) and Pakari G2 boy writing a story in Sindhi, his second school language (Sindh Province, Pakistan).  
© Foundation for Applied Linguistics, Thailand and and © Sindh Literacy and Development Programme, Pakistan

**Students learn additional languages as required in the curriculum.** Students in many MTB MLE programmes learn three or more languages by the end of primary school. The process for learning each new language follows the same basic steps described above for learning the official school language.

## Using languages for instruction in MTB MLE programmes

MTB MLE teachers also follow a step-by-step approach to using languages for instruction in primary school.

**Teachers use only the students' MT for instruction in early grades** (pre-primary and/or Grade 1, at least to the end of Grade 2). Since they already know their MT, teachers use that as the language of instruction for math, science and social studies. Having learned to read and write their MT in early grades, MTB MLE students have a good foundation for learning to read and write the official school language, once they have developed a basic oral vocabulary in that language.

### **Teachers use the MT and the official school language for instruction in middle primary.**

Students in middle primary grades should have developed confidence in using the official school language to talk about familiar topics. They should also be confident in their ability to use their MT for learning math, science and other school subjects. Having achieved success to this point, they should be ready for the next challenge—using the official school language with the mother tongue for learning.

To support students in using both languages for learning, teachers help them build their academic vocabulary relating to each school subject. They do this by following the basic educational principle of using what students already know to help them understand what is new. Here are the steps that teachers can use to help students learn new concepts in the MT and then the related academic terms in the school language:

1. Use the MT to introduce and teach a new concept (example for Math: multiplication). Assign activities in which students use the concept to solve a problem and/or complete a task. Encourage them to talk together in the MT and help each other. Ask thoughtful questions that encourage them to summarize what they have learned.
2. Review the academic term in the MT and then introduce the term in the official school language. (Example for Math: *"In the MT we call this 'multiplication.' In \_\_\_ [official school language] we call it \_\_\_."*)
3. Write the MT and official language terms on the chalkboard and students write them in their exercise books.
4. Follow the same pattern to teach one or two more official language terms relating to the new concept, then review and students write each one.
5. Briefly review the essential parts of the lesson, this time using the official school language. Speak slowly and carefully, stopping to check that students understand. Use the new terms frequently so students hear them in context. Provide another short activity and this time encourage students to use the official school language as they work together. Encourage and help them if they have trouble communicating in the school language.
6. Finish the lesson with a short review in the MT of the main concept and ask questions to make sure students understand.

**Teachers use the MT to support the official school language in Grade 6 or the final year of the programme.** Grade 6 teachers use the official school language with support from the MT following these steps:

1. Use the official school language carefully to introduce 1-3 new academic terms and tell students to listen for the terms and think about how they are used in the lesson.
2. Introduce the new concept, using language that challenges the students but does not stop them from understanding what they need to learn. Emphasize the new academic terms (#1, above) and ensure that students understand and can use the terms correctly.
3. Assign team activities and encourage students to use the official language as they talk together about what they have learned and help each other.
4. To conclude the lesson, ask questions in the MT to check for comprehension.

An essential feature of MTB MLE—and one of the reasons why MTB MLE students succeed in school—is that curriculum writers and teachers recognize the difference between *concept* learning and *language* learning in early and mid-primary grades. When students are just beginning to learn the official school language, teachers keep these two kinds of learning separate. As students build confidence in using the official school language in middle primary, teachers begin to bring the two processes together. By the end of primary school, students should be prepared to continue building fluency in the official school language as they use it to learn new concepts.

# Q3 What is involved in implementing effective MTB MLE programmes?

Studies of MTB MLE in different countries have found that successful programmes share many of the same general features. The circle diagram below<sup>3</sup> identifies the components of MTB MLE programmes that seem to be essential for success and sustainability.



Note that these components are placed in a circle to show that many of them will take place at the same time. Also, most of the activities will continue, in cycles, as the programme is implemented and expands. Programme implementers may not be responsible for all of these components. For example, they may not be responsible for establishing supportive policies or securing funds to support MTB MLE at national, provincial or local levels. However, they will be responsible for most of the other components. The sections below present a brief overview of the activities relating to each one.

3 From S. Malone, 2010.

**Preliminary research.** Preliminary research should provide the information that is required for developing realistic implementation plans. Below are examples of questions to ask at national and provincial levels and also in each language community.

**At national and provincial levels,**

- What existing policies might provide support for MTB MLE? Can those be strengthened? Are there policies that are opposed to developing and using minority languages in school? Can those be changed?
- Which government agencies and institutions and which non-government organizations can be mobilized to support the programme?
- What national, provincial and local resources might be available for the programme? Examples of *local* resources include people, buildings, equipment, materials, cultural knowledge, and background information about the community language. Once the resources are identified, what strategies will be used to mobilize them?
- What factors might hinder implementation and sustainability? Examples might include difficulty in getting to some locations because of weather or lack of resources for printing, distribution and storing materials. How can those problems be averted or overcome?

**Within language communities:**

- How do people describe their children’s educational situation?
- What language(s) do students in each school understand and use at home?
- What is the status of the community’s MT? Is it in written form? Is the writing system acceptable to MT speakers and to relevant government agencies?
- Do community members understand the purpose and benefits of MTB MLE? If so, do they want it for their children? If not, what kind of advocacy is needed to help them understand why it would be good for their children?
- What existing groups (especially including women) can be mobilized to support the programme?
- What other resources (cultural experts, language experts, retired teachers, existing buildings and/or equipment) might be available for the programme?
- What factors might delay or hinder programme implementation and sustainability? Do community members suggest possible solutions to problems?

## Example from Viet Nam

### Preliminary Research: Classroom Language Mapping in Lao Cai Province<sup>4</sup>

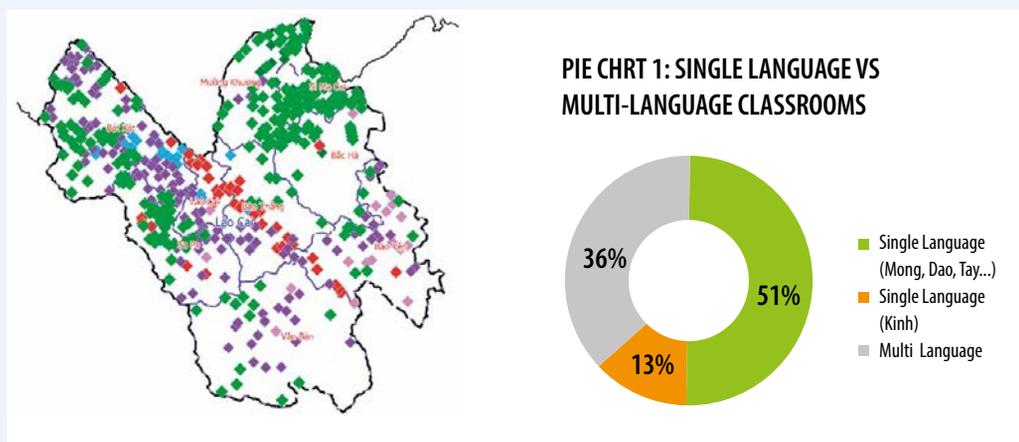
In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in Viet Nam, with support from UNICEF, implemented a Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education Action Research project in three provinces. In Lao Cai Province the programme was established in the Mong language community. Lao Cai education officials recognized the value of the programme for the Mong children and wanted to expand the programme to additional schools.

The Lao Cai Department of Education and Training, the Ministry of Education and Training's Primary Education Department, SIL International and UNICEF worked together to implement a "Classroom Language Mapping Project" in Lao Cai Province. The purpose was to identify the languages used by students in primary grade classrooms.

To help the Lao Cai government plan for MTB BE expansion, the Language Mapping team needed to get information relating to these questions<sup>5</sup>:

- Are there classrooms and schools in which all or most of the students speak the same MT? What is the academic performance of students in those classrooms?
- Where are the classes and schools in which students do not share a common language?
- What is the ethnic background of teachers in each school and what languages do they speak and understand?

The results of the Classroom mapping are shown in the two diagrams below



4 See [http://www.unicef.org/vietnam/Lao\\_Cai\\_mapping\\_profile\\_set.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/vietnam/Lao_Cai_mapping_profile_set.pdf)

5 Adapted from a presentation by J. Owen at the 4th International Conference on Language and Education, Bangkok, Thailand, 2013.

In the map on the left, each small square represents a school in which students speak the same MT. The colors denote different language groups. The second diagram shows the percentage of students in three situations:

- In 51% of the classrooms, all the students speak the same minority language as their MT.
- In 13% of the classrooms, students speak Vietnamese (Kinh), the official school language as their MT.
- In 36% of the classrooms, students speak two or more different minority languages as their MT.

This jointly sponsored research helped the Lao Cai provincial government to identify schools where MTBBE could be effectively applied. It also identified the teachers who speak one of the three MTs, the schools in which students are doing well academically and the schools in which students are not doing well.

The methodology used in the Classroom Mapping Project in Lao Cai has been applied to other provinces in Viet Nam and is now used in other countries.

**Realistic implementation plan.** A clear and realistic implementation plan is essential for developing a programme that achieves the goals of its stakeholders. An implementation plan for MTB MLE should include a section for each component in the diagram of essential components above, with a suggested time frame for the specific activities that fit under each component. Flexibility is essential with respect to the time frame because many things can happen that can change the schedule. A good plan also includes regular evaluations to identify the parts of the programme that need to be changed and provides time to make the changes.

The example below is an excerpt from the first implementation plan developed by LIBTRALO, a national NGO in Liberia, for their Liberian Languages and English Multilingual Education (LLEME) programme in 15 Liberian language communities. The LLEME plan was revised many times because the programme began shortly after a long civil war and many parts of the plan had to be adapted to fit the changing situation. The boxes with Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4 for each year show which activities were supposed to take place in each of the four quarters of each year—January to March (Q1), April to June (Q2), July to September (Q3) and October to December (Q4). In this plan, classes would start in year 3, giving plenty of time for preliminary activities.

(Note that only three components are shown here. The actual plan had the same components included in the “essential components” diagram above.)<sup>6</sup>

LLEME implementation plan												
	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Identify education officials	x	x										
Identify possible supporting partners	x	x										
Identify possible funding agencies	x	x	x	x								
Prepare preliminary research materials		x										
Train community researchers		x										
Collect and document baseline information				x	x							
<b>Awareness raising &amp; mobilization</b>												
	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Develop advocacy materials	x											
Do advocacy in district and province		x	x		x	x			x	x		
Do advocacy in communities		x	x	x				x	x	x		
Mobilize communities	x	x	x	x				x	x	x		
Meet with district officials, principals & teachers of selected schools				x	x			x	x			x

<sup>6</sup> See <https://libtralo.wordpress.com/literacy/>. For an updated LLEME plan see [http://www.sil.org/sites/default/files/files/lleme\\_implementation\\_plan\\_updated.pdf](http://www.sil.org/sites/default/files/files/lleme_implementation_plan_updated.pdf)

## Curriculum and instructional materials

	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Establish educational goals for K1 & K2 (with MOE)		x										
Develop curriculum for K1 and K2 based on MOE competencies		x	x									
Identify cultural themes for each week			x									
Develop & test primers [to introduce letter-sound relationship in the MTs]		x	x	x								
Develop Oral English lessons			x	x	x							
Get MOE approval for K1 and K2 curriculum and teaching materials					x							



LIBTRALO members from fifteen languages communities, after working together to develop the Implementation Plan for their “Liberian Languages and English Multilingual Education” (LLEME) Programme. (Liberia)

© Liberian Translation and Literacy Organization, Liberia

**Awareness raising and mobilization.** The goal of awareness raising and mobilization is that stakeholders at all levels of implementation will have the information, encouragement and support they need to develop and sustain a strong MTB MLE programme.

Here are examples of goals for awareness raising and mobilization in **language communities**:

- Parents will understand the purpose and benefits of MTB MLE and feel confident that it will help their children.
- Community leaders and community members will support MT teachers and officials in their primary school.
- MT speakers will write, illustrate and edit the variety of graded reading materials in their language that students will read as they advance through primary grades.
- All community members will share their knowledge, experience and creativity to make their programme appropriate for their community.

Examples of activities:

- Invite community leaders, business leaders and other influential people to visit teacher training events, classrooms and special “community days”.
- Conduct creative writing workshops with prizes for the best MT stories.
- Sell MT storybooks at the community market.
- Make posters about the programme and display them in public places.
- Encourage community leaders—women and men—to establish an MTB MLE guidance committee that will take responsibility for their programme, and especially their local teachers. Encourage the committee to get registered as a local NGO.



MTB MLE mobilization meeting, Seereer community, (Senegal)

© SIL International, Senegal

Goal of awareness raising and mobilization in **provinces and districts:**

- Education officials will understand the purpose and benefits of *strong* MTB MLE programmes and they will support schools, principals, teachers and community members in following best practices that assure success and sustainability.
- District officials will work closely with local communities, supporting local schools and encouraging teachers.

Examples of activities:

- Invite education officials and others to visit MTB MLE training workshops and classrooms.
- Establish MTB MLE support committees in each region, province and district that has or will have MTB MLE schools. Conduct regular meetings and publicize outcomes.
- Hold cultural events that celebrate cultural diversity.



Programme leaders explain the need for MTB MLE. (Cambodia)  
© International Cooperation Cambodia (ICC), Cambodia

Goals for awareness raising and mobilization are needed at the **national level:**

- Policy makers will establish a policy that supports a strong MTB MLE programme. They will ensure that there is adequate financial support for the pilot project and later, for expanding and maintaining the programme.
- National education officials will support and facilitate integration of MTB MLE into the formal education system.
- Policy makers will assign responsibility for implementing and supporting the programme.

- MTB MLE-specific teacher training will be incorporated into regular teacher education programmes in established institutions.
- Universities, NGOs and other organizations will work together with the government and with local communities to implement and support MTB MLE.

Examples of activities:

- Host national and international MTB MLE meetings / conferences that include presentations and discussions with technical experts, policy makers, people from language communities and others.
- Invite government officials to attend training workshops.
- Publish newspaper articles and other materials about MTB MLE.
- Establish networks and partnerships to publicize and support programmes.
- Hold cultural events that celebrate the nation's cultural diversity.



National Workshop to provide information about MTB MLE. (Afghanistan)  
© SIL International, Afghanistan

**To summarize:** Awareness-raising and mobilization for MTB MLE is one of the programme components that must be ongoing because ongoing support at all levels is essential if the programme is to be implemented successfully and sustained within the formal education system.

## **Example from Afghanistan: Awareness raising and mobilization at national level**

In March, 2010, a “Workshop on Multilingual Education in Afghanistan” was held in Kabul. Workshop sponsors were UNESCO, SIL International, Afghanistan Medical Consultants, Samar, World Vision and Save the Children. The workshop brought together educators, linguists, policy makers and MT speakers of Afghanistan’s ethnic languages to discuss the following question: “What can be done to provide quality education for girls and boys from all of Afghanistan’s language communities?”

Workshop participants learned about research studies and experiences in other countries that have demonstrated the educational, social, and cultural benefits of helping children build a strong educational foundation in their MT and a good bridge to the official school language.

Following each presentation, participants broke into groups to apply new information to their own contexts and make recommendations for action. On the third day, participants divided into new groups based on their specialty areas (e.g., language planning, language and education policy, curriculum, etc.). Each group summarized the recommendations relating to their specific topic, revised them as needed, and presented them at a final plenary session.

Participants called for mother tongue-based education programmes in their country that will enable students to use their mother tongue as one of the languages of learning in formal and non-formal education. Following are specific recommendations relating to language development in Afghanistan that came from this event:

- Establish a research center for Afghan languages and cultures;
- Support university departments that engage in linguistic and sociolinguistic research;
- Analyze and record grammar and sound systems for all the languages; develop alphabets for all languages that do not have them, focusing first on endangered languages;
- Conduct research on the customs and cultures of each ethnic group;
- Identify and support language communities that want to strengthen and preserve their language and culture;
- Develop educational materials in the languages;
- Establish education programmes for adults and children that start in their home language and then help them learn one of the national languages; use the home languages for early education; teach the national languages as subjects and use them for later primary and higher education;

- Include courses on Afghan languages in teacher training institutions;
- Use radio and television to raise awareness and gather information about languages and cultures;
- Encourage speakers of Afghan languages to collect traditional literature and write poetry, stories and dramas in their mother tongue.

**Alphabet development.** Most ethnic minority languages have been used for oral communication for hundreds, even thousands of years. Some have had their own writing systems for centuries but others have never been put into written form. Linguists who analyze unwritten languages are often impressed with the beauty of their grammars and sound systems. But until a language is put into writing, it will be difficult to use it as one of the languages of instruction in the formal education system.

In some places, a language may already have an alphabet but if the alphabet is unacceptable to MT speakers and /or to the government it will be difficult to use it as a school language. A basic statement about this issue is that minority language communities need an acceptable alphabet if their language is to be acceptable for use in the formal education system.

Alphabet development has two goals: The first is that MT speakers will accept the new (or revised) alphabet and use it consistently. The second and equally important goal for MTB MLE is that the alphabet will be acceptable to the relevant government officials.

The process of developing a new or revised alphabet usually includes the following activities in this general order:

1. *Language survey:* Collect information about the language—number of speakers, number of dialects, attitudes of MT speakers towards the language; locations in which it is used and the social, economic, political, religious and cultural domains in which it is used.
2. *Language analysis:* Identify the parts of the language that need to be represented by letters or symbols.
3. *Trial alphabet:* Conduct an alphabet workshop in which mother tongue speakers of the language, with help from linguists, as necessary, identify the letters or symbols that will represent their language. Produce a tentative or trial alphabet.
4. *Testing:* Test the trial alphabet both formally (through observing people's use of the written language and noting problems) and informally (by encouraging as many people as possible to use it as much as possible and then provide their feedback.)
5. *Revision:* Identify alternative letters or symbols that can be used if problems are discovered with earlier selections.

