

Suggestions for UNICEF EAPRO Strategy (2016-2020) on Multilingual Education and Social Cohesion



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Acronyms

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
APCSS	Asia-Pacific Coalition for School Safety
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CFS	Child-Friendly Schools
CRC	Convention on the Rights of Children
CSER	Comprehensive Education Sector Review (Myanmar)
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EAP	East Asia and Pacific
EAP ECDS	East Asia Pacific Early Childhood Development Scales
EAPRO	East Asia and Pacific Region Office (UNICEF)
GPI	Global Partnership for Education
HCNM	High Commissioner on National Minorities
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning (UNESCO)
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
LESC	Language, Education and Social Cohesion (UNICEF)
MINE	Myanmar/Burma Indigenous Network for Education
MLE	Multilingual Education
MLE WG	Multilingual Education Working Group
MTB-MLE	Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRC	National Reconciliation Commission (Thailand)
NUCC	National Unity Consultative Council (Malaysia)
OBEC	Office of Basic Education Commission (Thailand)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OOSCI	Out-Of-School Children Initiative
PRC4ECCE	Pacific Regional Forum for Early Childhood Care and Education
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PBEA	Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme
SEA-PLM	South East Asia Primary Learning Metrics (UNICEF)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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Glossary

Resilience

UNICEF defines resilience as, ‘the ability of children, communities and systems to anticipate, prevent, withstand, adapt to and recover from stresses and shocks advancing the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged’. (Working definition in the draft UNICEF Position Paper on Resilience)

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding involves a multidimensional range of measures to reduce the risk of a lapse or relapse into conflict by addressing both the causes and consequences of conflict. Peacebuilding can be transformative, changing or transforming negative relationships and institutions and strengthening national capacities at all levels for better management of conflict dynamics and in order to lay the foundation for supporting the cohesiveness of the society and building sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding is multidimensional (including political, security, social and economic dimensions), cuts across sectors (education, WASH, health, nutrition, child protection, gender) and occurs at all levels in a society (national to community levels), and includes governments, civil society, the United Nations system, as well as an array of international and national partners.

Education and Peacebuilding

Education may be a driver of conflict, but it also can play a significant role in supporting peacebuilding. Education is not a marginal player in peacebuilding, but a core component of building sustainable peace (UNICEF 2011). While the relationship between education and conflict is recognized, education’s role in peacebuilding is not fully realized. Education as a peace dividend is accepted. However education can contribute to other dimensions of peacebuilding, such as conflict prevention, social transformation, civic engagement and economic progress (UNESCO 2011). For example, education can contribute to improved governance by addressing underlying inequities that fuel conflict, providing education and employment opportunities to disenfranchised youth, empowering adolescent girls and women as actors in the peacebuilding process, imparting civic and political education, and modelling democratic participation and decision-making. Creating an enabling environment for education to contribute to peace requires a long-term view that includes education sector system building and strengthening. Practices of good governance, conflict-sensitive education policy (that which is delivered in a way that does not exacerbate social cleavages or cause conflict), transparent collection and use of information, and equitable distribution of education resources and materials are important signals of strengthened institutional capacity and are crucial to the peacebuilding process.

Social Cohesion

Social Cohesion refers to the quality of coexistence between the multiple groups that operate within a society. Groups can be distinguished in terms of ethnic and socio-cultural origin, religious and political beliefs, social class or economic sector or on the basis of interpersonal characteristics such as gender and age. Quality of coexistence between the groups can be evaluated along the dimensions of mutual respect and trust, shared values and social participation, life satisfaction and happiness as well as structural equity and social justice. (UNDP ACT, July 2013). Social Cohesion, or

rather the reestablishment or strengthening of social cohesion, is one of the results that emerge from an effective peacebuilding intervention.

Home language/s	The language/s spoken in the home. This may differ to the languages spoken more broadly in the immediate community or nationally
Intercultural Education	Intercultural education can be integrated with any component of a school curriculum and aims for a sustainable and peaceful way of living together ‘through the creation of <i>understanding</i> of, <i>respect</i> for and <i>dialogue</i> between the different cultural groups’ (UNESCO, 2013, p. 19). It allows students the opportunity to articulate the differences within and between groups and to work towards accommodation and acceptance of differences.
Language of instruction	Also called the ‘medium of instruction’, this term refers to the language through which education curriculum is delivered.
Minority language	A language spoken by a minority of the population, or a portion of the population that is not politically dominant in a society. This can refer to the languages of indigenous, immigrant and ethnic linguistic minorities.
Mother tongue	A person’s first language. As many people grow up with more than one language, a mother tongue may be the language a person grows up speaking and identifies with as their first language.
Multilingual Education	Multilingual Education programs enable learners to begin their education in their mother tongue – the language they know best. Students transition to the official medium of instruction as they progress through their primary schooling. In the best MLE programs, students continue to develop their ability to communicate in both languages throughout primary schooling (UNESCO, 2007a).
National language/s	The official or <i>de facto</i> language of a nation state. It is often the language of government and administration. The terms ‘national’ and ‘official’ are often used interchangeably, but some countries distinguish between these terms. For example, Papua New Guinea has four ‘official’ languages: Tok Pisin, English, Hiri Motu and Papua New Guinean Sign Language, while in Singapore, Malay is the ‘national’ languages, while the four ‘official’ languages are Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil.

1. Introduction

The East Asia and Pacific (EAP) region encompasses one-third of the world's population and more than one-quarter of the world's children – around 580 million children in total. The region possesses a stunning variety in geography, culture and political and economic systems and significant diversity can be seen within countries in terms of wealth, ethnicity and language. The EAP region is also diverse in terms of education provision. While some countries have achieved the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2015, specifically, the Education For All commitments, many have not. A significant portion of the population continues to experience multiple deprivations, including access to and quality of education. Governments are making efforts to achieve 'inclusive growth' and working to distribute the benefits of economic development to all sections of society, as they mainstream the MDGs' gains and its continuous application in the newly approved Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Many are increasingly recognising education as a pivotal component of inclusive growth.

Education not only increases the chances that, someday, children will be able to support themselves and seek a better life for their families; it also provides them with the skills to rebuild their societies. And it can instil in them a desire to seek reconciliation when the conflicts have been resolved and the catastrophes have ended.

**Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director
(2015)**

To address the complex issues of inequity in education, the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Region Office (EAPRO) Education Programme focuses on inequity in terms of access to education and learning, encompassing children with disabilities, gender in education, Early Childhood Development, Education in Emergencies, Peacebuilding, and youth and adolescent development. One of EAPRO's major initiatives has been the Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) programme, a four-year global initiative (2012-2015/16) funded by the Government of Netherlands which aims to build resilience, social cohesion and human security through strengthened policies and practices in education. In the EAP region, one of its components is the Language, Education and Social Cohesion (LESC) Initiative, with the overall aim of strengthening the capacity of UNICEF Country Offices, governments, educational practitioners and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to include social cohesion components into policies and programming and to gather evidence on language education and peacebuilding.