6. *Approval:* Conduct a second alphabet workshop to present the revised alphabet to mother tongue speakers for their approval. Request approval from relevant government agencies for the final alphabet.

Ideally, when people develop an alphabet for their language, they follow a process like the one above. However, community members may want to begin their MTB MLE programme quickly and do not have time to analyze their language first. Working together, and with support from language experts, they can develop an initial alphabet for their language, which they can test, and then revise as needed, as MT speakers use it inside and outside of school.

### **Examples from many countries: Developing alphabets for minority languages**

People with experience in developing or revising alphabets for minority languages have identified factors that will help or hinder acceptance of new alphabets. Here are some of the important questions that MT speakers can ask:

Political factors:

- Does the national government have a policy on minority language alphabets or scripts? If so, how will this affect decisions about *our* alphabet?
- If our language has several or many dialects, will the alphabet give preference to any one dialect over the others? If yes, will that be acceptable to all groups?

Linguistic factors:

- What kind of writing system is best for our language (e.g., phonemic, syllabic, morphophonemic, morphemic)?
- Do the letters or symbols we want to use represent the important parts of our language (consonants, vowels and semi-vowels, stress, tone, etc.) consistently and clearly?

Sociolinguistic factors:

- Will different groups of people in our language community (examples: well educated, less educated, children, political leaders, teachers) agree that this alphabet represents our language well?
- In addition to MT speakers, which people or groups of people will be concerned about the way this language is written? (Examples: government officials, politicians, linguists, religious leaders) Can representatives of some or all of those groups have a part in developing the alphabet?

Educational factors

- Will the alphabet help MT students in early primary grades to learn to read and write the language?
- Will it help students when they are ready to transfer to the official school language?

**Curriculum and instructional materials.** All strong and successful MTB MLE programmes have the same basic goals for their students:

**Language goals.** Students will develop fluency and confidence in understanding, speaking, reading and writing their MT plus one or more official school languages for communication and for life-long learning.

**Academic goals.** Students will achieve the learning competencies established for each subject and each grade of primary school and will be prepared to continue learning in secondary school and beyond.

**Socio-cultural goals.** Students will love and respect their heritage language and culture and will respect and appreciate the languages, cultures and beliefs of people outside their community.

MTB MLE curriculum is based directly on learning competencies established by the government for “mainstream” schools (i.e., schools for children who speak the official language as their MT) but adapted so it is appropriate for students who do not speak the official school language at home. Here are the main features of MTB MLE curriculum:

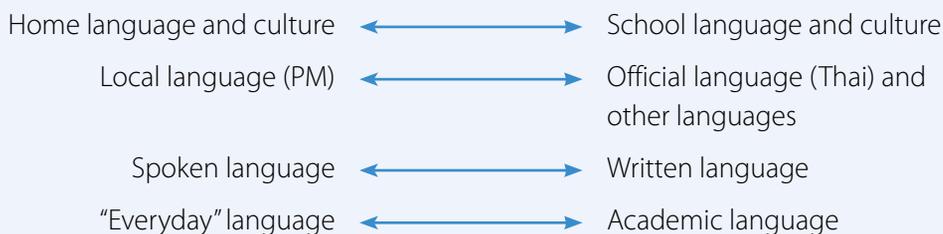
- Competencies for math, science, social studies and other academic subjects are the same as for mainstream schools. This is because both MT and mainstream students use a language they understand to learn those subjects.
- MTB MLE students’ MT is taught as a subject from the beginning to the end of primary school. Competencies focus first on helping students build listening and speaking skills and then on introducing and helping them build fluency in reading and writing their language.
- The official school language is also taught as a subject from the beginning to the end of primary school. Competencies are based on the recognition that students must learn to understand and speak the official school language before they can read and write it. So curriculum for early primary focuses on helping students build oral vocabulary and an understanding of the school language grammar. Curriculum for middle primary (often Grades 2-3 or 2-4) helps them “bridge” between reading and writing their MT and reading and writing the school language. Curriculum for later primary prepares them for further education by expanding their “everyday” and abstract oral language and helping them develop fluency in reading and writing longer and more complex texts.
- MTB MLE curriculum includes additional languages as mandated in the mainstream curriculum. However, strong MTB MLE programs delay introducing the additional languages so students have time to build a strong foundation in their MT and then the official school language before introducing the additional languages.<sup>7</sup>

7 Students in this programme are expected to learn to speak, read and write five languages: Patani Malay, Thai, English, Jawi Malay and standard Malay.

The goal throughout this process is that teachers will have the strong curriculum and good teaching materials they will need to help students build competence and confidence in hearing, speaking, reading and writing all their school languages and achieve success in all their subjects.

### Example from Thailand: Curriculum development for the Patani Malay-Thai MTB BE programme

Patani Malay and Thai educators developed the curriculum for the Patani Malay-Thai MTB BE programme. This is an eight-year programme that begins with two years of kindergarten (KG) and continues to the end of Grade 6. The programme teaches Patani Malay (PM) as a subject and uses it as language of instruction in early grades. Standard Thai, the official language, is taught as a subject each year. The goal is that students will achieve government standards for each grade while acquiring standard Thai as a second language. The MTB BE curriculum for each grade is based directly on the Ministry of Education curriculum for mainstream Thai schools. It uses a learner-centred approach that enables students to “build bridges” between what they already know and the new concepts they need to learn.



**Language development.** The MTB BE curriculum follows the step-by-step model described earlier in this booklet. In early KG1, students build confidence in using “everyday MT” to listen and talk about familiar topics. Later in KG1 they begin pre-reading and pre-writing activities in PM. In KG2 they begin reading and writing PM. Students continue studying PM as a subject through Grade 4 but as more languages<sup>8</sup> are added, the amount of time for studying PM in Grades 5-6 decreases significantly.

The curriculum introduces oral Thai in KG1, semester 2. Students begin bridging to written Thai early in Grade 1 and continue to build oral and written Thai to the end of primary school. They begin learning oral English, the second official school language, in Grade 2 and in Grade 3 they begin studying Jawi Melayu (Arabic script) and standard Malay (roman script).

8 Students in this program are expected to learn to speak, read and write five languages: Patani Malay, Thai, English, standard Malay and Jawi Malay.

**Academic development.** As noted above, the curriculum for each subject follows the standards established by the Ministry of Education for each grade. PM is the only language of instruction in Kindergarten 1 and Kindergarten 2. In Grade 1 and Grade 2, teachers use PM to teach concepts and introduce academic terms in Thai relating to each concept. In Grades 3 and 4, teachers use both PM and Thai for teaching. In grades 5 and 6, students use Thai textbooks but if possible, teachers (or PM teaching assistants) use PM to help them understand, as needed.

The MTB BE curriculum emphasizes meaning as well as accuracy in all learning activities for all subjects in all grades. It also emphasizes higher level thinking from KG 1 to the end of Grade 6.

**Socio-cultural development.** Suwilai Premisrirat and Uniansasmita Samoh (2012) describe the place of socio-cultural development in this MTB BE curriculum:

*... the program honors students' home culture and social background and recognizes them as a resource for the nation as a whole. It also teaches them about their rights and responsibilities as citizens of the larger society. Teaching and learning activities and materials reflect the values and goals of their parents and the community. For example, the children should be able to Salam (Muslim way of greeting) to their parents and others as well as to be able to wai (Thai way of greeting). And to best take advantage of their situation, the children should be able to speak, read and write well in both Patani Malay and Thai. Moreover, the children should be able to keep their identity at the local level and also have a sense of Thai identity at the national level. Through this cultural bridging, they can live with dignity in the wider Thai society to foster true and lasting national reconciliation (Suwilai Premisrirat and Uniansasmita Samoh, 2012, p. 93).*

Teachers gave the project grades ranging from 80-90%, noting that, while the students in the project exhibited much more creativity, confidence, and enthusiasm than students in traditional monolingual Thai classes, the MTB BE approach is very demanding of the teachers.



Patani Malay teachers and supervisors use the MTB MLE curriculum to develop lesson plans for their programme. (Thailand)  
 © Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand

**Reading and learning materials.** When MTB MLE students learn to read, they want many books! Implementers of successful MTB MLE programmes make materials development a priority from the beginning. They recruit and build the capacity of fluent MT speakers to write, illustrate and edit reading and other learning materials that the students will use as they progress through each grade.

Experiences in many MLE programmes have shown that students do not require expensive MT reading materials. Neatly printed booklets with simple line drawings are acceptable, especially in early grades.<sup>9</sup>



Graded reading materials for the Gawri MTB MLE program (Pakistan)  
 © Forum for Language Initiatives, Pakistan

9 A resource for developing MT graded reading materials can be found at <http://bloomlibrary.org/landing>.

The most important characteristics of reading materials in any language are that: (1) the content is interesting, (2) the language is clear and understandable, (3) illustrations are related to the text and appropriate to the local culture, and (4) the materials are graded from very short and simple (pre-primary and Grade 1) to longer and more complex as students move into upper primary grades and beyond.

Stages of reading materials for successful MTB MLE <sup>10</sup>			
Stage 1 MT	Stage 2 MT	Stage 3 2 <sup>nd</sup> language (L2)	Stage 4 MT and/or L2
<p><b>Audience:</b> New readers</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Learn that written text communicates meaning; gain confidence in reading</p> <p><b>Length / content:</b> Short and simple, about familiar topics</p>	<p><b>Audience:</b> Readers who have gained basic reading skills</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Build fluency; begin to use reading to learn.</p> <p><b>Length / content:</b> Longer, about local culture and new topics</p>	<p><b>Audience:</b> Readers who are ready to read in a new language</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Use what we have learned to about reading in the MT to begin reading the L2.</p> <p><b>Length / Content:</b> Same as Stage 1</p>	<p><b>Audience:</b> Fluent readers in both MT and L2</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Read to learn and for enjoyment</p> <p><b>Length / content:</b> No specific length. Variety of topics from the MT culture and the world outside the community.</p>

In addition to the benefits these materials provide for students in each MTB MLE programme, books in many languages that present the diversity of a nation's cultures and histories adds to the richness of the national heritage.

**Teacher recruitment and training.** Good education programmes require good teachers. Students cannot become successful learners if their teachers are not motivated and/or do not receive the training and ongoing support they need to be effective. And of course students cannot do well in school if their teacher does not speak or understand their language.

One of the challenges faced by many MTB MLE programmes is that there are too few MT speakers with formal teaching credentials. One reason for the lack of qualified MT teachers is that many ethnic minority children are not able to use their MT for learning in school. As a result, many of them do poorly in the formal education system and lacked the qualifications needed to gain acceptance to teacher training institutions.

Over time, as effective MTB MLE programmes are established and supported within the formal education system, this situation should change. An important long-term need will be for an

<sup>10</sup> Adapted from S. Malone 2013.

MTB MLE teacher-training component that can be incorporated into regular teacher education programmes in established institutions.<sup>11</sup>

Until a formal training programme is in place, other options are available and have been proven successful in many parts of the world. Respected individuals who are fluent in the students' MT can become excellent MTB MLE teachers if they have good teaching and learning materials, good pre-service and in-service training and regular, supportive supervision.

**Lessons learned regarding MTB MLE teacher recruitment:**

- People recruited as MTB MLE teachers must be fluent speakers of their MT and the official school language.
- They must have a legible handwriting, on paper and on the chalkboard.
- They must be trusted and respected in their community.

**Pre-training assessment and practice**

- New trainees are tested on their ability to read and write the MT. If necessary, they should have time to (1) learn their alphabet and spelling system, (2) practice writing words and sentences neatly and fluently on paper and on the chalkboard, (3) practice reading stories and other classroom materials aloud and fluently, and (4) practice using the MT for teaching.
- New trainees are also tested on their ability to understand, speak, read and write the official school language. They need time to practice speaking, reading and writing that language to ensure that they can use it fluently, correctly, and effectively in the classroom.

**Essential components of pre-service teacher training**

- Trainees learn about the MTB MLE curriculum and the importance of helping students achieve the learning outcomes for each subject, each grade.
- They discuss and practice using theories that underlie effective child-centred teaching.<sup>12</sup>
- They learn about and practice the dual focus in language education: helping students learn to speak, read and write accurately and to speak, read and write meaningfully—to communicate and learn.

11 A resource for institutionalizing teacher training can be seen at [http://www.sil.org/sites/default/files/files/institutionalizing\\_teacher\\_training\\_for\\_mtb\\_mle\\_12-2011.pdf](http://www.sil.org/sites/default/files/files/institutionalizing_teacher_training_for_mtb_mle_12-2011.pdf) (Note that you must have Adobe Reader to view this document.)

12 Especially important for teachers: Jean Piaget's developmental theory, Richard C. Anderson's schema theory, Albert Bandura's social learning theory and Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural learning theory.



Patani Malay teacher uses a Big Book to teach students that reading is a meaningful activity. (Thailand)  
 © Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand



Dai teacher helps a student learn the parts of his language—focus on accuracy. (China)  
 © SIL International, China

- They learn about the “levels of thinking and learning”<sup>13</sup> and practice classroom activities that encourage their students to develop and use higher level thinking skills.
- They learn to use teaching resources for each subject and they practice creating their own activities and resources.

13 See [http://unex.uci.edu/pdfs/instructor/blooms\\_taxonomy.pdf](http://unex.uci.edu/pdfs/instructor/blooms_taxonomy.pdf) for more about the levels of thinking and learning adapted from “Bloom’s Taxonomy”.

- They learn how to assess their students' progress through informal assessments and through testing.
- They learn and practice classroom management skills.

Teachers who will be assigned to schools with very large classes will need special help in preparing effective strategies for those situations and plenty of ongoing support and encouragement from supervisors.

### **Essential components of in-service teacher training**

Regular in-service training, based on supervisors' classroom assessments, is essential for quality education in MTB MLE (and mainstream) schools.

In their regular classroom visits, supervisors identify strengths and weaknesses in teachers' pedagogy and classroom management. Each in-service training workshop gives time to both—building on the teachers' strengths and helping them to overcome their weaknesses.

- Supervisors ask strong teachers to demonstrate pedagogical or classroom management activities and encourage other teachers to discuss and then practice what they have learned.
- Teachers share positives (good things) and negatives (problems) relating to their classroom situations and then think creatively together and share ideas for building on the positives and reducing the negatives.

### **MTB MLE teacher assignment and support**

- MTB MLE teachers are assigned to schools in their MT language area. If their language has dialects that are distinctly different, teachers are assigned to their home dialect.
- Although schools are included in the MTB MLE programme only if the community commits to supporting their school and teachers, supervisors still check regularly with teachers to ensure they are receiving that support. If necessary, they meet with local support committees to remind them of their obligations to the teachers.
- MTB MLE teachers' who have completed formal teacher training receive the same salary and other support as teachers in mainstream schools.



Mon MTB MLE teacher. (Thailand)  
© Foundation for Applied Linguistics, Thailand



Kaachi MTB MLE teacher. (Pakistan)  
© Sindh Literacy and Development Program,  
Pakistan



Seereer MTB MLE teacher.  
(Senegal)  
© SIL International, Senegal

As MTB MLE programmes move beyond the pilot phase and begin to expand, MTB MLE teacher training should be incorporated into established teacher training programmes. Thailand provides an excellent example of the way this can be done.

### **Example from Thailand: Establishing MTB MLE teacher training in accredited institutions**

In 2007, the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, initiated a Patani Malay-Thai MTB Bilingual Education pilot in Thailand's Deep South. The project was supported by Mahidol University, UNICEF (Thailand) and the Thailand Research Fund (TRF).

Because of civil unrest in the area, the pilot project was initiated in just four schools in 2008. Although the project was small, the impact on Patani Malay students was impressive and in recent years twelve more schools have been added. As the programme expanded, it was clear that a teacher education programme was needed to prepare Patani Malay speakers to teach in the MTB MLE schools. The Faculty of Education at Yala Rajabhat University (YRU), a major centre for training in the Deep South, recognized the value of MTB BE and the need for a formal MTB BE teacher training programme.

In 2012, with funding from the European Union, YRU and Mahidol University signed a Memorandum of Understanding to cooperate in a research project for institutionalizing MTB BE teacher training. The project goal was that YRU would become a centre for MTB MLE teacher education in southern Thailand. The university now provides MTB MLE and related classes for undergraduate and graduate education students. Continuing education classes are also available for teachers and administrators. YRU has established an MTB BE Centre to provide technical knowledge to students, teachers, administrators, academics and others in southern Thailand.<sup>14</sup>

14 [http://www.op.mahidol.ac.th/orra/research\\_highlight/2556/2556\\_09\\_LC.pdf](http://www.op.mahidol.ac.th/orra/research_highlight/2556/2556_09_LC.pdf)



Patani Malay students in the MTB BE teacher education programme at Yala Rajabhat University. (Thailand)

© Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand

**Monitoring and evaluation.** In Papua New Guinea, a group of people involved in development programmes once described the importance of “starting small and growing slowly”. They had seen what happens when implementers move too quickly and fail to evaluate progress frequently. Programmes that started with great excitement soon ran into trouble and then failed. A Papua New Guinean who had observed that problem commented that, “When programmes are started and then fail, it leaves the local community very discouraged. It would be better not to start at all.”

The same is true for MTB MLE programmes. Wise implementers build monitoring and evaluation into every part of the programme and use what they learn to strengthen and sustain it.

Part Two of the Policy Makers’ booklet describes evaluation results from several MTB MLE programs in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Those evaluations focus on students’ progress in learning. Student assessments are essential, of course, but monitoring and evaluation of other parts of the programme are also necessary for sustainability.

In successful MTB MLE programmes initial planning is followed by initial implementation and then an evaluation of the programme to that point—sometimes called “process” or “formative” evaluations. Programme plans are adapted to build on the strengths and overcome the problems that are identified in the evaluation. This cycle continues as the programme expands to higher grades in each school, to additional schools in the same language community and then to additional languages.

Following are examples of evaluation questions that can help guide the monitoring and evaluation process.