This proposed strategy outlines the focus areas that UNICEF EAPRO can take into consideration for 2016-2020 programmes, in terms of MLE and LESC programming. It builds on the findings of the LESC Initiative, in order to continue to increase awareness and the institutional capacity of EAP countries to address issues of language, conflict, social cohesion and multilingual education in a strategic and systemic manner. Educational inequality has many causes and influences and a range of collaborations and strategies are required to successfully bring about and build on progress.

UNICEF EAPRO will be discussing with interested UNICEF Country Offices and key partners for possible engagement on the following six focus areas:

- 1. Inclusive Language Policy and Planning;**
- 2. Advocacy and Public Education;**
- 3. Knowledge Sharing;**
- 4. Intercultural Education for Social Cohesion;**
- 5. Multilingual Education; and**
- 6. Facilitated Dialogue and Training.**

2. The East Asia and Pacific (EAP) Region

The EAP region is a diverse area that has experienced a rapid rise in growth and development, but these come with rising social, economic and educational inequalities. These inequalities often result in the exclusion of marginalized communities, such as ethno-linguistic minorities, indigenous populations, the very poor and people living in rural and remote areas. The failure of governments to address the causes of exclusion is a key driver of conflict in the region.

In fact, many EAP countries have recently emerged from or are still confronting some form of insecurity, violence or social/political unrest, such as Indonesia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea (PNG), the Philippines, Solomon Islands and Timor Leste. Several countries also have high rates of poverty, for example, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar and PNG. The Pacific Islands countries are geographically and politically isolated and have weak economies and governance structures; hence their capacity to address challenges is stretched. The internal and external migration of refugees and undocumented workers across this region and their lack of equitable access to civil services and rights continue to perpetuate disadvantage, as well as to contribute to ongoing tensions. In addition, attacks on schools, students and teachers and military occupation and use of schools are common occurrence in countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Myanmar (See, e.g. Parks, Colletta & Oppenheim, 2013; Sercombe & Tupas, 2014; UNICEF, 2008; 2014; Wardenaer, 2015).

Moreover, the region is particularly vulnerable to pressures resulting from rapid urbanization, migration, climate change and frequent natural hazards. EAP is the most hazard-prone region in the world and this has had severe implications on livelihoods and on the young population of the region. Asia-Pacific's population is young which means children are disproportionately affected by natural hazards and will feel the full force of climate change. The impact of such emergencies does not only threaten human life, but also derails development gains and profoundly places children's right to education at risk.

Unfortunately, governance and political issues have played a key role in the degree to which social exclusion, marginalization, natural disaster and conflict have been experienced in EAP countries. This is particularly the case with regards to discriminatory legislations, lack of transparency and political participation, and inequitable resource redistribution and economic opportunities.

3. UNICEF and the Right to Education

UNICEF works to ensure that children experience the rights guaranteed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, UN, 1989), a guiding document for UNICEF's mandate and one which has been ratified by every country in the EAP region. A central pillar of the CRC states that 'childhood is entitled to special care and assistance' (p. 1). Among the CRC Articles are the rights to:

- Universal access to quality education;
- Equitable access to education, with respect for a child's cultural values, language and identity;
- Protection from physical and mental violence, and
- The right to freely express, practice and maintain a child's own culture, religion and language

(Articles 3, 13, 16,-17, 19-20, 28-30 and 32).

These rights are also protected internationally through the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR, UN, 1966), and reiterated regionally through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) *Human Rights Declaration* (ASEAN, 2012). As established in the ICESCR and Article 28 of the CRC, the *ASEAN Human Rights Declaration* supports the right to compulsory and free primary education; accessible secondary education and technical/ vocational education, and tertiary education, accessible to all on the basis of merit.

Most recently, under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2015-2030), Goal 4 strives to preserve these rights by ensuring 'inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all', including 'safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all'. Closely connected is Goal 5, to 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls' and Goal 16, which aims to 'Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels' (UN, 2015).



Photo 1: A boy studies in Myanmar. UNICEF is running a Quality Basic Education Programme with support from Australia, Denmark, EU, Norway and UK © UNICEF/NYHQ2012-2065/Dean

The risks that impact children's access to education are interconnected and include conflict; poverty; economic and social inequalities; exclusion of marginalised communities, and challenges resulting from rapid urbanization, migration, climate change and frequent natural hazards. UNICEF is committed to taking action where it is needed most, and the programmatic priorities reflect this core value. They include:

Early Childhood Development (ECD) and school readiness: In recent decades there has been a growing recognition among economists, educators and scientists of the importance of the first five to six years of life in the formation of intelligence, personality, and social behaviour. UNICEF supports countries to develop the capacities to improve children's developmental readiness to start

primary school on time, especially for marginalized children, and to complete a quality basic education.

Equal access to education and universal primary school education: To reduce the number of children who are out of school around the world, UNICEF tailors programmes to respond to the needs of specific countries. While UNICEF continues to recognize gender as a critical dimension as it relates to access, participation and completion of a quality education, there is also a focus on other areas of disparity within populations. Disadvantaged and marginalized children usually suffer from a range of socio-cultural and economic inequities that must be addressed in education. UNICEF works to identify the bottlenecks that inhibit school participation and to understand the complex profiles of out-of-school children that reflect the multiple deprivations and disparities they face in relation to education.

Enhancing quality in primary and secondary education: The focus on increasing access to education that was generated by the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) and the Millennium Declaration (2000) led to increased pressure on already-strained education systems around the world, taking a toll on the quality of education being delivered to children. UNICEF focuses on innovative ways to improve the quality of learning opportunities for all students. The Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) model is at the centre of this area of focus, including an emphasis on safe, healthy, inclusive and gender-sensitive school environments, relevant curricula and child-centred teaching and learning practices. Addressing quality also means continuing to cultivate critical thinking and develop skills to adapt to changing environmental conditions and their impact on education.

Education in emergencies and post-crisis transitions: All children have the right to an education, even in emergencies and post-crisis situations. In fact, schools take on an added significance in those contexts of disasters. Schools offer protection and help to restore a sense of normalcy for children, enabling them to overcome the emotional trauma they have suffered. In an emergency and its aftermath, UNICEF is committed to getting all children back to school or into school for the first time. Paradoxically, emergencies provide a window of opportunity for marginalized children to participate in education.

Girls' education and gender equality: Girls' education has a huge impact on individuals and societies. Girls who receive quality, basic education are more empowered and better prepared to protect themselves against violence, abuse, exploitation, and trafficking, and are less vulnerable to disease, including HIV/AIDS. Recognizing both the disadvantage of girls as well as the opportunities provided through girls' education, UNICEF supports governments in the reduction of gender disparities in education through interventions aimed at gender equality for both girls and boys, across differing contexts (e.g. UNICEF South Asia, 2015).

Children with Disabilities and Inclusive Education: Many children with disabilities (CWD) are denied the rights to live in dignity and reach their full potential in East Asia and the Pacific (EAP). These children are among the most marginalized, excluded and vulnerable children in the region. An estimated 190 million CWD live in the region. Many are invisible as they are not even issued birth certificates. Many have limited access to basic services, such as education, protection and psychosocial support. Many governments and other stakeholders assume that the needs of CWD are best addressed by segregation into separate schools. This is rarely necessary with perhaps the exception of extreme or multiple disabilities and leads to social exclusion. UNICEF supports the principle of inclusion as expressed in the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD). Every child regardless of disability, income, gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation or cultural origin,

should wherever possible, be able to attend a school that fully nurtures their potential to learn within their own communities.

To support greater advancements in education across the EAP region, the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Region Office (EAPRO) strives to address issues of inequity, conflict and social cohesion in a strategic and systemic manner. In alignment with UNICEF's *Strategic Plan for Education 2014-2017* (UNICEF, 2013), particularly its Outcome 5 - Education, the UNICEF EAPRO Education Programme focuses on inequity in terms of access to education and learning, encompassing children with disabilities; gender in education; Early Childhood Development; Education in Emergencies; Peacebuilding, and youth and adolescent development.

4. Multilingualism in the EAP Region

Improving educational outcomes for children is immensely important in alleviating and preventing poverty, increasing health, political participation and social tolerance. UNICEF's Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 (UNICEF, 2013, p.2) articulates that:

To the degree that any child has an unequal chance in life — in its social, political, economic, civic and cultural dimensions — her or his rights are violated. There is growing evidence that investing in the health, education and protection of a society's most disadvantaged citizens — addressing inequity — not only will give all children the opportunity to fulfil their potential but also will lead to sustained growth and stability of countries.

Equitable universal education is a key goal in creating a fair, healthy and socially inclusive world. As the *Education for All Global Report* emphasises, 'education enables people to escape from the trap of chronic poverty and prevents the transmission of poverty between generations' (UNESCO, 2014, p.144). There is also a strong link between education and healthier populations due to a range of factors including the willingness to seek professional help in health issues, including vaccinations, and awareness of basic health standards in relation to the transmission of and protection from diseases. One of the factors that impacts on children's ability to achieve high levels of education success is the language of instruction in schools. Therefore, in multilingual societies, the question of language of instruction becomes pertinent and in attempting to redress educational inequities, language problems are invariably raised. Students whose home language is different from the language of instruction in school face the difficult challenge of learning in their second language, with schooling in an unfamiliar language partially accounting for the lack of academic success of minority and indigenous children (Ball & UNESCO, 2011).

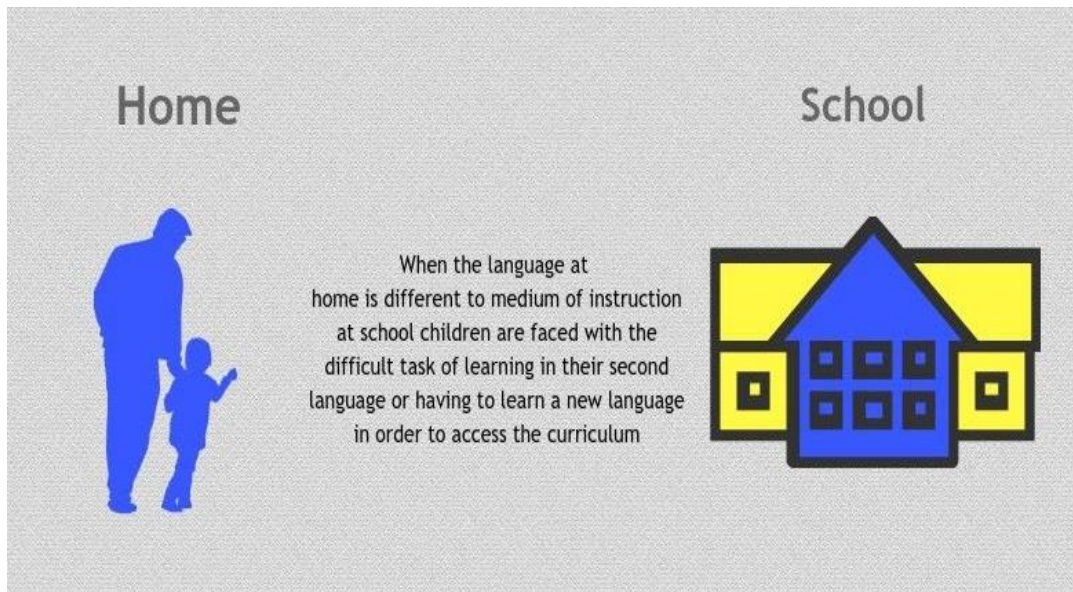


Figure 1. Dichotomy of home language and school's medium of instruction.

Languages in education are particularly challenging in the EAP region, which boasts some of the most linguistically diverse populations in the world. More than 2,300 living languages, including sign languages, creoles and pidgins, are used across the Asia Pacific region. This vast multilingualism is made up of thriving languages which have diverse statuses. Some are acknowledged as official national languages, others are present as languages of wider communication and prestige. Other languages are confined to sub-national settings and many are spoken in small localities.

However, more than 700 languages of the Asia Pacific region are classified as threatened, at some level, with a large number seriously endangered or dying. All languages, whether they are robust international vehicles of science, technology and commerce, or small and localised in remote villages, express the unique identities and traditions of their speaker populations. Table 1 provides an overview of the linguistic diversity of some of the countries across the EAP region and an indication of the number of languages that are officially recognised. The linguistic diversity captured in Table 1, and the level of support provided by governments for languages, has a significant impact on education systems, access to education and education outcomes, as is further discussed in Section 5.4.

Country	Population	Living languages	Languages in trouble or dying	No. of national, official and/or recognised languages
Cambodia	14,963,000	23	15	1
Indonesia	248,818,000	706	343	1
Laos	6,770,000	85	25	2
Malaysia	29,948,000	138	116	2
Myanmar	60,976,000	117	23	8
Papua New Guinea	7,732,000	839	146	5
Philippines	98,394,000	182	23	21
Singapore	5,535,000	24	11	4
Thailand	67,912,000	74	25	1
Timor Leste	1,178,000	19	6	17
Vanuatu	253,000	110	55	3
Vietnam	89,706,000	108	42	1

Table 1: Linguistic diversity across East Asia and the Pacific (Ethnologue, 2015a; 2015b)

These emerging but variable changes in medium of instruction have been supported by an increasing recognition of language and communication issues within various instruments of international law. This widening scope of language questions contained within international law reflects a desire to protect communities' rights to use, enjoy and maintain languages, particularly minority languages (de Varennes, 1996). Because language has multiple functions within the lives of speakers, including at the practical as well as symbolic level, no single instrument of law can fully encompass all dimensions of language. Nevertheless, a general pattern affirming language rights, as an integral to general human rights discourse, has been established. Some examples of the many international conventions include:

- *European Convention on Human Rights, CETS No. 5, November 4, 1950* (Council of Europe, 1950).
- *American Convention on Human Rights, "Pact of San Jose, Costa Rica," November 22, 1969* (Organization of American States, 1969).
- *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, June 27, 1981* (Organisation of African Unity, 1981).
- *Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, 27 June 1989* (International Labour Organization, 1989).
- *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic or Religious Minorities* (UN, 1992).
- *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, CETS No. 148, November 5, 1992* (Council of Europe, 1992).
- *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001* (UNESCO, 2001)
- *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, October 17, 2003* (UNESCO, 2003).
- *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, October 20, 2005* (UNESCO, 2005).