**Curriculum/teaching method.** Are learning outcomes clear? Do the teachers feel comfortable with the teaching methods? Do lesson content and class activities affirm the students' heritage culture? Does each year of primary school begin by building on what the students learned the year before? How can the curriculum be improved?

**Teachers and other staff.** Do teachers treat their students with respect? Do supervisors visit classrooms according to schedule? Do they encourage and support the teachers? What can be done to help staff at all levels build competence, confidence and creativity in carrying out their tasks?

**Training.** Do teachers demonstrate that they understand the teaching method? Do they have regular opportunities for in-service training? Does in-service training help teachers with issues that they have identified? Do training events encourage personnel to work together to solve problems and teach each other new skills? How can training be improved?

**Materials.** Are teaching materials clear and easy to use? Do parents and other community members approve of the reading materials in their school? Can the students read them? Do they enjoy them? Is the system for producing reading materials as efficient as it needs to be? Is the distribution system effective and reliable? What parts can be improved?

**Student progress.** Do the students demonstrate that they are achieving the learning outcomes established for their grade level? Are they progressing successfully from one grade to the next? Are the students and their parents satisfied with their progress? What can be done to help students be more successful? Has the programme had an effect on student attendance and completion?

**Community support.** Is there a community committee that supports the teachers, takes care of the school and is responsible for the programme in general? Do the teachers find the committee effective? How can it be improved? Is there resistance to the programme in the community? If so, what is the reason for resistance and what can be done to overcome it?

**Programme growth and quality.** Is the programme growing as planned? Are people in the language community satisfied with the way it is growing? What can be done to ensure that the quality of the programme is maintained as it expands to new schools and then to new languages?

**Cost effectiveness.** Are stakeholders satisfied that benefits to MT students are worth the cost of maintaining the programme? If the programme is relatively new, are there ways to be more cost effective without sacrificing programme quality?

**Long-term impact ("impact" or "summative" evaluations).** What intended and unintended changes have come about as a result of the programme for the minority language communities and for the wider society? Have students successfully transferred their literacy skills from the MT to the official school language?

**To summarize:** Monitoring and evaluation at all stages of an MTB MLE programme are essential for identifying and building on the programme’s strengths and identifying problems that need to be solved. Monitoring and evaluation also provide information for reporting to government authorities and other partners. Most importantly, regular monitoring and evaluation help to ensure that the programme meets the goals and expectations of the minority language communities and of education officials.

**Supportive partnerships.** Minority language communities, even with help from non-government organizations (NGOs), cannot sustain their programmes without governmental support at all levels. Governments alone cannot plan and implement strong and sustained MTB MLE programmes without participation and support from local communities. At national and international levels, governments need input from international agencies and non-government organizations and sometimes from other governments.

Strong and sustainable MLE programmes require cooperation and support from multiple agencies – government, universities, research institutes, NGOs and others – working with language communities to plan, implement, evaluate and support their programmes. Building supportive partnerships—locally, sub-nationally, nationally and internationally—makes the best use of resources and helps to ensure that MTB MLE programmes are strong, successful and sustained.

## Q4 What about parents and other people in the minority language communities? Will they support MTB MLE?

The best people to answer this question are government and community leaders, teachers and parents of children in MTB MLE schools. Here is what they say:

**From the Director of the Gawri MTB MLE Programme, Pakistan:** *Shakir Ali is a 6-year-old child from one of the MLE schools. He never attended any school before. In 2010 he had completed two years of preschool. One day, he was sitting with his elder brother and father and started to read the headlines of the Urdu newspaper that his father was reading. This surprised the father because Shakir Ali’s older brother was a Grade 7 student at a government school. The older boy had begun his education in Urdu was still unable to read an Urdu headline. Shakir Ali had gained confidence and understanding from the mother tongue-based school, to read the Urdu words. (Information provided by Muhammad Zaman Sagar, Executive Director of Gawri Project and Language Development Consultant for FLI, Pakistan.)*

**From Yu Nankai, kindergarten teacher/training supervisor, Dai Han Bilingual Education Project in China:** *When we first started teaching students in this BE project [in 2007], all the primary school teachers at our school believed our students would be the least prepared for primary school because they had started their schooling in Dai [rather than the national language, Mandarin Chinese]. Nobody wanted to have our kids in their first grade classes after they finished kindergarten. Almost ten years later, students coming out of our project classes are the ones that those same teachers want to have in their classes. They no longer avoid our students, but instead compete to get them in their classes! Why? Because they have found them to be the best prepared, the most cognitively developed among their peers. This project is worth it. Starting these kids' education in their mother tongue works.* (Translation by Heidi Cobbey, SIL International, Dai-Han BE Project facilitator.)

**From the school principal, Khmer-Kinh Bilingual Education school, Trà Vinh Province, Viet Nam:** *MTB BE students are able to know and understand more about their language and culture than those of non-MTB BE programme, though they are all Khmer students. I can express the difference between the two groups of students as follows: Non-MTB BE students have good achievement as well, but MTB BE students have more understanding. MTB BE students are more confident in daily life than the other group of students. Non-MTB BE students sometimes are quite timid, for instance, a Grade 1 student may not understand the command "sit down". Obviously, the main differences between the two group of students is that MTB BE students learn in their mother tongue, and when they transit to Vietnamese, they are more active and more confident in taking part in learning activities, even in their daily life as well. Students like to take part in the MTB BE programme very much. But also some non-MTB BE students have asked me "Why could we not attend the MTB BE programme?" This question shows that these students perceived that by engaging to this programme, student can learn in Khmer, and have more opportunity to sing, play and dance in Khmer.* (Translation by Dinh Phuong Thao, Education Specialist, UNICEF, Viet Nam.)

**From parents of students in MTB MLE schools, Benishangul Gumuz region, Ethiopia** *Before, when our children went to school and everything was taught in Amharic [the national language of Ethiopia], we saw how they were suffering and how disappointed they were. It was a very negative experience. Children dropping out of school was a normal occurrence. As parents, we were reluctant to bother sending them to school. But now they are learning in our own language, the mother tongue as medium of instruction, and they are excelling—not just in the mother tongue class, but in ALL their other classes too. They have become very clever!*

*We are amazed to hear our children reading to us.*

*Now we understand that our language is just as good as every other language. Before we thought it was inferior because our children were not learning in school. This gives us equal status with all other language groups.*

*Since our children now get a better education, our own interest in school is high. We now participate in all kinds of school-related activities: we help to take care of the school, and we meet to discuss the wellbeing of our children. This kind of thing never happened before (Blacksten, 2014, p. 4.)*

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## MTB MLE RESOURCE KIT

Including the Excluded: Promoting Multilingual Education

# Booklet for Community Members

## **MTB MLE RESOURCE KIT**

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Published in 2018 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

and

UNESCO Bangkok Office

1<sup>st</sup> edition: 2016

2<sup>nd</sup> edition: 2018

© UNESCO 2018

ISBN: 978-92-9223-556-7 (print version)

ISBN: 978-92-9223-557-4 (electronic version)



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Cover photo: © SIL International, Senegal

TH/IQE/16/035-800-Rev.

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# Introduction to this booklet

By the time children begin school they have already learned many things. They have learned about relationships as they interact with their parents and others in the community. They know about nature and the environment from watching the world around them and learning the names of the things they see. They sort and classify familiar objects and compare weights and distances as they go about their everyday activities. They evaluate the things that people say and do according to their understanding of what is good and bad, useful and harmful, appropriate and inappropriate.

Also by the time children begin school they are able to use their language for a variety of purposes. They know the correct way to talk respectfully to older people. They know how to ask questions and how to respond to questions from others. They can follow their parents' step-by-step instructions to do a new task. They talk with family and friends about their ideas. They describe what they see and explain what they think. When they disagree, they know how to argue their point of view.

Through interactions like these, children have become confident in their ability to communicate with others and are excited about learning in school.

But what happens on their first day of school if their teacher does not speak or understand their language?

Many children from minority language communities quickly realize that school is not a good place for communication and learning—at least not for them. They cannot talk about what they know or ask the teacher questions. They cannot use their knowledge and experience to help them understand math or science lessons. For these children, school is an unfamiliar place where the teacher uses an unfamiliar language to teach things that they cannot learn because they do not understand the teacher's language.

This booklet is about “Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education” (MTB MLE) programmes in which children use their home language or mother tongue (MT) as the first language for learning in school. In MTB MLE classrooms, teachers share their students' language and culture. They know the things that small children learn and do at home and they use the students' knowledge and experience to help them learn new things in school. The goal of MTB MLE is that all children, from every language community, will be successful in school and become productive members of their community and citizens of their country.

The remainder of this booklet is organized around a set of questions that parents, teachers, school administrators and other community members often ask about MTB MLE. The responses to each question include examples from real programmes in different parts of the world.

# Q1 What problems do many children from minority language communities face when they begin school?

Children who speak a minority language must learn the same things as children who speak the dominant language when they begin school. They must learn the rules for behaviour in the classroom and on the school grounds. They must learn how to read and write. They must learn new concepts in math, science, social studies and other subjects. And they must be able to demonstrate that they understand and can use what they have learned.

But they can do those things only if they understand and speak the teacher's language.

Children from minority language communities who do not use the official school language at home face challenges that make school very difficult for them:

- They do not understand what the teacher is saying and the teacher does not understand them.
- They cannot use the knowledge and skills that they have learned at home because those are not included in their lessons or learning materials.
- They are expected to learn to read and write in the official school language before they have learned to understand and speak it.
- They are expected to learn math, science, and other subjects but do not have the school language vocabulary to help them understand the concepts.

If they do poorly in their schoolwork—and many do because they cannot understand—they may have to repeat grades. Many students become so discouraged that they give up and quit school altogether. Here is what a researcher in India saw when he visited a classroom in 2005:

*The children seemed totally disinterested in the teacher's monologue. They stared vacantly at the teacher and sometimes at the blackboard where some [letters] had been written. Clearly aware that the children could not understand what he was saying, the teacher proceeded to provide even more detailed explanation in a much louder voice.*

*Later, tired of speaking and realizing that the young children were completely lost, he asked them to start copying the [letters] from the blackboard. "My children are very good at copying from the blackboard. By the time they reach Grade 5, they can copy all the answers and memorize them. But only two of the Grade 5 students can actually speak [the school language]," said the teacher (Jinghran, 2005, p. 1).*

A teacher in Papua New Guinea identified the same problem. He described the confusion, and even fear that young students feel when they do not understand their teacher's words:

*During my teaching times I saw that a lot of children were kind of confused. They were just coming out of the village where their mother and father spoke to them in their home language. And then, here I was, standing like a giant over these small young children and talking to them in a strange language. I was frightening them, rather than encouraging them to learn (Rambai Keruwa, quoted in D. Malone, 2004, p. 17).*

Of course, some children from minority language communities do eventually learn the official school language very well. Those students complete their education and integrate successfully with society outside their home area. However, when the official school language is the only language they can use in the classroom and when lessons focus only on the dominant society, what happens to their relationship with their home community? The sad result is that many children from minority language communities are forced to abandon their cultural heritage in order to get an education. In 1985, when researchers asked one parent from Papua New Guinea to describe the situation for his child, this is what he said:

*When children go to school, they go to an alien place. They leave their parents, they leave their gardens, they leave everything that is their way of life. They sit in a classroom and they learn things that have nothing to do with their own place. Later, because they have learned only other things, they reject their own (Delpit and Kimmelfield, 1985, pp. 29-30).*

Unfortunately, even after many years, many children in minority language communities face the same situation as those children in Papua New Guinea.

## **Q2** What is Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE) and how does it help children from minority language communities do well in school?

MTB MLE is based on the foundational principle of all good education: We learn when we can use what we already know to help us understand what is new. MTB MLE teachers realize that young students' MT and the knowledge and experience they bring from home provide the best foundation for helping them learn new things in school.

Here is an example of the way that an MTB MLE teacher applies this principle to help her students understand a new Math lesson.

## Math lesson: Introduce students to the metric system

For today's Math lesson, the MTB MLE teacher is supposed to introduce her students to the metric system. She wants to be sure that her students *understand* this new system so they can use it correctly.

The teacher realizes that her students already know about measuring because people in their community have had their own measuring system for a long time. The students have often seen people use their fingers, forearms, footsteps, pieces of bamboo and other things to measure objects of all sizes. They already know many of the MT words that people in their community use to describe different lengths, sizes and weights.

So the teacher does not start the lesson by handing out metric rulers and telling students to measure millimetres and centimetres. Instead, she divides the students into teams and assigns each team one of the traditional ways of measuring. She tells them to practice that way of measuring so they can demonstrate it for the rest of the class.

After all the teams have finished their demonstrations, the teacher asks questions such as these: In our community, what is the best way to measure things that are very small, like your fingernail? What word do we use to talk about something that small? What is the best way to measure things that are very long, like a vegetable garden? What words do we use to talk about something that size?

The teacher encourages her students to talk together and then share their answers. And then she introduces the metric system because now she can use the students' knowledge about traditional ways of measuring to help them understand the new system.



Thradari teacher uses local plants to teach a science lesson. (Pakistan)

© Sindh Literacy and Development Program, Pakistan

The paragraphs below describe the features of MTB MLE programmes that help children learn successfully in school. As you read them, you will see that they are all closely related to the principle above—teachers start with what the students already know to help them learn what is new.

**MTB MLE students learn to read and write in their MT.** MTB MLE teachers realize that memorizing the names of letters is not the same as “reading”. They know that copying words from the chalkboard is not the same as “writing.” They understand that the purpose of reading and writing in school is to learn and communicate thoughts and ideas. And they understand that their students cannot “read-to-learn” or “write-to-communicate” in a language that they do not understand.

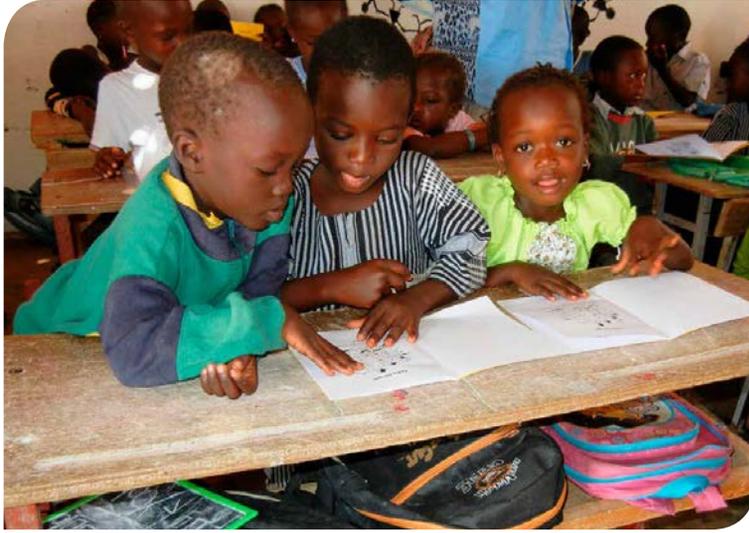
MTB MLE teachers read to their young students every day. They read stories in the MT about people, places and activities that the students know from their daily lives. Students see the teacher holding a small book or pointing to words on a Big Book or poster as she reads. Soon they realize that the “marks” on a printed page communicate a real message. That is an essential first step in helping students become fluent readers and writers.



Patani Malay students listen as their teacher reads a Big Book story in their mother tongue. (Thailand)

© Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand

MTB MLE teachers help their students learn to match the individual sounds of their language with the letters of their alphabet. They teach students to put letters together to understand words and read sentences. From the first week of school, teachers encourage their students to spend time with books. They show students how to use the pictures on each page to tell the story in their book. Through all these activities, students quickly begin to see themselves as readers. In fact, young students begin to enjoy reading so much that teachers say that their students want to stay in the classroom and read during recess time rather than go outside to play. One of the biggest “problems” for MTB MLE teachers is that their students keep asking for more books!



Seereer pre-primary students use pictures to help them read the story in their MT book. (Senegal)  
© SIL International, Senegal

MTB MLE teachers encourage their students to write creatively in their MT about things they know and think about, even before the students can form letters neatly and spell words correctly. They also help students learn the MT spelling rules and give them time to practice writing words and sentences.



KG2 Patani Malay student's MT story. (Thailand)  
© Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand

When MTB MLE students do all these activities, they become confident writers who love to communicate their thoughts and ideas in written form. Two Kindergarten Year 2 (KG2) teachers in the Patani Malay-Thai MTB BE programme described what happens in their classrooms:

*"In the past, when we wrote incorrectly on the chalkboard, the students didn't know but now they notice our mistakes!"*

*"I cannot leave chalk on the table during the lunch period because students use it to write stories on the chalkboard. When I come back to the classroom, they call me to listen to them read what they wrote and that takes up class time. I did not teach them those stories; the stories come from their own ideas."<sup>1</sup>*

**MTB MLE students learn to understand and speak the official school language.**

At first, students listen and respond (no speaking) to their teacher's commands in the school language to do specific actions. Examples: "Walk to the door." "Pick up a book." "Point to the tree." Teachers follow a careful plan that introduces new vocabulary and new sentence constructions in "small steps" that never make students feel frustrated or afraid. Quite the opposite--students have fun as they learn new words and new sentence constructions.



Lahu student listens as the teacher says a word in the school language and points to the matching thing in the picture. (Thailand)

© Foundation for Applied Linguistics, Thailand

When they are ready, teachers encourage the students to begin talking in the official school language. At first they respond to the teachers' questions with single words. Then they respond in short sentences. Their teacher continues to help them take "small steps" in learning and as a result, they are confident in using their new language. Parents laugh when they tell teachers that their small children come home from school and tell them commands in the official school language!

**Students begin reading and writing the official school language.** When students have begun to develop fluency in reading and writing their MT and when they have learned the

1 Translated from an article in [www.isranews.org](http://www.isranews.org) March 2010

necessary vocabulary in the official language, they are ready to begin reading and writing that language. Students continue to develop fluency and confidence in listening, speaking, reading and writing their MT *and* the official school language(s) to the end of primary school.