- *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UN General Assembly Resolution 61/295 of September 13, 2007 (UN, 2007).*

5. Multilingual Education

A key issue in the discussion of language, education and human rights is that of Multilingual Education. Typically focused on the use of the mother tongue in instruction, it is often referred to as Mother Tongue-Based, Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), and supports multilingual approaches to education in pre-school and early primary years, with the introduction of instruction in national languages in later primary school years. When the language at home is different to the language of instruction at school, children are faced with the difficult task of learning in a second language, a language with which they have little familiarity. This often results in lower educational outcomes and children dropping out of school.

One way this has been illustrated is through the UNICEF Out-of-School Children (OOSC) Initiative. In Cambodia, for example, while only four percent of Cambodian children speak Khmer as a second language, a vast majority of these children are in the Mondul Kiri and Ratanak Kiri provinces. Over 60 percent of children in these provinces have Khmer as a second language, and over 40 percent of these children have never attended school, where textbooks are only available in Khmer, in mainstream schools¹. Of those that have attended school, 8.5 percent have dropped out, implying that language and cultural barriers are among the key inhibitors to education access (UNICEF, 2012).

Challenges in starting school

When children begin school they must learn many new things. They must:

- Learn about proper school behaviour;
- Learn to read and write;
- Learn new information and concepts in math, science, social studies and other subjects; and
- Demonstrate that they understand and can use the new information and concepts.



¹ Note that textbooks in indigenous languages and Khmer are both available in multilingual education schools in Ratanakiri and Mondulkiri provinces.

Challenges for minority language speakers

Speakers of minority languages are faced with additional challenges that impede their education attainments. For example:

- They must learn the official school language. At the same time, they must try to understand the new things that the teacher is teaching them in the new language.
- They must try to understand the lessons in the textbooks, which are written in the official school language. If they do not yet understand the language well enough to grasp the meaning of the lessons, they are forced to memorize words, phrases and even whole sentences as the teacher reads. Memorization, however, is not the same as understanding, and so they fall farther and farther behind academically.
- They must be able to write in the new language. If they do not understand the language well, they are forced to copy letters, words and sentences from the chalkboard or from a book, but that does not help them learn to express their thoughts in written form.



Photo 2: Girls from an indigenous community, Viet Nam. ©UNICEF/NYHQ2009-0222/Estey

Presently, bilingual and multilingual education is practiced in many parts of the world. The specific language situation of each setting influences the kinds of program that are best suited in each case. However, large scale research and case studies have shown that programs that support MTB-MLE in the early years of learning, followed by the introduction of the national language, can lead to significantly better educational outcomes for minority children (e.g. Chumbow, 2013; Cummins, 2000; Kosonen, Young and Malone, 2006; SEAMEO and The World Bank, 2009; Taylor & Coetzee; 2013; UNESCO, 2006, 2007c, 2008b). The main benefits that emerge from properly designed multilingual education in linguistically diverse environments can be grouped into four categories:

5.1 Better and Fairer Education

A large body of research evidence on academic success for minority language populations shows that multilingual education improves cognitive skills, educational outcomes and opportunities for children (See, e.g. Baker, 2011; Bialystok, et al., 2005; Bialystok, Peets & Moreno, 2014; McField & McField, 2014; McIlwraith, 2013; Premrirat, 2015; Sullivan, et al., 2014; UNESCO, 2006; 2007b).

Additive multilingual education ensures that the child builds on language skills, rather than using a mother tongue for only brief periods and then transitioning to national language schooling entirely. These transitions often lead to what is called 'subtractive' bilingualism, whereby the child's ultimate language abilities are in the dominant or official language only (Malone, 2005). Biliteracy is crucially important. This requires that both languages of a bilingual child are used to acquire reading and writing skills and developed as a resource for academic learning. The classroom should affirm both the spoken and written forms of the child's mother tongue, along with the spoken and written forms of the national or official language, where these are different (Hornberger, 1997; 2003).

The benefits of this additive bilingual model are higher standards of academic performance in general, better literacy rates in national and international testing, and better acquisition of both national and foreign languages, which all greatly enhances children's economic capabilities and prospects of self-determination (See, e.g. Heugh & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012; Taylor & Coetzee, 2013). The Global Out-of-School-Initiative Children in South Asia identified 36 million children as being out of school across the region, with the most common factors keeping children from school as poverty, remote location, social discrimination, conflict emergencies, disability and gender (UNICEF South Asia, 2015). For ethnic minority children, especially the most disadvantaged, rural, female and minority children, multilingual education practices create inclusive learning environments that are less likely to marginalise children based on their social, ethnic or gender groups. Despite the complexities of planning and resourcing for multilingual education, practical experience and research evidence concur that it is indispensable to deliver equitable, quality education in diverse settings.

Better and Fairer Education

Equitable access to the language of instruction is crucial in educational outcomes



Additive Approach

An additive multilingual approach means that language and literacy skills are strengthened in more than one language
e.g. mother tongue plus national language plus language of wider communication



Figure 2. Advantages of mother tongue-based multilingual education.

5.2 Stronger Ethnic Identity, National Citizenship and Global Citizenship

As well as benefiting children's academic performance and language development, MLE fosters ethnic connections, increases family cohesion, and cultural identities (May, 2012). Alongside retention of ethnic and cultural differences, the curriculum should foster a wider sense of national belonging, in which the formal compact of citizenship promotes equality and participation for all. In this way, a curriculum, and the experience of schooling in general, promotes local and national attachments.

By creating strong links with cultural heritages alongside a tolerating, inclusive and affirming national attachment, a reinforced sense of belonging is made possible. When minority populations are affirmed in their unique identities, the nation becomes a place of inclusion and participation, rather than exclusion and dominance. By allowing a deeper connection with cultural and ethnic histories and identities through language, multilingual education programmes can materially and symbolically build national bridges and foster conditions that increase social cohesion and material production. Multilingualism that focuses on local, national and international languages also prepares learners for participation in the global community, which is a world of interconnected multilingualism and increased mobility (e.g. Novelli & Smith, 2011; Petroska-Beska, et al., 2009; Portera, 2001; UNESCO, 2013; Woolman, 2006).