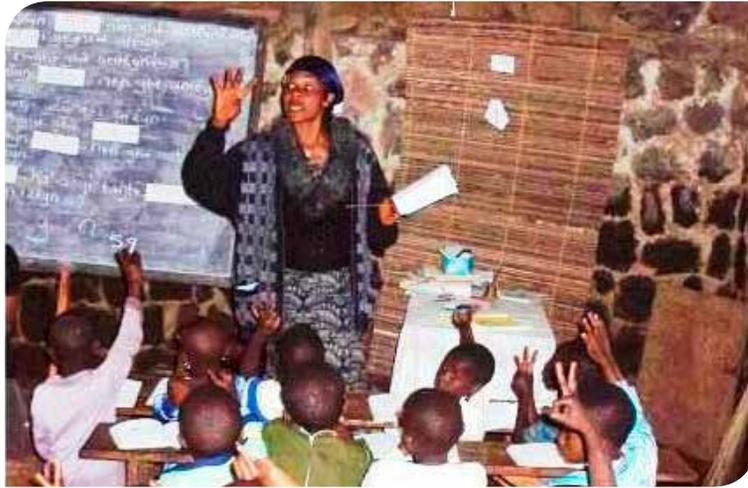


Patani Malay Grade 3 student's story in Thai, her second school language. (Thailand)

© Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand

**Teachers use students' MT as one of the languages of instruction in all grades.**

Teachers use the students' MT for teaching all subjects, except the official school language, in early grades. They provide activities that encourage students to use their MT as they think and talk together about new ideas. They use the things their students already know to introduce new concepts in math, science and other subjects. They provide team activities that challenge students to talk together as they apply what they have learned so they understand and can use their new knowledge for further learning.



Young Kom students are eager to answer the teacher because they can use their MT. (Cameroon)  
© SIL International, Cameroon

**Teachers use the students' MT and the official school language for instruction in middle primary grades.** Once students have learned something in their MT, they will transfer that knowledge to any other language they have learned. So MTB MLE teachers introduce new concepts in the MT and, when the students demonstrate that they understand, they re-teach the main points in the official school language. They speak carefully so students can understand and learn the vocabulary. They ask questions that students answer in official language and encourage students to help each other as needed. Then teachers finish the lesson by asking questions in the MT to make sure students understand the new concept.

**Teachers use the students' MT to support the official school language for instruction in the last year of primary school.** Teachers know that their students must be able to use a higher level of the official school language once they move into secondary school and their subjects become increasingly abstract. So in the last year of MTB MLE teachers focus on helping students learn new concepts and at the same time learn more abstract vocabulary in the official language. Now teachers begin the lesson in the official school language. They introduce the more abstract terms relating to the new concepts and make sure students understand and can use the terms correctly as they do activities and then talk about what they have learned. Teachers then finish the lesson by asking several questions in the MT to check students' understanding.

Why continue the MT to the end of primary school? The answer to that question, given in the quotation below, has been confirmed many times and in many places:

*The level of development of children's mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development... Children...with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the school language.*

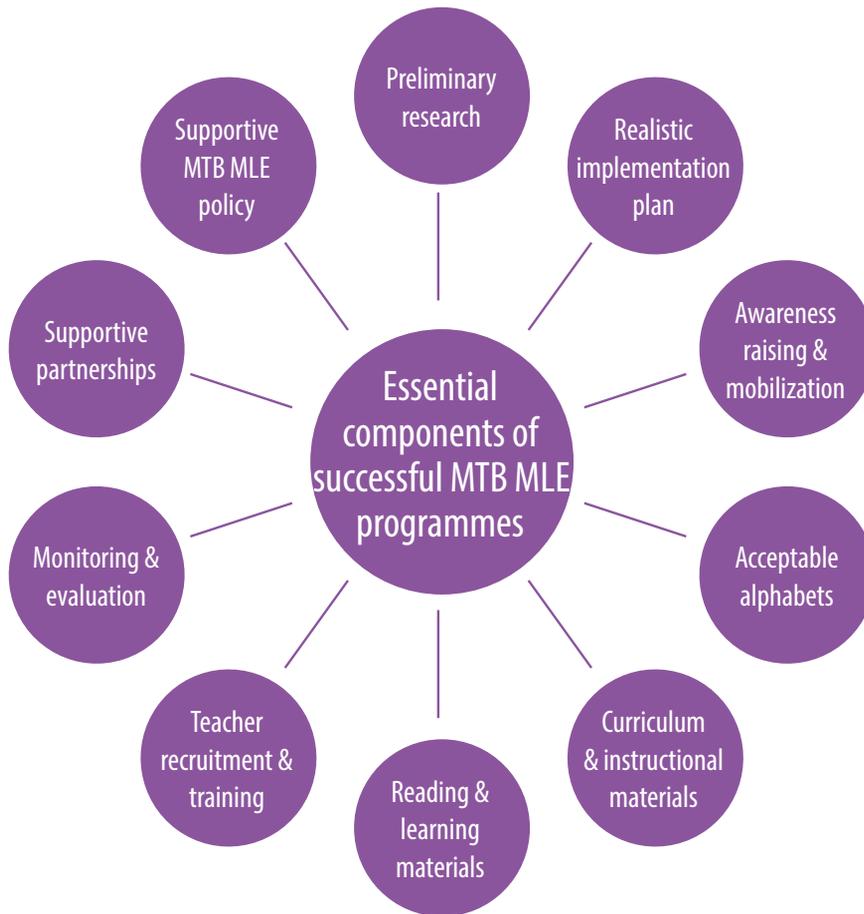
*When children continue to develop their abilities in two or more languages throughout their primary school years, they gain a deeper understanding of language and how to use it effectively. They have more practice in processing language, especially when they develop literacy in both, and they are able to compare and contrast the ways in which their two languages organize reality (Cummins, 2000).*

**To summarize:** Using the MT as the first language in school is *not* a waste of time. It does *not* take away from the students' ability to learn the official school language and it does *not* make it harder for students to learn other subjects. In fact, students' MT is an essential resource for learning new languages and new concepts.

## Q3 How can we develop and support MTB MLE in our community?

Successful MTB MLE programmes require cooperation and support from many people at all levels of government. Most important is that people in the community want MTB MLE for their children and that parents and others in the community support teachers, principals and local education officials in making their programme successful.

The diagram below identifies the essential components of strong and successful MTB MLE programmes. If the programme is established in the formal education system, responsibility for some parts of the programme belongs to policy makers and to district, provincial and national education officials. But community members' support is essential.



The **Booklet for Policy Makers** and the **Booklet for Implementers** describe the activities related to each of the components in the diagram above. Community members who want to support MTB MLE for their children can use those booklets to learn more about the process of implementing strong programmes. The short sections below describe the parts of the programme that especially need support from the community.

### **Preliminary research**

Before beginning an MTB MLE programme for their children, local leaders collect information from parents and other community members. These questions are especially important:

- What language(s) do small children in this community hear and use at home? What language(s) do they hear and use in the community?
- Are people proud of their language and culture and committed to passing it on to future generations?
- Do people recognize a problem with the education provided by their local school?
- Do they want to work together to improve the situation?

If people answer a strong “NO” to the last three questions, it will be difficult to get community support for an MTB MLE programme. However, sometimes people have not yet understood the importance of language in education. They may not realize that their heritage language is in danger because children hear and use only the official language in school and are starting to forget their MT. Programme leaders may take “no” as a reason to start a good awareness-raising campaign for MTB MLE.

When they do have community support for MTB MLE, programme leaders need additional information. Here are examples of questions to ask:

- Who can write stories in the MT about people and activities that are familiar and interesting for children in each grade?
- Who can edit the stories and check that the language is written correctly?
- Who can draw pictures that will help children understand the text on each page?
- Are there people who can serve as teachers?
- Which women and men are experts in the culture and can identify traditional wisdom and practices that can be used in classrooms and put into books?
- What buildings, equipment and other resources might be available for materials development and training?
- How can the community support MTB MLE teachers?

Programme leaders also need to identify problems that might hinder or even stop the programme so they can plan possible actions before the problems arise. Examples of questions to ask:

- What happens to local roads and rivers during the rainy season?
- Do parents migrate to different areas for farming or work and take their children?
- Do the school and/or teachers’ houses need repair?
- Are there separate clean toilet facilities for girls and for boys on the school grounds?
- Is the water safe for students to drink?
- Is there a place to store books and other classroom materials so they will be safe from rain, rats and insects?

Also, in regard to identifying potential problems, programme leaders need to talk with the principal and teachers in the local school. What do they know about MTB MLE? Do they understand why and how it helps children learn? As the example from Liberia (p. 13) demonstrates, community members might be very supportive of MTB MLE but if the school principal and other staff or local officials do not understand and support it, they can stop the programme before it begins.

As programme leaders interact with people, they can also share information about the benefits of MTB MLE. Research, along with awareness raising and mobilization, should continue as the programme expands to additional communities.

### **Awareness raising and mobilization**

Some local education officials (and some parents) may think that, in order to become fluent in the official school language, children need to start learning it as **soon** as possible and use it as **much** as possible. They are afraid that any time spent using the children's MT in school means less time, and even less success, in learning the official school language. This is what happened in Liberia:

#### **The importance of good information**

During a meeting with the school authorities, one of the teachers informed us that even though they had completed two MTB MLE training workshops, the school principal refused to accept the programme in their school. According to the teacher, the principal told them, ***"We are trying to take the children from darkness and you want us to take them back? Such a programme cannot be allowed in the school."***

Later, one of the local authorities told the MTB MLE supervisors, ***"If we had fully understood the essence of this programme, we would have prevailed on the principal to allow the programme to start in the school because it is good for our children."***<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of awareness raising and mobilization is to share information about MTB MLE and encourage people to take an active part in implementing and supporting an MTB MLE programme for their children.

Here are a few examples of activities<sup>3</sup> that programme leaders can use to raise awareness and mobilize their community:

- Make colorful posters that provide information about MTB MLE and put them in places around the community where many people will see and read them.
- Encourage community people who support MTB MLE to give speeches, do skits and demonstrations in different places with different groups, for example
  - Council meetings
  - Village markets and other informal gathering places
  - Religious meetings
  - Women's and youth group meetings
  - NGO meetings and workshops

2 2011, Supervisor's report, Liberian Languages and English Multilingual Education (LLEME) programme, Liberia

3 From S. Malone 2010

- Produce short books and other materials in the MT and sell or distribute them at the local market, churches, schools, shops and other places where people gather.
- If an MTB MLE programme has been established outside the community, encourage local officials to attend special events in which young students demonstrate their reading and learning abilities.



Parkari students demonstrate what they have learned at a Literacy Day celebration. (Pakistan)  
© Sindh Literacy and Development Program, Pakistan

## Acceptable alphabets

Researchers have identified 7,097 “living languages” in the world (Ethnologue. 2016). Several decades ago that number was over 8000. Most of the languages that have been lost are “non-dominant” or minority languages. The quotation earlier in this booklet from the parent in Papua New Guinea describes the situation clearly: When schools focus only on the official language and culture, students lose respect for the language and culture of their parents. When that happens their language begins to die.

Researchers have also found that almost half of the languages that are still used for oral communication have never been put into written form. A strong MTB MLE programme is not possible in an unwritten language but that does not need to stop people who want MTB MLE for their children. The **Booklet for Policy Makers** in this **MTB MLE Resource Kit** describes the basic steps in developing an alphabet for unwritten languages or revising an alphabet that is no longer accepted by the local community or by the government.

MT speakers, supported by a linguist who is familiar with languages like theirs, can make decisions about which letters or symbols best represent the important sounds of their language. When the community has developed a tentative alphabet, they test it with as many MT speakers as possible and make the necessary revisions. In some countries, a designated government agency must approve alphabets for minority languages before they are officially accepted for use in school.



Pashai girl reading her MT alphabet chart. (Afghanistan)  
© Serve, Afghanistan

The idea of developing an alphabet for an unwritten language may seem very difficult. However, with help from linguists, hundreds of language communities in every part of the world have done just that and with great success. Even while they are still testing their alphabet, MT speakers can begin creating graded reading materials for their MTB MLE programme. In fact, the process of writing stories, and asking other MT speakers to read them, is an excellent way to test the choice of letters and/or symbols used in a new alphabet. An important point to remember is that it's best to use an inexpensive process (such as photocopiers) to print classroom materials, at least until MT speakers accept their alphabet and it has been officially approved.

### **Curriculum and teaching materials**

Community members are usually not responsible for developing curriculum and teaching materials for MTB MLE programmes established in the formal education system. But they have an essential role in checking that the materials used in their school use the language correctly, affirm the children's cultural heritage and build on the knowledge and skills that children bring when they begin school. Here are some of the things that MT speakers contribute to the process of developing curriculum and teaching materials for their MTB MLE programme:

- They identify the things that small children have already learned by the time they enter school. When teachers have this information, they can use what the students already know to help them understand new math, science and other concepts.

- They identify the MT terms for things like “measure”, “add”, “subtract”, “weight”, and “directions” so teachers use the correct terms for teaching. In the process of identifying MT terms that relate to concepts in the curriculum, MT speakers can begin creating a “MT School Dictionary.” This will be a valuable resource for teachers and students.
- They identify traditional instruments, tools and other cultural items that can be used to create a “Cultural Corner” in each classroom and that teachers can use for lessons.
- They identify people in the community who can visit the school and teach traditional songs, dances, games, clothing, and tools.



Torwali students dance during Culture Time. (Pakistan)  
© Institute for Education and Development, Bahrain Swat

### ***Reading and learning materials***

A common experience in strong MTB MLE programmes is that students keep asking for more things to read, first in their MT and then also in the official school language. Wise programme leaders make the production of graded reading materials a priority from the very beginning.

MT reading materials for early grades must be written in clear and simple language about people, places, and activities that are very familiar to the students. Pictures on each page match the words on that page in books for new readers because they will depend on the pictures to help them understand the text. People, animals, plants and buildings in the pictures look like the things students see every day in their community. In fact, the only new thing in books for new readers is that the stories are in written form.

One of the most enjoyable parts of preparing for MTB MLE are the “Writers’ Workshops”. MT speakers who are fluent in their MT get together to write graded reading materials in their language. When local artists are identified, MT authors work with them to plan the illustrations that will best match the text. Editors can then check spelling and grammar. With a good team

of writers, artists and editors, a language community can develop a collection of MT reading materials that will encourage children to love reading.<sup>4</sup>

If there are not enough fluent MT speakers who have learned to write their MT fluently, it's not a problem. MT speakers who have learned to read and write another language can quickly learn to read and write their own. A brief introduction to their MT alphabet and time to practice writing should be all the new authors need to begin producing their MT stories.



Gawri authors proudly hold up their newly written stories. (Pakistan)  
© Forum for Language Initiatives, Pakistan



MT speakers from many languages hold up their stories. (Philippines)  
© SIL International, Philippines

4 A resource for developing graded reading materials can be found at [http://www.sil.org/sites/default/files/files/resource\\_for\\_developing\\_graded\\_reading\\_materials\\_2013.pdf](http://www.sil.org/sites/default/files/files/resource_for_developing_graded_reading_materials_2013.pdf)

We can identify four general stages of materials that are needed in successful MTB MLE programmes:

Stages of reading materials for successful MTB MLE			
Stage 1 MT	Stage 2 MT	Stage 3 2 <sup>nd</sup> language (L2)	Stage 4 MT and/or L2
<p><b>Audience:</b> New and early readers</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Learn that written text communicates meaning; gain confidence in reading.</p> <p><b>Length / content:</b> Short and simple, about familiar topics.</p>	<p><b>Audience:</b> Readers who have gained basic reading skills</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Build fluency; begin to use reading to learn new things.</p> <p><b>Length / content:</b> Longer, about familiar topics and introduce new topics.</p>	<p><b>Audience:</b> Readers who are ready to read in a new language</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Use what they have learned about reading in the MT to begin reading the new language.</p> <p><b>Length / Content:</b> Same as Stage 1.</p>	<p><b>Audience:</b> Fluent readers in both MT and L2</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Read to learn and for enjoyment</p> <p><b>Length / content:</b> No specific length; variety of topics from the MT culture and from the world outside the community. Includes MT and L2 (or bilingual) textbooks.</p>



Young Dai students love to read “Stage 1” stories in their MT. (China)

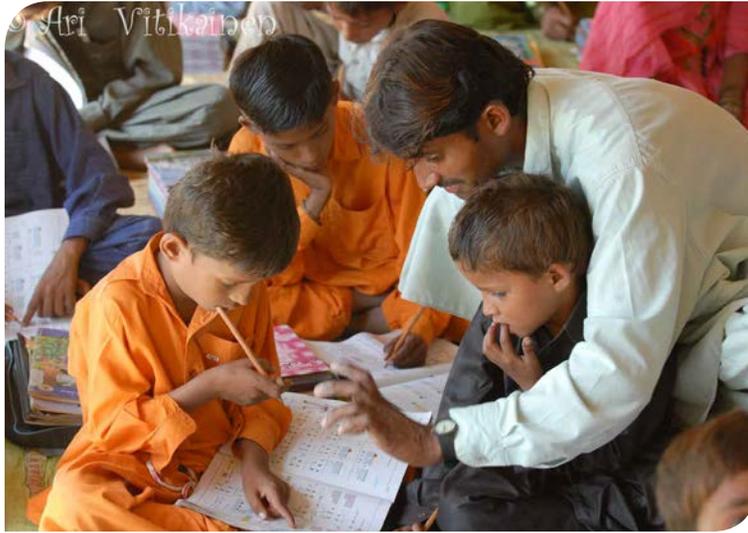
© SIL International, China

## Teacher (and other) recruitment

The table below identifies the community members who will be needed to support MTB MLE in local schools:

Staff	Responsibilities	General qualifications
Teachers	As assigned by provincial or national education department.	<p>Speak, read and write both languages fluently.</p> <p>Understand and appreciate the local culture.</p> <p>Have clear and legible handwriting.</p> <p>Acceptable to parents and other community members.</p>
Teaching assistants	Provide classroom support for the teacher, especially in subjects teaching or using the MT.	<p>Speak, read and write the MT and school language fluently.</p> <p>Understand and appreciate the local culture.</p> <p>Acceptable to parents and other community members.</p>
Cultural experts	<p>Identify features of the students' home culture that can be used to introduce new concepts in school.</p> <p>Identify MT terms that teachers will use to introduce new concepts (Ex: MT word for measuring length).</p>	<p>Recognized and respected in the community for their knowledge of the language and culture.</p>
Writers, artists, editors	<p>Write, adapt, and translate reading materials in the MT and official school language.</p> <p>Illustrate the materials.</p> <p>Check the materials for clarity, language, punctuation and spelling, then revise them as necessary.</p>	<p>Speak, read and write, the L1 competently.</p> <p>Understand and appreciate the local culture.</p> <p>Recognized in the community as good storyteller and/or artist.</p> <p>Literate in the L2 and able to adapt materials from the L2 into the L1 or vice-versa</p> <p>Understand MT grammar and punctuation rules (editors).</p> <p>Approved by the community.</p>

Staff	Responsibilities	General qualifications
Supervisor	<p>Visit classes regularly; help teachers when they have problems.</p> <p>Help main (government) supervisor to assess learners' progress.</p> <p>Make sure accurate records are kept.</p> <p>Help with pre-service and in-service training for teachers.</p> <p>Ensure that adequate classroom supplies are on hand.</p>	<p>Speak, read and write MT and school language fluently.</p> <p>Knowledgeable about the community's history and culture.</p> <p>Confident in interactions with government officers, school officials and NGO leaders.</p> <p>Experience in classroom teaching.</p> <p>Approved by the community.</p>
Advisory / support committee	<p>Communicate the goals, objectives and activities of the programme to the community.</p> <p>Support communication between officials and community.</p> <p>Encourage the community to maintain classrooms and classroom materials, toilets and school grounds and support teachers.</p> <p>Ensure that teachers are in school every day and treat students appropriately.</p> <p>If needed, raise funds to support the program and ensure accountability in the use of funding and other resources.</p>	<p>Support the purpose and goals of the programme.</p> <p>Committed to the programme and willing to work together for its success.</p> <p>Approved by the community.</p>



Kachhi teacher and his pupils. (Pakistan)  
© Sindh Literacy and Development Program, Pakistan

### ***Monitoring and evaluation***

When MTB MLE programmes are established within the formal education system, education officials are responsible for evaluating most parts of the programme. But since people from outside the community may not understand the students' MT, they will depend on community members' help in conducting the evaluations and in helping to analyze the results.