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) (UNESCO, 2016b) is also one of the strategic areas of UNESCO's Education Sector programme for the period 2014-2021. UNESCO's work in this area is guided by the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 on Education, which aims to:

ensure that all learners are provided with the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development (UN, 2015).

The GCED, along with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) (UNESCO, 2016a), prioritises a global focus in education in order to ensure education contributes to a peaceful and sustainable world. MLE plays a critical role in achieving these goals as the benefits of being able to participate on the global stage have positive implications for economic self-sufficiency and provide people with a chance to participate in and be exposed to the rich cultural diversity on display throughout the world.

5.3 Fostering Peace and Improving Social Cohesion

Refusal to acknowledge differences in language and cultural identity of minority populations, and more extremely, efforts to suppress or deny them, can provoke social minority alienation, inter-ethnic suspicion and social tension. Sustained over time, these erosions of social cohesion can damage social relations and produce conflict and even violence. There is an emerging consensus, globally, that recognition of cultural diversity and language rights for the component parts of a country serve to enhance identification with the wider national community (See, e.g. Banks, 2004, 2006; Kymlicka & Pattern, 2003).

Fostering inclusion through recognition of differences bolsters political and social cohesion. There is a practical dimension to these identification processes. If minority populations achieve high rates of functional literacy in their mother tongues and the official languages of their society (biliteracy) they gain meaningful access to the narratives, skills, knowledge and practice of the wider society. This cultural capital enhances material success in education and the economy, and processes of citizenship integration. Success in schooling makes access to higher education possible, improves skills acquisition, labour market access and ultimately produces greater economic productivity and competitiveness. Education systems should encourage universal command of both the official and identity languages, and should view members of minority groups as focal point for investment in social cohesion, social resilience and conflict avoidance.

This belief has been consistently supported by UNESCO, since the release of *Monographs on fundamental education VIII: The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education* (UNESCO, 1953), which supports the use of vernacular languages in education. These goals have been constantly reiterated, with UNESCO continuing to produce a wide range of materials and training to support multilingual education (e.g. UNESCO, 2003a; 2007a; 2013b).

5.4 MLE Challenges and Effective Practices

While the benefits of well-designed multilingual education programs in linguistically diverse environments have been clearly documented, in practice, there are numerous complexities and challenges in developing and implementing medium of instruction policies for education. Despite the linguistic diversity across South East Asia, as illustrated in Table 1, most countries only have one or two official languages, reflected in the education system. There are significant differences across the region in the accommodation of mother tongues as a medium of instruction to support learning for minority, refugee, stateless and out of school children. For example, Malaysia, with its 138 languages, has one official language - Malay - but allows the use of Chinese and Tamil as the medium of instruction in primary and secondary schools. Support for other languages, however, including indigenous and non-indigenous languages, is usually limited to the teaching of the language as a subject.

Cambodia, which has the least linguistic diversity in the region with 23 languages, has one official language - Khmer – that is the medium of instruction in schools. However, mother tongued-based education is available in in five different Government approved languages and integrated in the formal school system for pre-school aged children and from Grade 1 to Grade 3 predominantly in the North Eastern provinces. While Cambodia has strong infrastructures in place for multilingual education such as the Multilingual Education National Action Plan (2015-2018) and Guidelines for Bilingual Education for Indigenous Children in the Highland Provinces (2010), the scope remains small in comparison to the need; it is only reaching approximately 4,000 children while it is estimated that over there are 82,000² school aged children in the north eastern provinces where the majority of ethnic minorities reside. Learning from Cambodia's experience, it is important to note that scale up of MLE requires huge Government commitment in terms of resources and capacity. Through strong advocacy, the Cambodian Government acknowledged the majority of MLE teachers as Government staff and placed them under its own payroll in late 2015 that was a huge milestone. The Government envisions to pay salaries for all MLE teachers at the end of 2016 including new recruitment of MLE teachers. However, budget commitments for teacher training and textbooks and other learning materials are very limited.

In Indonesia, one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the region with 706 languages, the official language, Bahasa Indonesian, is spoken as a first language by around only 15 percent of the population. While there is a supportive policy environment for the use of the non-official languages, in formal schooling, this is typically limited to oral language use to support positive classroom settings. In other locations, such as Myanmar, support for ethnic languages has predominantly been limited to non-formal settings, although there is emerging support for MTB-MLE (Kosonen & Young, 2009).

The perceived and real obstacles to effective MTB-MLE programs are as varied as the linguistically rich and diverse contexts across South East Asia. A key challenge is the political perception, particularly in countries with top-down, centralised systems of governance that the use of languages other than the national language in the education system could lead to a lack of national unity and to fragmentation of national identity. Other perceived obstacles include the expense of effectively

² National Institute of Statistics of Cambodia, 2014.

implementing MTB-MLE; languages related issues such as the lack of written forms of languages and a shortage of teaching and learning materials and literature, and structural issues such as a shortage of teachers who speak the languages. While these challenges can hinder or stall the effective implementation and scaling up of MTB-MLE programs, these challenges, as well as others, are being successfully addressed in many countries, including some South East Asian countries (Kosonen and Young, 2009).

Examples currently underway in South East Asia include pilot mother tongue-based programs in Vietnamese pre-schools and primary schools. In three provinces in Vietnam, the local ethnic languages are being used as the medium of education from pre-school to Year 2, with the national language, Vietnamese, introduced alongside the mother tongue from Year 3. Critical lessons have been documented through the project, including the importance of political engagement with local authorities, as well as community members, teachers, parents and students; ensuring the quality and relevance of teaching and learning materials, and regular assessment of student outcomes. Significantly, notable gains in Maths and Vietnamese have been demonstrated in speakers of ethnic languages through the pilot project (UNICEF and Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam, 2011).

In the Philippines, where Filipino and English are the official languages, there are 19 official languages in use as the medium on instruction in schools. With 182 languages spoken across the country, the policy environment has been more supportive than those of neighbouring countries. In endeavouring to improve outcomes for MTB-MLE education, significant research has been underway into understanding best practices in MTB-MLE education in the Philippines. A multi-stage, large-scale study has focused on identifying the challenges in implementing MTB-MLE, and working with schools to identify the drivers of success for the effective implementation of programs. The next stage of the project will focus on student outcomes in MTB-MLE programs (Metila and Pradilla, 2016).

The ongoing documentation of best practice in MTB-MLE and the detailing of how obstacles are addressed, are key to building more widespread support for these programs across the South East Asian region.

6. Peacebuilding and Education

UNICEF's Peace Building, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) Programme was a four-year (2012–2015/2016) innovative, cross-sectoral programme based in 14 conflict-affected contexts, focusing on education and peacebuilding. The goal of the programme was to build resilience, social cohesion and human security through strengthened policies and practices in education (UNICEF, 2014, p.3). The programme strove for five outcomes based around education and peacebuilding:

- Outcome 1: Integrating peacebuilding and education
- Outcome 2: Building institutional capacities
- Outcome 3: Developing community and individual capacities
- Outcome 4: Increasing access to conflict-sensitive education
- Outcome 5: Generating evidence and knowledge (see UNICEF, 2014, pp. 22-54)

The PBEA programme, as run by UNICEF EAPRO, was implemented with focus on Outcomes 2 and 5, with the Language, Education and Social Cohesion (LESC) Initiative as one of its major components. Southeast Asia has experienced a number of long-standing intra-state conflicts in recent years and education has been used to exacerbate conflict in some cases, inculcating violence, fear and mistrust of different groups, whether they be political, ethnic, racial or religious 'others' (See, e.g. Brown & Ganguly, 2003; De Silva, 1998; De Votta, 2003; Jitpiromsri, 2014; McCargo; 2008; Mohsin, 2003; Parks, Colletta & Oppenheim, 2013; Sercombe & Tupas, 2014; UNICEF, 2008; 2013a; Vaddhanaphuti; 2005; von Feigenblatt, et al.; 2010; Wardenauer; 2015). The overall aim of EAPRO's PBEA programme was attend to two significant drivers of conflict, 1) low levels of institutional capacity to address issues of inequity, conflict and social cohesion in a strategic and systemic manner, and 2) the lack of adequate evidence on education-relevant conflict drivers that can limit effective planning of conflict-sensitive education activities.

The EAPRO LESC Initiative was based on two theories of change: 1) if the capacity and awareness of UNICEF Country Offices, governments, educational practitioners and Civil Society Organisations (CSO's) are strengthened to include peacebuilding/social cohesion components into policies and programming, then they will be better able to support conflict reduction and social transformation in their respective countries; and 2) if education policy and programming are informed by adequate and rigorous evidence, then governments and UNICEF Country Offices will be better positioned to address and mitigate education-relevant conflict drivers.

An additional commitment within LESC Initiative is to build language education policies that have been negotiated among all stakeholders, thereby, fostering more collaborative relations within society, but, also by basing language policies on solid empirical research about multilingual education and its connections to effective literacy acquisition. Both of these, literacy and multilingualism, can improve children's academic performance, improve their life chances, and secure ethnic and national identities.

7. The LESC Initiative – What Did It Do?

Underpinning the LESC Initiative was the recognition that conventional analyses of conflict have underestimated the 'contribution' of language and ethnicity differences in generating original conflicts and in sustaining conflicts once they have commenced. The LESC Initiative examined the role of language policy, planning and theory, and deliberative processes in fostering a culture of dialogue as a critical methodology to solving apparently intractable problems in education in the three target countries – Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand. The initiative sought to build greater ability for people, citizens and governments to lead and shape change in their societies, despite the presence of longer term economic, political, and conflicted-based obstacles.

It was critical that the LESC activities in each country were conflict-sensitive, and through on-site consultations and research undertaken in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand in 2012, context-specific links between education, language and conflict were identified and became the focal points of the

expanded LESC Initiative. Key characteristics of each context and its associated LESC activities can be read below.

Malaysia: In Malaysia, education has become closely linked with creating national unity. The desire for unity is in part a product of the rise in different school systems in Malaysia, particularly Tamil and Chinese schools, alongside Malay-medium schools. While there have been various attempts to integrate these schooling systems through a centralised curriculum that focuses on national unity, the school systems remain largely separate, and challenges for social cohesion typified by hierarchies across ethnic groups is a persistent problem amongst Malaysia's population. Another particular issue in Malaysia is schooling for undocumented, refugee and stateless children, as only Malaysian citizens can be entered into the public school system. This is particularly evident in Sabah and Sarawak where the large migration of workers to palm plantations has resulted in a high number of stateless children who are either being denied education, or who are dropping out early in schooling due to barriers of language and distance from schools (Lo Bianco, 2013, p.16). Specific challenges in language, literacy and academic achievement also need to be addressed for Peninsular Orang Asli students. The Orang Asli are the Indigenous peoples of Peninsular Malaysia, a majority of whom live in poverty and experience poor educational outcomes and high school dropout rates (Noor, 2012), although progression has been achieved through the Millennium Development Goals (UN Malaysia, 2011).

The LESC Initiative in Malaysia focused on current practices and prevailing attitudes and values relating to language across the education spectrum, with a particular emphasis on language planning activities for the main ethnic groups, as well as for indigenous and non-indigenous speakers. The initiative was informed by rich, participatory research and fieldwork activities. These included bilateral meetings, interviews, consultations and Facilitated Dialogues with over 150 individuals belonging to over 100 organizations, institutions and governmental departments across Malaysia. Three Facilitated Dialogues were held in Kuala Lumpur (Peninsula Malaysia), Kota Kinabalu (Sabah) and Kuching (Sarawak), while site visits were conducted at the Sekolah Wawasan Vision School, Subang Jaya, the Kampung Numbak Learning Center, Sabah and at Multilingual Education (MLE) Preschools in Sarawak. Participants involved in the Facilitated Dialogues and site visits included education stakeholders; government personnel; ethnic and indigenous community representatives; teachers; parents, and representatives from NGOs. As the social, political and education context in the settings for each Facilitated Dialogue and site visit differed significantly, so too did the agendas, concerns and petitions amongst each group. The Facilitated Dialogues allowed space for concerns to be shared and advanced.

A key observation has been that the programmes and initiatives that currently make up the bulk of the activity of national unity promotion are essentially motivated by an ethos of overcoming existing problems, and only occasionally comprise of problem prevention. Tackling problems is important. Yet, the LESC Initiative found that Malaysia needs to move towards an ambitious programme of social inclusion, fostering a sense of participatory citizenship, educational equality and cultural democracy reflected in its language policy.

Indeed, the need for comprehensive language planning is the strongest single conclusion of this work. Comprehensive language planning should build on the promising outcomes reported in the

LESC initiative, and should secure the presence of the languages of all citizens, address the unresolved tensions deriving from the disparate and un-integrated vernacular-national school systems of the major ethnic groupings; explore the role of multilingualism and MTB-MLE and State-specific differentiation in language and education policies to address the needs of indigenous and non-indigenous groups across Malaysia. A concerted, sustained and facilitated public conversation based on the participation and voices of policymakers, ethnic and indigenous communities, experts and the wider society (media, Civil Society Organizations [CSOs], and economic interests) is needed to directly address these questions.