Community members also help to evaluate the quality of MT reading materials. They observe the materials that students choose to read during "free reading time" in school and at the end of the school year they identify the reading materials that are well liked and should be re-printed and those that need to be revised or discarded.

School committees meet regularly with teachers to identify problems and mobilize the community to maintain classrooms, toilet facilities, the school grounds and teachers' residences.

### ***Supportive partnerships***

Successful programmes have the full support of people within and outside their language communities. MT speakers create the MT reading materials, teach the classes and ensure that materials and buildings are maintained. When they identify the components of the programme that are going well, communities work together to ensure that those components are maintained and when problems arise, they solve them together.



Several language communities work together to prepare materials for teachers. (Liberia)  
© Liberian Translation and Literacy Organization, Liberia

Successful MTB MLE programmes also require cooperation between MT speakers and people from outside the language community. Cooperation is especially important for developing or revising the MT alphabet, recruiting and training teachers and other staff, supervising classes, conducting and documenting preliminary research and evaluating programme components.

Establishing relationships with government agencies and NGOs is an important strategy but it is not always easy for people in local communities to reach “up” to district, provincial and national officials to ask for their help. Three of the programmes in the Case Study book in this **MTB MLE Resource Kit** describe the way that language communities developed MTB MLE programmes outside the formal education system. In all three cases, community members worked with partners from outside the community. In each case, the programmes have been successful in helping students move from the MTB MLE programme into the formal education system.

## Q4 What do people within and outside minority language communities say about MTB MLE?

A teacher in the Regional Lingua Franca Programme in the Philippines compared her MTB MLE students with the students she had taught in Filipino and English:

*Before, the children just sat in class but they didn't say anything. They didn't even know how to answer the teacher's questions. Now they always have their hands up! They have so much to say. Now this is an active, excited group of children.*

Supervisors report that teachers are happy because their students are learning the official school language so well. This is what a supervisor said about the Hmong MTB MLE programme in Thailand:

*In the early years teachers worried that using the mother tongue would impede their students' ability to learn Thai, the national language. However, support for the programme increased as people have seen that children in the MLE project enjoy coming to school and are confident in expressing themselves and responding to the teacher. Any remaining doubt turned to support when the teachers saw how quickly the children who had gained literacy in their MT were able to read and write in Thai.*

Communities with good MTB MLE programmes report that now students love coming to school. Here is what Rajbanshi people in Nepal say about the children in their MTB MLE programme (one of the programmes described in the **Case Studies booklet** in this **MTB MLE Resource Kit**).

*The students are ready to come to school even though it's just 8 o'clock in the morning. They come early and enjoy playing with their friends. During the language session, they are fully engaged in the story. They are curious and have a great imagination. They have confidence in talking and asking questions. They learn mathematics from local materials and the teachers talk to them only in their mother tongue. They sing songs in local melodies. Even the snack is local food. Everything is so familiar to the students.*

*You can hear their laughter from far away. You can see their smiling faces all the time. They are happy. They love learning. They are not going to an alien place to study. School is just like their 'home'.*

Students and their parents are the most important stakeholders in MTB MLE programmes. Parents know that if their children are not doing well in their classes, the children will drop out of school. Therefore, they are very happy when they see that their children are excited about learning and love going to school. This is what people in the Benishangul Gumuz region of Ethiopia said about their MTB MLE programme:

*Before, when our children went to school and everything was taught in Amharic, we saw how they were suffering and how disappointed they were. It was a very negative experience. Children dropping out of school—it was a normal occurrence. As parents, we were reluctant to bother sending them to school. But now they are learning in our own language... and they are excelling - not just in the mother tongue class, but in ALL their other classes too. They have become very clever!*

*Now we understand that our language is just as good as every other language. Before we thought it was inferior because our children were not learning in school. This gives us equal status with all other language groups.*

*Since our children now get a better education, our own interest in school is high. We now participate in all kinds of school-related activities: we help to take care of the school, and we meet to discuss the well-being of our children. This kind of thing never happened before (Blacksten, 2014, pp. 4-5).*

Finally, UNESCO points out the benefits of MTB MLE to individual nations, and to the world:

*Education has a vital role to play in building resilience against violent conflict. Schools in the twenty-first century need above all to teach children what is arguably the single most vital skill for a flourishing multi-cultural society – the skill of living peacefully with other people.*

*Awareness of religious, ethnic, linguistic and racial diversity should not be banished from the classroom. On the contrary, diversity should be recognized and celebrated (UNESCO, 2010, p. 36).*

Language communities cannot develop and sustain good MTB MLE programmes without support from the government and other external partners. But governments cannot develop and sustain MTB MLE without the full participation of MT speakers in the language communities. Only when all partners work together in planning, implementing and supporting MTB MLE will “Education for Some” become “Education for All.”

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for Education

## MTB MLE RESOURCE KIT

Including the Excluded: Promoting Multilingual Education

# Case Studies Booklet

# **MTB MLE RESOURCE KIT**

Including the Excluded:

Promoting Multilingual Education

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## **Booklet for Case Studies**

Published in 2018 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

and

UNESCO Bangkok Office

1<sup>st</sup> edition: 2016

2<sup>nd</sup> edition: 2018

© UNESCO 2018

ISBN: 978-92-9223-556-7 (print version)

ISBN: 978-92-9223-557-4 (electronic version)



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Cover photos: © Serve, Afghanistan

TH/IQE/16/035-800-Rev.

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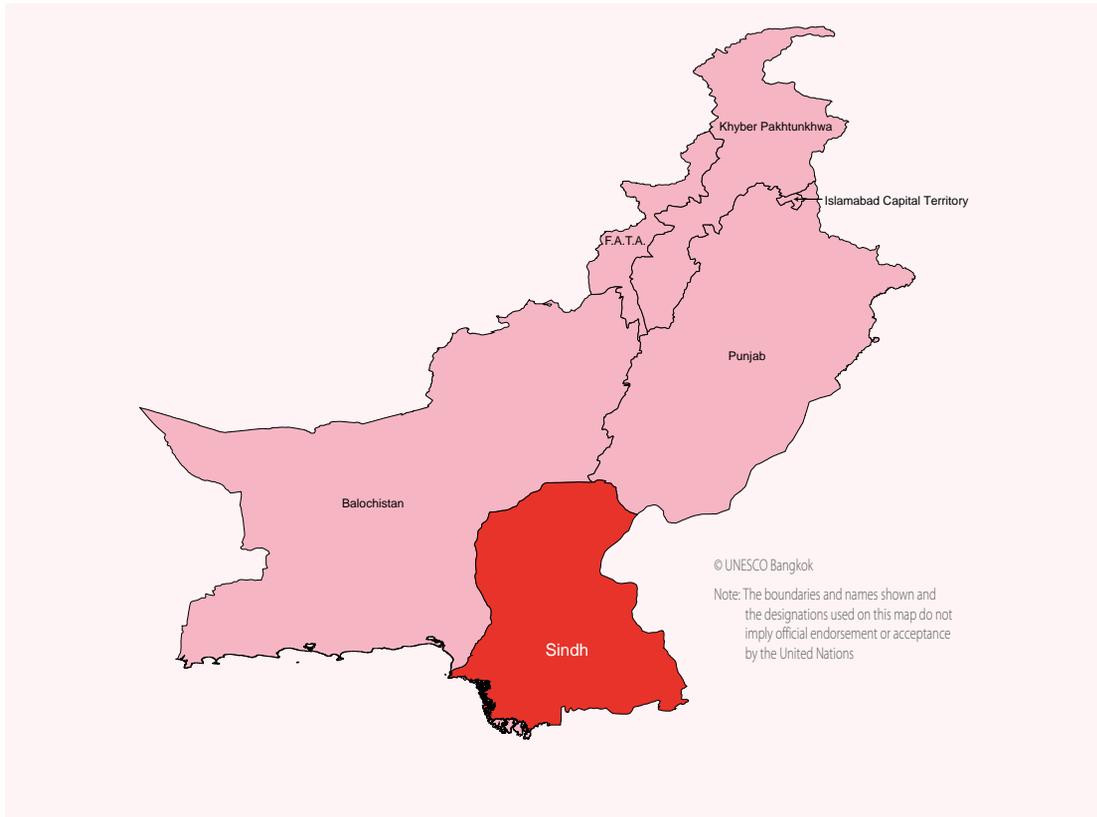
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# Introduction

Mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB MLE) programmes provide students from minority language communities with a strong foundation for learning in their mother tongue (MT) and then a good “bridge” to learning in one or more official school languages. In strong and well-planned MTB MLE programmes, students achieve success because they continually use what they already know to help them learn new concepts and new skills.

The case studies that follow describe MTB MLE programmes for pre-primary and primary school-age children in five Asian countries: Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Viet Nam. Three of the programmes—in Afghanistan, Nepal and Pakistan—were implemented outside the formal education system and prepare students to enter and then progress through primary grades. The other two programmes—the Philippines and Viet Nam—have been implemented within the formal system with support from policy makers and national education departments.

The same general questions are used for all the case studies so that you can compare and contrast strategies and identify those that seem most realistic in your own contexts.



## Pakistan: Sindh Literacy and Development Programme<sup>1</sup>

### Where do the language communities in the Sindh Literacy and Development programme live?

The Sindh Literacy and Development (SLD) programme works with four literacy and development organizations in Sindh Province, Pakistan. These are the Parkari Community Development Programme (PCDP)<sup>2</sup>, the Kachhi Community Development Association (KCDA), the Thradari Community Development Organization (TCDO) and the Dhatki Community Development Programme (DCDP).

The SLD programme works with two newer organizations that have been established by the Marwari people in two geographic areas—one group living in Sindh Province and the other in Punjab Province.

<sup>1</sup> Ms. Erona Matthew, PCDP Managing Director, provided the information for this section.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.unesco.org/uiil/litbase/?menu=4&programme=221>

## **What was the educational situation for the children in these communities before the programme began?**

Before the SLD programme began, many of the children in the Parkari, Kachhi, Thradari and Dhatki communities had no access to education. Some lived in remote areas where there were no government schools. In some areas, people lived on land belonging to rich landowners who did not allow the ethnic minority children to attend school. Many people did not understand the importance of education and health and were not aware that they had basic human rights. If problems arose, people often did not realize that they could work through the problems together. When project leaders started bringing awareness about MT literacy and education to people in their language communities, they also presented information about community health. They encouraged people to work together and advocate for basic human rights. Slowly the situation changed and as people became interested in education they also began to realize that they could work together to improve their communities.

## **What are the programme goals?**

All the programmes share the same goals. These are to provide good primary education for children, to improve community sanitation and health and to bring the communities together to advocate for human rights.

## **Which agencies or organizations support the programme?**

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) provided funding to PCDP to open five MTB MLE schools. CIDA also provided funding to KCDA for their programme.

Since 2007, Wycliffe Norway, in cooperation with Norway Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), has provided funding for PCDP and KCDA to open schools and expand their adult literacy and other development work.

Since 2015, The Seed Company has provided funding for TCDO and DCDP as well as two new literacy projects sponsored by the Marwari Community Development Organization (MCDO) in Sindh and Punjab.

SIL International literacy specialists and consultants continue to provide technical support in language development, MT materials development and teacher training.

## **Does the programme have policy support?**

The government of Pakistan does not have a specific policy that supports MTB MLE. However, there is a relationship between Sindh provincial government officials and some SLD schools, teachers and supervisors. Because of these relationships some SLD schools have been registered with the provincial government and school supervisors have the authority to issue government exams. Some SLD schools have not been registered. Students in these schools are registered

in a nearby government school and are allowed to sit in the government school to write the government exams. Another example of provincial government support is that MTB MLE students receive a government syllabus and books without charge.

### **When did the programme begin and how did it develop?**

In 2000 the Parkari Community Development Programme (PCDP) initiated an MTB MLE pilot programme for the Parkari language community. People from the community attended writers' workshops where they developed graded reading materials in the MT. Programme leaders also held workshops to train teachers and to train village committees to take responsibility for their local school. Five schools were initiated in the Parkari pilot programme.

In 2001 the Kachhi Community Development Association (KCDA) developed materials in their language and opened a pilot school in the Kachhi community.

In 2007, Thradari and Dhatki leaders began mobilizing their communities for MTB MLE and developing MT materials. In 2010 each group opened a pilot school in their language areas.

The PCDP now has 29 MTB MLE schools; the KCDA has 16 schools and the TCDO and DCDP have one school each. PCDP students begin MTB MLE in Kindergarten and continue through Grade 8. KCDA, TCDO and DCDP schools go from Kindergarten to Grade 5.

PCDP and KCDA have now moved well beyond the pilot stage. TCDO and DCDP are finishing their pilot programmes and preparing to expand to new schools. Leaders of the two Marwari programmes are currently creating MT materials and doing community awareness to initiate their MTB MLE programmes.

In response to the request from communities for MTB MLE, PCDP has also started community self-help schools. These schools have a specific MT focus but the transfer to Sindhi, the first official school language, takes place more quickly. It is done this way because it is hard to find funding for a full five-year primary school. Because the students who completed their MTB MLE education were so successful in further schooling, PCDP has added a MT foundation to their self-help schools. Village adult education centres are following this same pattern.

### **How do you develop MTB MLE curriculum and classroom materials?**

Government schools in Sindh province require students to learn three languages. The first language is Sindhi, the official language of Sindh province. The second is Urdu, the national language of Pakistan and the third is English. MTB MLE schools teach the students' MT as the first language so students learn four languages before finishing primary school.

MT literacy workers, with technical support from SIL International literacy specialists and consultants, developed the curriculum for the MTB MLE schools. The curriculum is based on the government syllabus for each grade but adds MTB MLE-specific learning outcomes matched to

each government competency. The team then adds performance indicators for each learning outcome. The indicators state the things that students should be able to do to show they have achieved each outcome. Government supervisors have expressed their appreciation for the curriculum and given MTB MLE teachers permission to use it.

Teaching materials follow a pedagogical approach to language education that focuses on both meaning and accuracy. Men and women from the local communities attend writing workshops each year where they learn to create stories that relate to the students' community and culture. These stories are for teachers to read to their students and for children to read alone or together. For academic subjects, the curriculum team reviewed government textbooks to identify the content of each of the lessons. They then developed MT-specific lessons to teach the same content but using local themes that build on MT students' knowledge and experience. All the materials were checked with literacy consultants and tested in the community.

PCDP began the first literacy project and so was the first to develop a MT curriculum and materials. The other SLD literacy projects have used PCDP's materials as a guide in developing materials for their own programmes. SIL consultants have continued to help the newer literacy projects with planning and by checking materials.

### **How do you train teachers?**

Teachers for MT1 and MT2<sup>3</sup> take part in one pre-service and two in-service training workshops in which they learn MLE principles and teaching methodology. They practice the games, songs and other learning activities that they will use in their classrooms. Teachers also have time to practice reading and writing in their MT since this will be different from their own primary education experience. During in-service training, teachers are encouraged to give feedback and discuss the challenges they are facing in their classrooms.

For primary Grades 1 to 5 there are usually two teacher-training workshops a year. The first training session focuses on the syllabus for that year. During in-service training, teachers can share teaching problems, learn about topics they will encounter in the syllabus and get any additional help they need. Pre- and in-service training also provides instruction and time to practice specific parts of the curriculum.

Each programme also organizes training events to build the capacity of male and female members of the village school committees so that they will know their roles and responsibilities in supporting their school and teachers and will be successful in managing their school.