Myanmar: Regrettably, there has been civil unrest in Myanmar for over 60 years. During this time, the government has resisted appeals by ethnic groups for ‘ethnically defined regional autonomy as described under the post-colonial federal union of Burma’ (UNICEF, 2014, p.24). Successive governments have persisted with Myanmar as the only language of instruction in schools, which has prevented Myanmar’s many ethnic minorities from attaining fair and equitable education in the country. For this reason, language and the rights to use native ethnic languages can be a key driver of conflict in Myanmar.

The LESC Initiative concentrated here on the link between language and educational equity and focused on mother tongue-based multilingual education as a key driver of social cohesion and violence reduction. An overarching objective of the LESC Initiative has been to foster a coordinated and comprehensive, evidence-based approach to tackling problems in languages education, some of which have been controversial for decades. This has involved early childhood education, primary schooling and post-primary education, all cognisant of the sociolinguistic and ethnic diversity of Myanmar’s population and its diverse ethno-linguistic groupings.

The findings and proposals arising from the LESC Initiative in Myanmar have been informed by rich, participatory research and fieldwork activities. These include a large number of bilateral meetings and focus groups, interviews, consultations and Facilitated Dialogues with many hundreds of individuals belonging to over 150 organizations, institutions and governmental departments across the country.

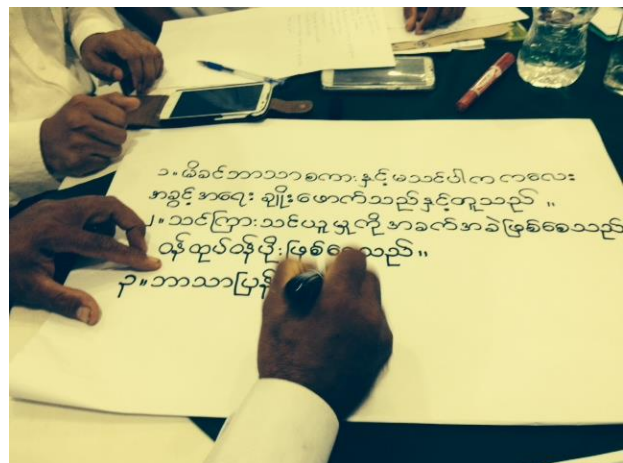


Photo 2: Facilitated Dialogue, Mawlamyine, May 2014.
Photo: Lo Bianco, 2014

There is considerable evidence from the LESC research that supports the notion that language status and language education contribute to tension and sometimes conflict, at both a societal and educational level (Lo Bianco 2015). Multilingual education has been viewed negatively, as a threat to national unity, for many decades in Myanmar, but the LESC Initiative has shown that language policy processes can play a vital role in generating understanding of the perspective and position of one group of stakeholders for the views of others, and even as far as full consensus, trust, and collaborative approaches to decision-making and enactment, which can lead to greater educational outcomes for children and improve social cohesion.

The dialogues across Myanmar and Thailand (Mae Sot) included participants from all levels of government; policy makers; education stakeholders and officials; representatives from ethnic groups; teacher; parents and representatives from NGOs. The dialogues allowed participants to move past acrimonious debates, beyond past entrenched positions and towards constructive and deliberated common ground around education law reform and multilingual provision in education and allowed for constructive and positive relationships to be formed between many stakeholders. The Initiative stimulated a demand for policy development on the part of government, which has led to ongoing work on the preparation of a peacebuilding and social cohesion promoting national language policy for Myanmar.

Thailand: The main focal point of the LESC research was on language and education in the country's South and situated in the context of minority language groups and their educational prospects, improving access to the curriculum and its representativeness, and enhancing learning outcomes. This education focus took place within a wider context of paying general attention to policy developments to make the lives of children safer, the delivery of education more effective and social relations more secure. The Initiative addressed questions of language education; MTB-MLE; the choice of scripts for writing systems (Thai, Rumi, Yawi); intercultural education and the status of Patani Malay in the context of Thai language, among other interconnected issues. The process was informed by rich, participatory research and fieldwork activities including interviews, consultations, bilateral meetings, and a Facilitated Dialogue. Many individuals belonging to over 70 organisations, institutions and governmental departments across Thailand contributed to the LESC activities, including local government and ministry personnel; education stakeholders; academics and teacher trainers; teachers; interpreters; representatives from civic organisations, as well as from NGOs. Important groundwork towards progression around a number of language-related issues was established. One of the focuses of the LESC Initiative has been to support existing trials, experiments and pilots in bilingual education such as those supported by Mahidol University, which have demonstrated strong academic gains for children's learning when education is grounded in early and substantial use of mother tongue.

However, further work and funding is needed for implementation of the action proposals for the three initiatives aimed at addressing broader societal, as well as educational factors in alleviating language-related tensions. The three initiatives were:

1. An exploration of how to grant administrative status for the Patani Malay language.
2. Scaling up: methods for expanding bilingual education.
3. An exploration of curriculum reform at the Upper Primary and Junior Secondary levels, to infuse global skills and intercultural learning for all students.

8. The LESC Initiative – What Did It Find?

The LESC Initiative has shown that language policy, and how it is put into practice in schools, as well as, at a societal level, can play a vital role in increasing social cohesion and improving the lives of children. Encompassing extensive fieldwork, the LESC Initiative involved over 90 on-site consultations and observations spread out across each country, 15 local conferences, seminars and workshops, and upwards of 40 interviews and consultations. All of this involved over 500 personnel from over 320 organisations. This extensive field work has provided a wide and representative understanding of the links between questions of language and social cohesion, and how these links are perceived and can be better understood by governments, people and organisations in the LESC countries (See UNICEF, 2015a-c; 2016a-c, for full details of the LESC Initiative).

The activities within the LESC Initiative have gone beyond research and investigation of problems to include a range of actions that mitigate conflict situations and foster collaborative discussions to reduce tension. While Section 10 outlines 10 key findings from the LESC Initiative and the role of these findings in advancing progress for languages, education and social cohesion, there are five broader contentions which can be drawn from the LESC experience.

8.1 Language as a Source of Conflict

One clear finding is that language is often a point of grievance between sub-national or minority groups and various agencies of government. These minority groups can be indigenous or immigrant in origin. Language grievances are usually linked to a host of related issues of ethnicity, belief, customs, and identity, but there are also many problems that are mainly or even exclusively about language itself. This includes the choice of national language and system of its implementation by governments in multilingual and multicultural contexts. The LESC Initiative revealed how some language problems are easily identified, such a lack of access to mother tongue education, whereas others, equally serious, tend to be ignored. An example of this would be exclusion from access to social service, educational, economic and legal opportunities and rights based on language use, among other variables. For example, children in plantation areas in Sabah, Malaysia, many of whom have an Indonesian or Filipino heritage, are unable access to education due to their legal status, poverty, distance and mother tongues which are not official languages of Malaysia (UNICEF, 2016a). Minority children's educational performance in general, their acquisition of the national official language, and their rates of access to higher education are often closely connected to the language of instruction in initial schooling, to language of assessment and the design and content of curriculum.