### **How do you supervise classrooms?**

Each project has school supervisors who have been trained to monitor MTB MLE kindergarten and primary classes. School supervisors make weekly school visits. After each visit they complete

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3 MT1 and MT2 are equivalent to Kindergarten years 1 and 2.

a form that provides quantitative and qualitative information with details about teachers' and students' performance in the classroom. On each visit the school supervisor also meets with leaders of the village committee to learn about the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Each village school committee is expected to visit their school on a regular basis to ensure that the teacher is coming regularly and on time and that the children are present and doing well in school.

When possible, SIL literacy specialists and consultants visit the schools, both to share their insights in how the programme can be improved and to give encouragement to the literacy teams.

### **How do you evaluate students' progress?**

Students are evaluated by regular tests administered by teachers, internal exams from the MLE school supervisors and external government exams administered by MLE or government school supervisors.

In 2007, at the request of CIDA, international literacy consultants from SIL International carried out a final evaluation of the PCDP and KCDA pilot projects. Starting in 2009 NORAD has sent representatives to carry out a biennial evaluation of PCDP and KCDA and their literacy programmes.

### **What results have you seen to this point?**

One indication of the success and positive response to the programme is that many students who have completed the MTB MLE programme have gone on to complete high school and then returned as teachers. Here is a story from one of the villages with an MTB MLE school.

*In the beginning, only boys attended the MTB MLE school. Then the village leader encouraged people to send their girls and he also sent his daughter. As a result, seven girls began to attend the school even though many parents still kept their girls at home. When these seven girls were in primary school, they promised one another that since their parents had given them this opportunity, they would now take responsibility for bringing change to their village. So after they completed primary school they registered in the government high school. They were not regular students but the village teachers helped them study the government lessons and prepare to write the government exams. After high school they were accepted into college. During this time they started a campaign to bring awareness to parents of the importance of girls' education. Four girls were appointed as teachers in the MLE school and two of them trained as adult education teachers and were teaching the women in the newly opened adult education centre in their village. Currently there are 48 girls enrolled in the MLE school. There has been a significant change in the girls' village and it has become an example to parents in surrounding villages who have begun to see the importance of education, especially for girls.*



Parkari girls and boys learn together in their village school.<sup>4</sup> (Pakistan)  
© Sindh Literacy and Development Programme, Pakistan

Finally, there is the experience of thirty-five boys who had completed their primary schooling in Parkari village schools in the desert.

*The boys came to the city of Mirpurkhas to continue their studies. Since their homes and families were far away, they lived in a hostel and attended a government city school. At the end of each year from Grades 6 to 8, the top three positions in each class, including all sections in the government school, went to boys who had come from the Parkari desert schools and were living in the hostel. Even as a group, they were above any other group of students. Several times a Parkari boy took the top position in the entire school.*

*In the final years of high school, the exam scores from all schools in the area are used to decide class position. Once again, the Parkari boys finished at the top.*

The excerpt below presents the main points from a group interview with the Parkari hostel boys:

*When we first came to the city we were amazed to see all the big buildings, the hostel and the school. We wondered how we would study here because we were from a very poor background and had come from a desert school made of sticks and mud. At first we were afraid of the city school and the city children. We thought they would have a higher standard than we do and would think that we are low. It helped that we had started our education in Parkari. It's our own language. Studying in Parkari opened our minds and that is why it was easy to learn other languages. If we had not started in Parkari we would not be doing so well because we would not have had a good foundation. We have good marks. We get top marks in our exams. The headmaster compared our marks with the other boys in the school and we were much better.*

4 In some traditional societies in Pakistan parents do not think their daughters should go to school.

*The headmaster said to us, 'If you have other boys in your village, send them to our school.' The school and the teacher were given honour and respect because of our marks. Now we have respect too (translated by Ms. Erona Matthew).*

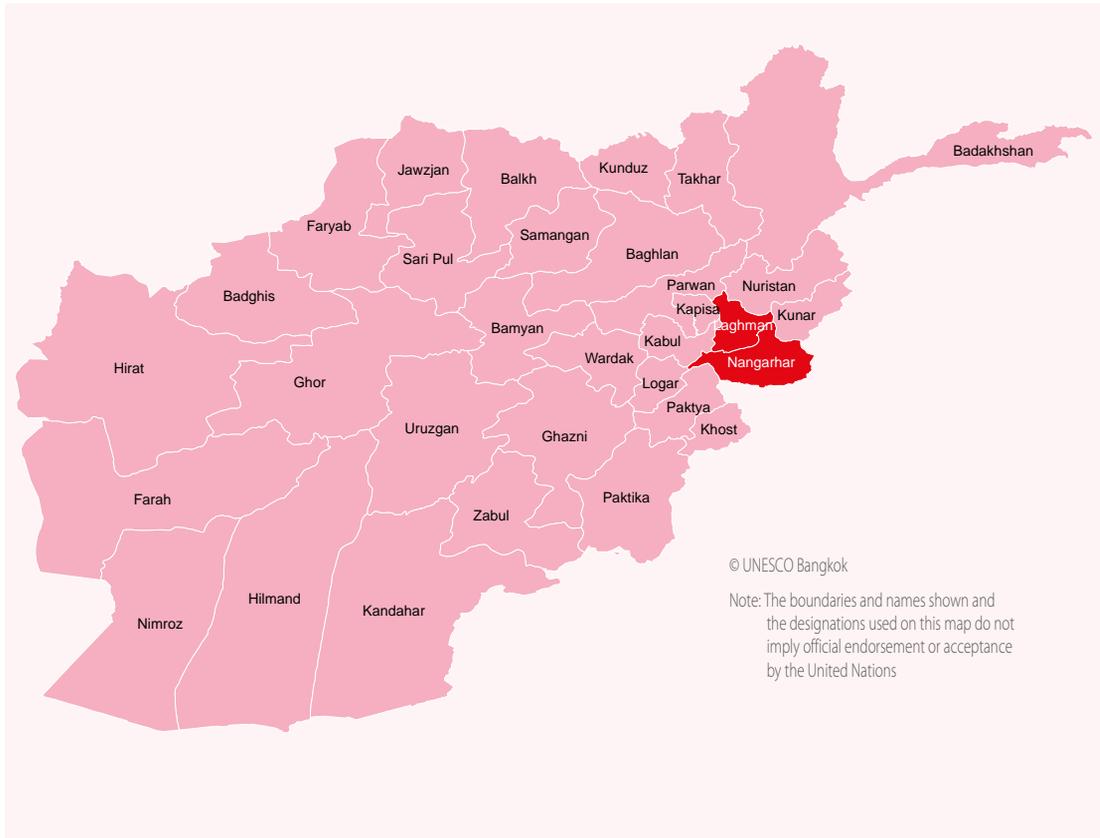


These Parkari boys from desert schools live in a hostel in the city so they can continue their education.

*© Sindh Literacy and Development Programme, Pakistan*

## **What are your plans for the future?**

As people in the area have seen the success of MT education, requests have come from many communities to open more MLE schools, but the lack of funding makes this very difficult. TCDO and DCDP are each planning to open two more schools in 2016. Two new language communities are developing materials for new pilot schools—one in each language—in 2017. PCDP and KCDA, the two established literacy projects, are focusing on sustainability through clusters and self-help groups. PCDP has initiated a Community Development Network that encourages local communities to provide financial support for their own MT schools and for other community development activities.



## Afghanistan: Pashai MTB BE Programme<sup>5</sup>

### Where do the Pashai people live?

Approximately 400,000 Pashai people live in northeastern Afghanistan. The Pashai mother tongue-based bilingual education (MTB BE) programme began in the Dara-i-Noor District of Nangarhar Province.

### What was the educational situation for Pashai children before the programme began?

Literacy rates in the areas where the Pashai live were extremely low. Although Pashai were bilingual in Pashai (their MT) and Pashto (one of the two official languages of Afghanistan), more than 85 percent of the people, including about 98 percent of the women, were illiterate

<sup>5</sup> Ms. Carloes Brink, Technical Coordinator for Literacy and Multilingual Education, Serve Afghanistan, provided information for this section.

in both languages. Many Pashai people could not find good jobs because they could not read or write. Many Pashai children did not start school and of those who did start, many dropped out after one or two years.

### **What are the programme goals?**

The programme goal has two parts. The first goal is that Pashai students will build a strong foundation in reading and writing in their mother tongue (MT) and gradually transfer their literacy skills to Pashto, the official school language in their area. The second goal is that students will develop confidence in themselves as learners, first in their MT and then in Pashto.

### **Which agencies or organizations support the programme?**

The Pashai MTB BE programme is supported by Serve Afghanistan, an international non-government organization (INGO). Other INGOs have also supported the programme: TearFund Australia, Tearfund UK, Tearfund New Zealand and SIL International have all provided financial and/or technical support.

### **Does the programme have policy support?**

In 2004 the Afghan government's new constitution included permission for the development and use of minority languages in education. The Pashai programme was given official status in 2006 by the local government and, in 2007, by the national government through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education. In 2014 the government finalized its "Inclusive and Child Friendly Education" policy. This policy includes a statement on the right of Afghan children to be educated in their mother tongue.

### **When did the programme begin and how did it grow?**

The Pashai Language Development Programme began in 1999. In the beginning, the focus was on teaching Pashai adults to read and write Pashto, the dominant language in this part of the country. This was because minority languages had not yet been approved for use in education and also because Pashai had not yet been put into written form.

In 2003, Pashai community leaders established a Pashai Language Committee. MT speakers developed the Pashai alphabet with linguistic support from SIL International.

In 2006, with permission from the Provincial government, the Pashai literacy team established MT literacy courses for boys. Students in these courses, which lasted two and a half years, learned to read and write in their MT and then also in Pashto.

In 2007, with permission from the central government, the literacy team established Pashai literacy classes for girls and then added classes for adult women. These classes followed the same pattern as the classes for boys.

In 2010 the Pashai established a five-year Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education (MTB BE) programme. There are, as yet, no government schools that implement a full MTB BE curriculum so the Pashai programme was established outside the formal education system. The programme is composed of two years of pre-primary classes followed by three years of after-school Pashai classes for children in Grades 1-3 in government primary schools. Children in the two-year pre-primary programme learn to read and write first in their MT and then in Pashto. Parents who enroll their children in the MTB BE programme must agree that the children will continue their education in primary school. The second part of the Pashai MLE programme begins when children enter Grade 1 and continues through Grade 3. Teachers in the MLE after-school classes use the MT to help students review the lessons from that day and complete their homework assignments. Teachers also help students build fluency in Pashai literacy.

The Pashai MTB BE programme has recently expanded to include five courses for boys in Laghman, a neighbouring province where the majority of people speak Pashto as their mother tongue. Pashai boys who complete MTB BE pre-primary begin Grade 1 with both Pashai- and Pashto-speaking students.

As noted above, the after-school courses continue to Grade 3. This fits with the educational system in Afghanistan: Grades 1, 2 and 3 have one teacher for all subjects but after Grade 3, students have different teachers for each subject.

Currently there are thirty Pashai MLE programmes for boys and twenty for girls in Nangarhar and Laghman provinces.



Pashai girls use their own language to learn in school.

© Serve, Afghanistan

## How did you develop curriculum for the program?

The programme team developed the curriculum and teaching / learning materials for pre-school and after-school courses. They used the government curriculum as a guide to ensure that the lessons will prepare Pashai students to do well when they enter the formal education system.

The two-year pre-primary programme is three hours a day, five days a week. The curriculum goals for each year are below:

In Year 1 students will...	In Year 2 students will...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjust to school environment</li> <li>• Develop oral Pashai language</li> <li>• Begin pre-reading &amp; pre-writing in Pashai</li> <li>• Begin oral Pashto</li> <li>• Learn basic mathematics</li> <li>• Develop socially and emotionally</li> <li>• Learn about the heritage culture</li> <li>• Take part in physical education activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build fluency in oral Pashai</li> <li>• Begin reading and writing in Pashai</li> <li>• Build competency in oral Pashto</li> <li>• Begin transferring literacy skills to Pashto</li> <li>• Expand knowledge of mathematics</li> <li>• Continue social and emotional development</li> <li>• Build general knowledge and appreciate heritage culture</li> <li>• Continue physical development</li> </ul>

Curriculum for the three-year after-school classes has three goals for students:

- Build fluency in Pashai and Pashto literacy
- Understand math concepts
- Understand their daily lessons and complete homework assignments for other school subjects

## How did you develop classroom materials?

The Pashai programme team, with support from a technical advisor, developed materials for the pre-primary and after school classes. These included a Pashai primer, twenty-five Pashai reading books, a pictorial dictionary, a book of proverbs, a riddle book and several story books.

## How do you train teachers?

One-week training workshops for MTB BE pre-primary and after-school classes take place at the beginning of each school year and at the beginning of each term.

Programme staff also work with teachers in the government schools to help them understand the purposes and benefits of MTB BE and to learn how to use Pashai as an added language of instruction while teaching the Pashto national school curriculum.

### How do you supervise classrooms?

Programme supervisors are supposed to visit each MTB BE class once a week. Programme staff and supervisors meet twice a month so supervisors can share problems and discuss progress. The meetings provide opportunities for staff and supervisors to learn from and support each other.

Programme staff also visit the MTB BE classrooms regularly.

### How do you evaluate students' progress?

Pre-school students take an exam at the end of the two-year pre-school programme. Students who attend the after-school Pashai courses take an exam at the end of each term (four times a year.)

### What results have you seen to this point?

1,974 Pashai children completed the original Pashai literacy classes between 1999 and 2014. Half of them were girls. In those same years, 4,060 young people and adults graduated from 203 Pashto literacy classes. Half of this group was female.

Since 2012, 1000 Pashai girls and boys have enrolled in pre-primary classes.

In 2009 the Pashai programme was awarded UNESCO's Confucius Literacy Prize.<sup>6</sup>



Pashai community representative accepts UNESCO Confucius Literacy Prize at the United Nations, 2009.  
© Serve, Afghanistan

6 See "The Winners of the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes 2009", pages 7 and 8. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001838/183809e.pdf>

Results of the pre-school exam show that 82 percent of all the pre-school students graduate and go to Grade 1 in the government school.

Feedback from government schools indicates that students from the Pashai MLE programme often rank first in their class. They are confident in interacting with other students, eager to respond to their teacher's questions and are not afraid to stand in front of a classroom full of students. This is especially impressive because Pashai pre-school classes have twenty students and G1 classes in government schools have up to 100 students.

Parents see the difference between their children who were in the Pashai classes and those who were not. The younger siblings who attend the pre-school course are able to help their older siblings who are enrolled in non-MLE government schools. Parents often comment on another important characteristic of their children who are in the programme: they love to study and are eager to go to the after school study course. They are enthusiastic and confident in the classroom, whereas other children are often shy and not willing to go to school.

Recently, many people from the community were present at a graduation party to mark the end of the pre-school programme. After the students had demonstrated what they had learned, the Education Director of Dara-i-Noor district stated that the difference between pre-school students and students in the regular government school students is so big that it's even difficult to compare them with each other.

### **What are your plans for the future?**

Until recently, the MTB BE programme focused on the South East Pashai who live mostly in the Dara-i-Noor area. Recently, the programme team took part in conducting surveys in the parts of Afghanistan where people speak the other three varieties of Pashai. Hopefully, when the survey results are analyzed, they will identify communities and locations that are ready for their own MTB BE programmes.

However, if MTB BE is to expand beyond the Pashai community it needs to be integrated into the national education system. The Government of Afghanistan is aware of the need for MTB BE and the outlook is good that it will happen. In 2014 the Ministry of Education developed an "Inclusive and Child Friendly Education Policy" that includes a section on children's right to education in their mother tongue. The policy states that curricula, examinations and assessment systems will be developed in ethnic minority languages through Grade 3, and that teachers will be trained in using their language as the language of instruction.

Based on their experience in implementing this pilot project, Pashai team leaders have learned several important lessons relating to expansion. First is that MTB BE programmes should be appropriate to the places where they are implemented. This means that classroom activities and materials should reflect the students' culture as well as their language. Also, the implementation plan should be realistic with respect to the geographic, economic and political situation in the community.

The second lesson learned from this programme is that MT speakers from each community should help to ensure that curriculum and materials affirm and build on the students' heritage language and culture.

The third and perhaps the most important lesson from the Pashai MTB BE programme is that the transition from using the MT as language of instruction to using the official language only for instruction must be gradual. Students must have time to develop a strong educational foundation in their own language, transfer those skills to their second (and third or fourth) language and become efficient learners who are able to use both or all languages for life-long learning.



## What are the programme goals?

The first goal is that Rajbanshi students will integrate successfully into the government's education system in primary school and achieve a good education.

Another goal is that this programme will provide a model for other language communities that want MTB MLE.

## Which agencies or organizations support the programme?

The School Management Committee of each MTB MLE school is responsible for the daily operation of the school programme and for supporting their teachers.

Local communities donated the land for their schools.

The District Education Office was not involved in implementation but allows MTB MLE in the three district schools.

The Nepali National Languages Preservation Institute (NNLPI) supports programme implementation.

Tribhuvan University Department of Linguistics provides linguistic support.

SIL International provides technical support.

## Does the programme have policy support?

Nepal's national education policy allows for the implementation of MLE schools.

## When did the programme begin and how did it grow?

The MTB MLE approach was not widely known or practiced in the government education system when the Rajbanshi MTB MLE programme was initiated. Therefore, the plan was to implement the programme in three new community schools that were established for this purpose. Advocacy and programme planning began in 2009.

The programme team realized that the five-year government primary education provision was too short a time for early Grade MLE students to gain sufficient oral and written proficiency in Rajbanshi (L1), Nepali (L2) and English (L3)<sup>8</sup> to achieve the government's learning objectives. For that reason, the MLE programme added a year of kindergarten so that Rajbanshi students learn reading and writing in their mother tongue before they enter Grade 1.

Classes began in 2010. Three schools are now included in the pilot programme. After the pilot is completed, the MTB MLE approach will be adapted and extended to other suitable language groups in Nepal that request it.

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8 L1: mother tongue and first school language; L2: second school language; L3: third school language

## How did you use the national curriculum to develop the instructional plan for this programme?

As noted above, the programme begins in Kindergarten and continues to Grade 5, the last Grade in the government primary education programme. The government does not have a national curriculum for kindergarten so the programme team, with input from community members, developed the curriculum for that grade.

Instruction in Grades 1 to 5 is based on the national curriculum, but adjusted for this MTB MLE programme in two ways: 1) Lesson content builds on the students' knowledge and experience; and 2) Nepali and English are not introduced together.

The MTB MLE programme teaches three languages as subjects and uses two of the three languages for instruction. One language is introduced at a time so that students can build confidence in their ability to speak, read and write each one.

Rajbanshi is the first language in this programme. Students already know the language because they hear and speak it at home. They learn to read and write in Rajbanshi in Term 2 of kindergarten and build fluency throughout that year and in Grade 1. They continue oral and written Rajbanshi as a subject all the way to Grade 5.



Rajbanshi student reading a story in his MT.  
© SIL International, Nepal

Nepali, the national language and the official school language of Nepal, is the second language in this programme. Teachers introduce oral Nepali early in Grade 1 and help students build their vocabulary in that language. Rajbanshi and Nepali belong to the same “family” of languages;<sup>9</sup> they share about 40 percent of their vocabulary and both use the

9 Nepali and Rajbanshi belong to the Indo-Aryan (Indic) branch of the Indo-European language family.

same writing system. So the students' foundation in reading and writing Rajbanshi prepares them to begin reading and writing Nepali in Grade 1, Term 2. Students continue oral and written Nepali as a subject to the end of Grade 5.

English is taught as a subject in the Nepal education system and it is the third language in this programme. Teachers introduce oral English in Grade 2, Term 2 and written English in Grade 2, Term 3. The programme team would have preferred to introduce English later to give students more time to attain proficiency in Rajbanshi and Nepali languages. However, students would not be able to achieve the expected outcomes for English by the end of Grade 5. Also, parents want their children to learn English early to help them learn about the world outside Nepal and to prepare them to find employment when they finish school. For that reason, the programme team decided to introduce oral English in Grade 2, Term 2, one year after Nepali is introduced. By that time children are familiar with activities for learning oral English because most activities are the same as for learning Nepali.

Rajbanshi and Nepali are both used as languages of instruction:

- Kindergarten and Grade 1: Rajbanshi only for instruction
- Grade 2: Rajbanshi with Nepali for instruction
- Grades 3-4: Nepali with Rajbanshi for instruction.
- Grade 5: Nepali only for instruction

A 2014 evaluation report of the programme says this about the way the programme introduces languages:

*This programme takes what the team calls a "staggered approach" to the introduction of languages in the curriculum by introducing L1 Rajbanshi in Kindergarten, L2 Nepali in Grade 1, and L3 English in Grade 2.*

*In principle, the introduction of L2 and L3 do not need to be so early, because the focus should be on oral and literacy skills development in the L1. Building a foundation in the L1 supports better learning of the additional languages later. However, to be as consistent as possible with the national curriculum, and so that the government textbooks can be used as much as possible, the team strategically introduced Nepali in Grade 1 and English in Grade 2 in the MLE model.*

*The kindergarten year was added to the existing five primary grades, formally becoming the first year of a six-year cycle. Focus in the first year is on Rajbanshi language, literacy readiness, story-telling and listening, and alphabet/syllable reading and writing.*

*It should be noted that, similar to kindergarten in other countries, children who are not ready to move into Grade 1 repeat the kindergarten year, so that the programme can ensure that incoming Grade 1 learners have a good L1 foundation and are ready to start the formal primary curriculum.*

## How did you develop classroom materials?

The programme team developed all the teaching and learning materials for kindergarten. The team also developed all Rajbanshi MT language materials for Grades 1-5 plus other materials to supplement the government textbooks that are used for all subjects except Rajbanshi (MT subject).

This was the first time the programme team had developed MTB MLE materials so they learned as they developed materials for one term and one year at a time. After using the newly developed materials the first time, teachers provided suggestions for making them more relevant to the students' learning needs. The team used the teachers' suggestions and observations from school visits to revise the materials before they were finalized and sent for printing. Working one year at a time also gave the programme team a better understanding of students' progress each year.

There were not many songs in Rajbanshi that were suitable for children when the programme began so MT speakers composed children's songs to use in classroom activities.

## How do you select and train teachers?

Each School Management Committee recruits MLE teachers for their school. Teachers must be MT speakers of Rajbanshi, they must come from the local community and they must have at least a secondary school completion certificate to begin teaching.

One of the important lessons from this programme was that teachers should come from the same community as their students. Local teachers are more likely to take ownership of the programme and they also stay longer in their job. In fact, apart from one teacher who left to work in another country and one teacher who left due to family reasons, the teachers who were recruited for these three schools have stayed in the programme, including those who married and had children during the programme period.

The programme team conducted one pre-service training at the beginning of the MLE programme and has in-service training two to three times a year. The training is especially important for new teachers who are not familiar with the programme's instructional design and activities, particularly for kindergarten and Grade 1. In grades 2 to 5, government curriculum and textbooks are used but teachers continue to use MLE teaching methods. In-service training provides opportunities for teachers to learn and practice new methods. Much of the in-service training time is used for demonstration and practice, especially in teaching MLE-specific activities. Teachers share their teaching experiences as well as the challenges they face and adjustments they make. This sharing of good practices by the teachers also provides the programme team with the input they need to make lesson plans more realistic and relevant to the local context.

Teachers who joined the programme later did not have a chance to go through the detailed pre-service teacher training which explained the purpose of the programme and the ways MLE classes are different from classes in regular government schools. For that reason, new teachers

spent time observing Kindergarten teachers and students before they attended their first in-service teacher training.

### **How do you supervise classrooms?**

The programme team conducts school visits and class observations three times a year. This includes time for teachers to discuss their students' progress.

Officers from the District Education Office also make annual school visits.

### **How do you evaluate students' progress?**

Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers conduct informal reading assessments in Rajbanshi and oral assessments for other subjects.

The programme team assesses students' reading and writing progress in all three school languages and other academic subjects twice a year, beginning in Grade 2.



Grade 2 student demonstrates her reading ability in the MT.

© SIL International, Nepal

### **What results have you seen?**

Rajbanshi parents and community members clearly appreciate having this MLE pilot programme in their language. Parents are happy that the programme helps their children learn from their own culture and also helps them gain knowledge from outside.

Besides academic achievement, parents report that their children love going to school. They talk about school experiences with their families and tell the stories that they learned. They are more independent and polite as well.

One mother from Chilhara MTB MLE School gave a speech in public during the school's Parents Day. She had never been to school herself but she was bold enough to speak in front of the people. This is what she said:

*I never dreamt that my child would be able to read books in three languages. She can sing songs in our language but she can also sing Nepali songs and even few English songs. I am very happy about my child's progress and thankful for the MLE programme and all the teachers.*

A government official's mid-term programme evaluation recognized the positive changes the MTB MLE programme has made in the community and in Rajbanshi children's education.

*Now the Rajbanshi community is very aware about its linguistic as well as cultural identity and heritage. They have realized and are devoted to their children's education in their own MT. Of their own free will, they have donated acres of land for constructing the school building and are well engaged in the school management committee (SMC) ... One of the notable impacts is that the rate of school dropout has remained constant at only 4 percent which can be the best lesson for the majority of schools in Nepal.<sup>10</sup>*

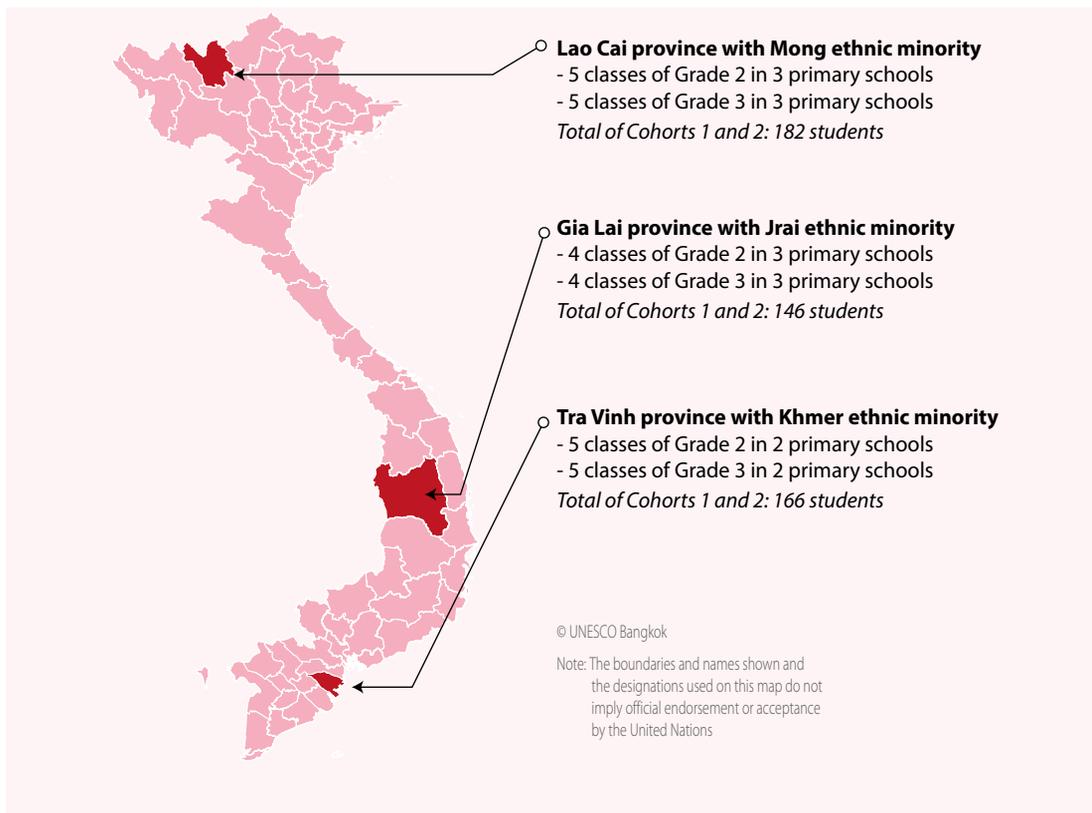
A final evaluation of the pilot project also recognized the importance of this programme. Here is what the evaluator wrote:

*I am extremely impressed with the Rajbanshi MLE programme, which surpassed my expectations and offered many lessons that I will carry with me to MLE programmes in other countries. The positive impact of the programme on the three Rajbanshi schools and communities is very apparent, and I hope no one among the project team, the district education personnel or any other stakeholders in Nepal will allow the effect to stop at this small-scale level.*

## What are your plans for the future?

The lessons learned in implementing the pilot can be adapted for other language communities in Nepal. However, the same approach of starting new community schools to implement an MTB MLE programme will not be considered and cannot be sustained unless government officials, teachers, school management committees and parents consider it worthwhile and incorporate MTB MLE into the government education system. Hopefully parents from other language communities in Nepal will, at some point, share the enthusiasm of parents whose children are in the Rajbanshi programme.

<sup>10</sup> From the mid-term evaluation report on SIL language education and development (LEAD) Nepal, submitted to Social Welfare Council, Nepal, in 2014.



## Viet Nam: MTBBE Action Research Project<sup>11</sup>

### Which language communities were part of this Action Research and where do they live?

The Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education (MTBBE) Action Research (AR) project was implemented in the Mong, J'rai and Khmer communities of Viet Nam. The Mong people live in Lao Cai Province; the J'rai live in Gia Lai Province; and the Khmer live in Tra Vinh Province.

### What was the educational situation for children in these communities before the project began?

Viet Nam is a diverse society with 54 officially recognized ethnic groups, many of which have their own distinct language and live in remote and economically disadvantaged areas of the country. The total ethnic minority population is approximately 12.5 million, representing 14 percent of the total population of about 90.5 million. Vietnamese is the official and only language of instruction in schools. This has created a "language barrier" for many ethnic minority children who have limited or, in some cases, no understanding of Vietnamese when they begin formal education.

<sup>11</sup> Ms. Joyce Patricia Bheeka, Chief Education Section, UNICEF Viet Nam, with her team, provided information for this section.

## What were the Action Research project goals?

The MTBBE Action Research project aimed to find answers to two key educational challenges: 1) how to cope with the large number of ethnic languages; and 2) how to provide education for all children in Viet Nam so they learn and develop to their full potential.

The first objective was to implement a valid and feasible design of bilingual education in ethnic minority languages and Vietnamese in pre-school and primary schools. The second objective was to contribute to the development of policies and practices that will promote the use and development of ethnic minority languages and thus improve access and equity in education and other social services.

## Which agencies or organizations supported the project?

The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), with support from UNICEF in Viet Nam, was responsible for implementing the MTBBE Action Research project.

The Project Steering Committee was co-chaired by the Vice Minister of Education and Training, who is in charge of Primary Education, and the UNICEF Deputy Representative. Other members of the Project Steering Committee came from related government departments such as the Early Childhood Education Department (ECED), Primary Education Department (PED) and Ethnic Minority Education Department (EME) and from institutions such as the Viet Nam Institute of Education and Science (VIES) and the Research Center for Ethnic Minority Education (RCEME).<sup>12</sup>

An Advisory Group was composed of representatives from the government plus senior staff from UNICEF, UNESCO and World Bank.

UN leaders in Viet Nam, in particular the UNICEF Representative and the UN Resident Coordinator, plus donor communities such as the World Bank, European Union and Norwegian government, played critical roles in promoting South-South cooperation to support MTBBE at high-level advocacy events in Viet Nam and elsewhere.

At provincial and local levels, Provincial Department of Education and Training Research Management Teams and District Boards of Education and Training Action Research Management Boards, as representatives for the MOET, were responsible for implementation. These departments ensured that education managers, school principals and teacher associations in each province and district were involved in implementing the project in their areas of responsibility.

During the implementation phase, the Viet Nam Linguistic Institute provided technical support and SIL International provided support for training master teachers, MTBBE project planning, the Classroom Language Mapping project,<sup>13</sup> and MTBBE awareness-raising for education managers and legal officers.

<sup>12</sup> See: <http://unicefvietnam.blogspot.com/2015/09/exchanging-best-practices-of-child.html>; [http://www.unicef.org/vietnam/media\\_23380.html](http://www.unicef.org/vietnam/media_23380.html)

<sup>13</sup> See [http://www.unicef.org/vietnam/Lao\\_Cai\\_mapping\\_profile\\_set.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/vietnam/Lao_Cai_mapping_profile_set.pdf)

The Ethnic Council/National Assembly, especially the Vice Chairperson and the Deputy Director of the Ethnic Department, were important partners in promoting the MTBBE policy.

### **Did the project have policy support?**

The Constitution, Education Law and other educational policy documents of Viet Nam have all provided support for the use of ethnic minority languages in education:

*The State shall enable ethnic minority people to learn their spoken and written languages in order to preserve and develop their ethnic cultural identity (Article 7. The Education Law of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam).<sup>14</sup>*

### **When did the Action Research project begin and how did it develop?**

In 2007, the MOET and UNICEF signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the MTBBE Action Research project.

The plan was to track two cohorts of students from the three language communities from pre-school through Grade 5.

Preparation included the following activities:

- Select locations for the MTBBE Action Research schools;
- Design and develop the methods, materials, teacher training curriculum, baseline surveys and mechanisms for measuring learning outcomes;
- Raise awareness and mobilize support from policy makers, education managers, principals, teachers, students and community members;
- Develop teaching and learning materials for pre-school, Grade 1 and Grade 2.

Between 2008 and 2014, curricula and teaching and learning materials were developed for pre-school and for primary grades 1 to 5 with help from education experts and MT speakers from the three language communities.

Project leaders selected three languages as the MTs for the project, based on the following criteria:

- Writing systems / scripts: The languages should have writing systems that are accepted by MT speakers, including those from different dialect areas. At least one of the languages should use a writing system that is different from Vietnamese.<sup>15</sup>
- Language use: Almost everyone in the selected communities should speak the same mother tongue. Children should have little or no exposure to Vietnamese before they begin school.

14 See [http://www.unicef.org/vietnam/brief\\_TA.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/vietnam/brief_TA.pdf)

15 Vietnamese uses a Latin script. Some non-dominant languages in Viet Nam also use Latin scripts while other languages, such as Khmer, use a non-Latin script. Project designers set these criteria so they could compare the process of transferring between languages that share the same script and between languages that use different scripts.

- Teachers: Teachers should be bilingual, fluent in the students' MT, share the students' ethnic background, have at least two years of teaching experience and be recognized as committed teachers by education managers and communities.
- Support from officials: Local and provincial education authorities must commit to supporting the entire MTBBE programme from preschool through Grade 5. Provincial departments of education and training, district boards of education and training, school managers and teachers' colleges must commit to tracking the progress of students when they complete the MTBBE programme and move into higher grades.
- Community support: Parents and community members who already support other community development activities must also commit to supporting the programme.

Seven schools were selected to be part of the MTBBE Action Research. Mong is used in three schools, J'rai is used in two schools, and Khmer is used in two schools.

The first cohort of students—a total of 262 children from the three language communities—began preschool in 2008 and the second cohort began in 2009.

### How did you develop the curriculum?

Nationally recognized curriculum experts from all subject areas and languages were invited to form a working group to develop the MTBBE curriculum. A benefit of the curriculum development process was that a large group of potential trainers, textbook writers, and advocates in the MOET, National Institute of Linguistics (NIL), and other agencies increased their understanding and appreciation for MTBBE.

The MTBBE curriculum, which was approved by MOET, is based on the national curriculum for mainstream schools but adapted to the needs of children from ethnic minority communities. It includes strategies specific to early childhood education programmes, such as basing instruction on themes that relate to young children's experiences in the home and community.

The curriculum development team wanted to ensure a smooth transition between pre-primary and Grade 1 and between students' MT and Vietnamese throughout the six years of the programme. They recognized that teachers do not need to re-teach concepts in Vietnamese that students had already learned in their MT. With that in mind, they focused on linking MT and Vietnamese learning competencies in order to avoid repetition. The main difference between the national curriculum and the MTBBE curriculum is that in the MTBBE curriculum 1) both Vietnamese and the students' MT are taught as subjects and 2) the students' MT is used as one of the languages of instruction, with Vietnamese:

- Pre-school to Grade 2: MT used as the language of instruction. MT and Vietnamese are taught as subjects. Students learn to read and write in their MT and then transfer their literacy skills to Vietnamese.

- Grade 3: Vietnamese is introduced as a language of instruction with the MT.
- Grades 4 and 5: Vietnamese gradually becomes the language of instruction beginning in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of Grade 4.

By the end of Grade 5, students should understand, speak, read and write their MT and Vietnamese and they should have achieved Grade level competencies for all subjects as described in the national curriculum, including for the Vietnamese language.



Mong MTBBE student practices writing on the chalkboard.  
© UNICEF, Viet Nam

### How did you develop teaching and learning materials?

A Materials Development Team was established with members from RCEME, EMED, ECED, VIES, NIL, and the National Institute of Pedagogy. This team, with support from UNICEF staff and an international technical expert, was responsible for coordinating materials development. They worked with cultural experts from each of the language communities to develop materials in each language.

The Materials Development Team followed these steps in developing pre-primary and primary teaching materials:

1. Develop trial materials for each language with support from technical experts. Send trial materials to the MTBBE Textbook Approval Committee to ensure that the materials are in line with the MOET-approved MTBBE curriculum.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The MTBBE Textbook Approval Committee is composed of national experts in languages and in the subject areas. It is coordinated by the PED and supervised by the MOET Vice Minister.

2. Correct the materials as instructed by the MTBBE Textbook Approval Committee and submit them to the MOET Vice Minister for final approval.
3. Print the materials.
4. Train teachers on how to use them.
5. Distribute the materials.

Pre-primary teaching materials included big books for shared reading, picture books, wall charts, teachers' manuals, resource books, word cards, and practice books.

As noted above, MTBBE curriculum for each primary Grade was based directly on the national curriculum. MTBBE teaching materials and textbooks cover all the topics and main contents of the primary curriculum but the content of the textbooks was adapted to be relevant to children in each language community.

### **How did you train teachers?**

As noted above, MTBBE programme coordinators selected teachers from the three language communities who were bilingual in their MT and in Vietnamese and who had already completed teacher training in the government system. The coordinating team considered the particular characteristics of each pilot province to determine the most effective strategies for preparing teachers to teach in MTBBE schools.

Programme coordinators realized that this would be the first time that ethnic minority languages were used for literacy and learning in Viet Nam's formal education system. The MTBBE teacher training process they developed had these general objectives:

- MTBBE teachers will become fluent in reading and writing their MT and able to teach their ethnic minority students to read and write it.
- Pre-primary teachers and provincial and district education managers will be able to create teaching and learning aids from locally available materials.
- Grade 1-5 teachers will understand and participate in the action research. They will understand and follow MTBBE-specific teaching approaches and they will be able to use the teaching and learning materials for each subject.
- Teachers, school principals and district and provincial education officers will apply the principles of action research—reflecting on and researching their own practices and making changes based on their findings.

The first phase of training in 2008 prepared pre-school and Grade 1 teachers for the school years beginning in 2008 and 2009. Programme coordinators included as many potential future teachers as possible in each training event.

During and at the end of each phase of training, teachers' strengths were identified and their ongoing needs and skills were diagnosed to determine their suitability as MTBBE teachers at the specified Grade levels.

MTBBE programme coordinators included school principals and district and provincial education officers in selected parts of the training so that they understood the approach and how to support MTBBE classroom teachers. Bringing these groups together during selected parts of the training also helped create team spirit.

During each phase of training, programme coordinators watched for especially talented and committed participants who could serve as authors, researchers or resource people for other bilingual teachers in their areas.

The MTBBE programme cooperated with Lao Cai and Tra Vinh Teacher Training Colleges to develop and institutionalize the MTBBE teacher training modules for pre-primary and primary teachers in Mong and Khmer MTBBE classrooms.



Grade 3 Khmer students learn about the many uses of bamboo.

© UNICEF, Viet Nam

## How did you supervise classrooms?

RCEME staff visited MTBBE schools and provided technical support as needed. MOET officials from the Ethnic Minority Education Pre-school and Primary Education Departments and selected MTBBE curriculum and materials developers also participated in the school visits and provided technical input to MTBBE teachers and school principals.

During each trip, teams observed Vietnamese, Mother Tongue and Mathematics lessons and provided feedback to teachers on how best to take advantage of their strengths and overcome any weaknesses.

At the end of each supervisory trip, feedback sessions with Provincial Departments of Education and Training, District Boards of Education and Training leaders and education managers were very useful. Participants were able to update information on the status of each school and listen as teachers shared their classroom experiences. The technical comments by the central programme staff were particularly valuable.

Provincial and district programme staff visited the schools each quarter to provide timely support to teachers.

### **How did you evaluate students' progress?**

Yearly student assessments were an essential part of the MTBBE Action Research. The assessments provided valuable information about the impact of the programme on learning outcomes.

The first student assessment in September 2008 collected baseline data for the first cohort of students. The assessment focused on five components in both the mother tongue and Vietnamese at pre-primary level.

A second assessment in May 2009 assessed the same group of students' progress over the pre-school year. It found that the MTBBE students had made "significant progress in all five components" compared with a sample of non-MTBBE students. The 2009 assessment added sections on teachers and learning materials. It provided valuable information that was used to improve textbooks, provide insights for teacher training, and strengthen the teaching-learning process.

### **What are your plans for the future?**

UNICEF will continue to communicate with policy makers at all levels to encourage their support for continuing MTBBE in the three language communities and, where feasible, expand it to other languages.

UNICEF will build on the growing interest and engagement of the Ethnic Council of the National Assembly and political leaders in the provinces by disseminating the MOET's final evaluation results and recommendations from the final evaluation. This will be done with the support of high-level institutions like the National Assembly and other related councils, to ensure the expansion and sustainability of the MTBBE programme.

Participants in the Action Research identified, tested and revised the essential components of MTBBE that will support expansion to new schools and new ethnic minority groups in Viet Nam. The programme also helped to create a socio-political climate that promotes expansion. UNICEF will encourage and provide technical support to the three provinces engaged in the Action Research to sustain their MTBBE programmes, continuing the good practice in Lao Cai and An Giang. UNICEF will also develop a specific advocacy strategy to engage more political leaders and decision makers in the National Assembly, in universities and research institutions in considering language issues in education for both bilingual and multilingual students as these students are often from the most remote and disadvantaged provinces.

However, expansion will require reforming the legal documents and guidelines relating to education for ethnic minority students to allow their MTs to be used with Vietnamese as a language of learning in the formal education system. Expansion and sustainability will also require supportive policies and permanent dialogue between education and other related legal agencies as well as scholars, academics and religious leaders such as the Central Buddhist Association.

Also, further assessment of individual components of the programme might be necessary to identify those parts that can be revised to improve the programme's economic feasibility.

Research from other parts of the world has identified specific medium and long-term benefits of strong MTBBE programmes. These are primarily in terms of reduced replication and dropout rates in primary school and a greater percentage of ethnic minority children in secondary school. Long-term tracking of students from this MTBBE Action Research programme will enable authorities to determine the relationship between programme costs and long-term benefits for individual students and Viet Nam in general.

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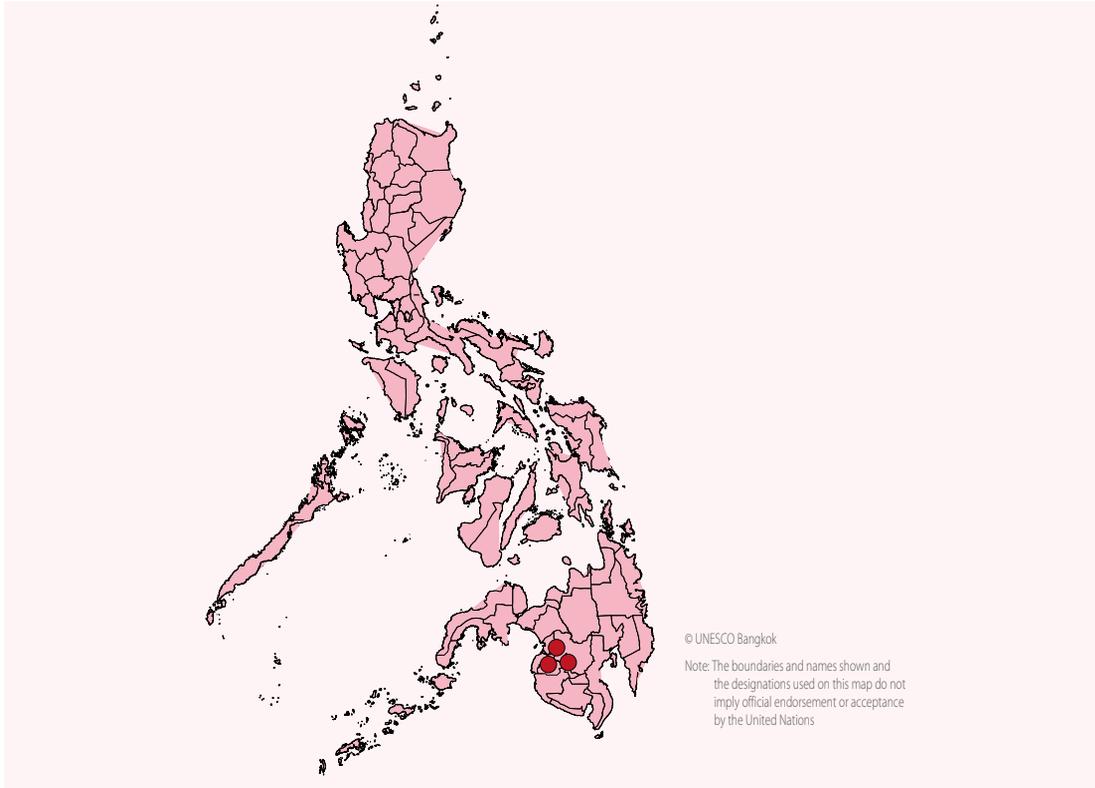
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## Philippines: MTB MLE Pilot Programme<sup>17</sup>

### Which language communities are included in this MTB MLE programme and where do they live?

This MTB MLE programme serves three language communities: Maguindanao, Hiligaynon and Tboli. These three plus fifteen other ethnic groups—a total of about two million people—live in South Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat areas of South Central Mindanao.

### What was the educational situation for children in these communities before the programme began?

Widespread poverty in South Central Mindanao was having a negative impact on school attendance rates, completion rates and learning outcomes. The government had implemented a new policy that called for using students' MT as a language of instruction from Kindergarten to Grade 3 and for teaching it, along with Filipino and English, as a subject. The problem was that teacher training in MTB MLE methods was inadequate and teaching-learning materials were provided in only 19 of more than 170 Philippines languages.

<sup>17</sup> Ms. Bonna Duron-Luder, Basic Education Advisor, Save the Children in the Philippines, provided information for this section.

## What are the programme goals?

The programme has three specific goals:

1. Provide quality education for children ages 3 to 8 in the three language communities and improve their learning outcomes.
2. Support at least 1,500 parents, teachers and other responsible members of the community in implementing and sustaining MTB MLE and child protection programmes in their communities.
3. Build local and national support for MTB MLE policy and programmes.

## What agencies or organizations support the programme?

Save the Children, Philippines signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Education in Region 12. A Technical Working Group established as part of that MOU was instrumental in developing and approving MT-based teaching and learning materials.

Nine Language Advisory Committees were established early in the programme. They were composed of principals/school heads, teachers, parents, local public officials, tribal leaders and youth. The original intent was that the Language Advisory Committees would take the lead in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating MTB MLE activities. However, the Committees' roles were changed when they became Community Based Child Protection Advocates and took responsibility for child protection and other activities relating to the MLE programme.

Region 12 of the Department of Education and SIL International provided technical guidance and support for materials development. They also helped develop lesson plans and trained teachers and day-care workers in using the MT-based teaching and learning materials.

Programme leaders worked with regional offices of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, government units at provincial, municipal and barangay levels and the National Commission on the Indigenous Peoples.

## Does the programme have policy support?

In 2009, the Department of Education issued Order 74 calling for MTB MLE to be implemented throughout the country.<sup>18</sup> This Order required schools to use students' mother tongue for instruction from pre-primary at least through Grade 3. Students' MT with Filipino and English are all taught as subjects during those years. The government also passed the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013,<sup>19</sup> which included MTB MLE. The Enhanced Basic Education Act together with Dep Ed Order No. 74 clearly demonstrated the government's support for MTB MLE throughout the Philippines.

<sup>18</sup> See <https://mlephil.wordpress.com/2009/07/18/dep-ed-order-no-74-s-2009/>

<sup>19</sup> See [http://www.deped.gov.ph/sites/default/files/order/2013/DO\\_s2013\\_43.pdf](http://www.deped.gov.ph/sites/default/files/order/2013/DO_s2013_43.pdf)

## How many schools are in the programme now?

During the three years of implementation (2012-2015), twenty-nine learning centres and ten elementary schools implemented MTB MLE classes.

## How did you develop the curriculum?

MTB MLE-specific curriculum, lesson plans and materials for the pilot programme were based on competencies established by the Department of Education. The Department of Education for Region 12 reviewed and approved the lesson plans for teaching the three languages.

Programme leaders recognized that it would be difficult for MTB MLE students to learn to read and write three languages (MT, Filipino and English) within a short period of time. A priority in planning the curriculum was to enable children to gain confidence in reading and writing their MT first and then transferring their knowledge and skills in MT literacy to reading and writing Filipino and then English.

## How did you develop classroom materials?

During the three years of the pilot programme, the programme team held a series of workshops in which participants developed, produced and then distributed teachers' guides, 97 big book titles (83 in the MT and 14 in Filipino), five big pictures and recordings of children's songs in the three MTs that are used in the programme.

The programme team, working with the Department of Education, developed "transfer primers" to help students transfer from reading and writing their MT to reading and writing Filipino. The primers help students to 1) identify letters that look the same and sound the same in their MT and Filipino; then 2) letters in Filipino that are not used in the MT; and then 3) letters in both languages that look the same but are pronounced differently.

The first two years (2012 and 2013) focused on developing lesson plans and teaching materials for schools in each language area. In the third year the team reviewed and finalized the lesson plans and teaching materials and developed the transfer primers and language bridging guides.

## How did you select and train teachers?

To address the need for teachers who are fluent in the three languages, programme leaders advocated with the Department of Education at the district and division levels to assign newly certified teachers to schools in their own language communities.

The programme team implemented a series of training sessions to help teachers understand the purpose of MTB MLE and use the curriculum, teaching materials and teaching methods effectively.



MTB MLE primary students enjoy learning in their MT.  
© Save the Children, Philippines

A total of 97 Kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers (81 females and 16 males) participated in the series of training events. Training focused on establishing MTB MLE classrooms, using MT-based teaching and learning materials effectively, and encouraging students' active participation in classroom activities.

### **How did you supervise classrooms?**

School Heads with Instructional Supervisors and Programme Coordinators from the Department of Education at school, district, division and regional levels are involved in the programme. Their responsibilities are to

- Understand the purpose of MTB MLE and why it is important
- Understand relevant theories of learning in general and of language learning
- Mentor and supervise teachers/facilitators and build their competence, confidence and capability to facilitate successful learning in their classrooms
- Guide teachers and facilitators in adapting curriculum to incorporate local context and culture, and
- Ensure that standards of quality are met and that reading, teaching and learning materials are appropriate.

'Learning circle' sessions are included in supervisory visits. In these sessions, participants reflect on their own learning and on the process of implementing MTB MLE in their schools or communities.

### **How did you evaluate students' progress?**

In partnership with the Department of Education, Region 12, Save the Children provided technical support in developing guidelines for the "MTB MLE Learners' Assessment".

The guidelines focus on two major areas. The first relates to the effectiveness of the program and the results provide input into programme design and implementation. The second relates to reading outcomes. The purpose is to identify students' learning gaps, issues and concerns. Assessments in Grades 1 to 3 focused on students' ability to read words and sentences correctly and to read with understanding. The results from these assessments are used for strengthening training programmes for teachers, principals, and education supervisors.

### **What results have you seen to this point?**

The three year pilot programme served 4,621 children (2,373 boys and 2,248 girls) from pre-school through Grade 3 in twenty-eight learning centres and ten elementary schools. This was an increase of between 10-20 percent over participation before the programme began.

By the end of the three-year pilot, the assessments showed a gain of 35 percent (Hiligaynon), 65 percent (Maguindanaoan) and 39 percent (Tboli) among Grade 3 pupils in speaking and reading their MT. Also, 51 percent of the Grade 3 pupils who were assessed exhibited reading abilities in Filipino.

Eighty teachers improved teaching skills, through training.

Parents and community members have a better understanding of the relationship between mother tongue instruction and improved education.

Five regional and municipal Language Advisory Committees were organized.

Implementation guidelines for MTB MLE implementation in the region were approved and disseminated by the Department of Education.

Other languages in the region such as Obo Manobo, Teduray and Blaan, have adopted the MTB MLE model developed in this programme. Also, the Department of Education and other organizations in the Philippines are promoting this model.

### **What are your plans for the future?**

The pilot experience provided information that will help to strengthen the use of children's MT in Save the Children's regular programming for early childhood and basic education.

MTB MLE is already implemented on a nation-wide scale but programme leaders need to advocate further with the regional Department of Education to use the model developed in this programme.

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