8.2 Language is an Ideal Entry Point into Peacebuilding Negotiations

Another major finding of the LESC Initiative is that language has some special characteristics that make it different from conflict around religious belief, territorial or governance disputes, or contentious interpretations of historical events. Because humans can learn, use and identify with many different languages, language questions are less ideological and emotionally fraught than disputes about race or religion. In addition, language is amenable to objective and empirical study to a greater degree than other more subjective points of difference across a society. This means that

today we have a vast body of scientific literature about language and language education. As a result, language can be an effective tool for promoting collaboration.

During the LESC Initiative, it was through dialogue and collaboration in joint projects that antagonists built shared identity together, came to see the viewpoint of other people, and collaboratively constructed solutions to problems. Presented with a sound and well attested knowledge base from reliable internationally reputable research around key questions related to multilingualism, the brain and cognitive functioning, curriculum design and literacy acquisition, participants explored the academic knowledge base on language and literacy learning, bilingualism and its relationship to cognitive functioning and school performance (See, e.g. Baker, 2011; Bialystok, et al., 2005; Bialystok, Peets & Moreno, 2014; McField & McField, 2014; McIlwraith, 2013; Premsrirat, 2015; Sullivan, et al., 2014; UNESCO, 2006; 2007b). Outcomes from the LESC Initiative have shown that by disseminating the results of research, and jointly designing new responses to longstanding educational problems, language becomes a vehicle to build active, concrete and collaborative participation in decision-making between minority groups, public officials and academic experts.

8.3 Language is Key in Advancing Education Outcomes

It is important to reiterate that the challenge of multilingualism for educational outcomes and social prospects for minority populations is due to the close relationship between language, literacy and education. The language of instruction in schooling can determine education success rates. It often decides whether or not children remain in school and complete enough education to enter higher education, trades or apprenticeships. In these ways language is closely tied to work opportunities. Language is linked with failure to continue schooling and underachievement. Failure to provide adequate MTB-MLE can exacerbate rates of poverty, unemployment and social alienation (e.g. Kosonen & Person, 2014; Kosonen, Young & Malone, 2006; McField & McField, 2014; Presrirat, 2015; SEAMEO & World Bank. 2009; UNESCO, 2007b).

However, much of the research cited here also acknowledges that mother tongue-based education is not without significant challenges, including political, pedagogical, resourcing and financial impediments. As a result, some of the key aims of the workshops and Facilitated Dialogues (involving expert-led, democratic and collaborative methods to facilitate discussion) under the LESC Initiative were to provide space to voice concerns around MTB-MLE; provide expert input on research around MTB-MLE; and address the crucial task of developing and expanding ideas around how best to implement changes and to address the challenges of MTB-MLE in each specific context.

The LESC Initiative showed that involving minority groups, together with majority groups in joint exercises, reflecting on language problems, helps to remove emotion and ideology from disputes, and fosters a culture of dialogue and collaboration. This can be seen, for example, in the policy dialogue process in Myanmar, where the Facilitated Dialogues allowed for constructive and positive relationships to be formed between many stakeholders, creating a sense of ownership and agency around language and education. They helped establish a dialogue space, which was previously absent, where multilingual education issues can be discussed. Through the Dialogues, the participants developed an understanding the mechanisms of language planning processes, including status, corpus and acquisition planning in the context of multilingual societies, and were able to

move towards more collaborative processes. These processes stimulated the demand side for policy development on the part of government, at both the technical and decision-making level; built trust among government, expert and civil groups; moved debate beyond notions of impossible and unmanageable, as well as raising expectations that common ground can be achieved (UNICEF, 2016b).

The LESC Initiative did not seek to directly measure education outcomes or changes to educational outcomes. This requires longer-term, empirical studies based in education institutions. While there is ample research in support of this argument as is outlined above, it should continue to be investigated in order to carefully identify practices and processes that assist increasing educational achievement across complex and varied contexts. The LESC Initiative, however, did demonstrate that a critical step in the process can be achieved through Facilitated Dialogues, in order to allow for advantageous conditions to form, and advances to be attained.

8.4 Addressing Language Issues is Integral to Social Cohesion

As countries continue to develop economically, rising educational and income inequalities and an ongoing failure to resolve localised differences, have continued to exacerbate conflict in numerous locations across the EAP region, including in all three LESC contexts. Within these complex, multi-causal dilemmas, language is clearly implicated and some focus on its status in law, public administration and education is needed to progress towards a solution of the conflict. An impediment to progression on this issue, in part, is concern on the part of governments around more regional and local forms of autonomy and the devolution of decision-making – what are the consequences for political unity? Yet research, and the ongoing conflict, tension and rising educational inequality, show that refusal to acknowledge existing differences in language use can often provoke precisely the problems feared.

Recognition of the symbolic value of linguistic diversity, both in the education system and more broadly in the community, is critical for improving social cohesion. By supporting the right of people to remain associated with their language and culture, by supporting this through multilingual education, children and youth have greater access to literacy and the curriculum, to better educational outcomes, which in the long term, leads to higher education completion rates, improved health outcomes and greater economic productivity and competitiveness, as well a greater social cohesion and national unity.

The following schematic representation details some of the variables, identified through the LESC Initiative, which could facilitate links between language and social cohesion. Alternatively, if these factors are inhibited, they can contribute to conflict around and disunity. These factors relate to the importance of language as a vehicle to equitable access to education, leading in turn to increased educational and economic success, and to longer term social cohesion. This process must begin with the creation of space for the languages of minority people in the public arena, national discourse and government initiatives, particularly the educational arena.



Figure 3: Facilitating links between language and social cohesion (UNICEF, 2016c)

In summary, LESC has found that language can be a driver of conflict in multiple ways, some evident, others camouflaged. Because language is linked to identity, it is part of the emotional and symbolic world of ethnic groups. Language is tied to the national identity of countries and so majority communities demand that minority groups learn official languages. But language is also a practical and material resource. Children develop literacy, numeracy and educational skills by learning academic language. Specialised language enables adults to enter trade, occupational or professional fields. Language is used to build national identities, which can exclude or include people. However, when engaged with through collaborative, democratic-based processes, language-related tensions can be relieved.

8.5 Challenges and Constraints

There are numerous challenges and constraints in undertaking peacebuilding, education and social cohesion initiatives in the EAP region, particularly given that the LESC Initiative was undertaken across three complex, multilingual societies with differing historical, educational and economic contexts, as well as differing political and environmental challenges. A significant encumbrance was the complexity and range of activities which language planning encompasses, and the limited number of people who have professional training in the field. The level of engagement with language-related issues in each context, and the ability to achieve consensus and progression around these issues therefore varied significantly.

The risk inherent in initiatives such as the LESC Initiative is ensuring sustained and long-term progression within politically unpredictable and conflict-prone or affected contexts. A constraint is the need to repeat and reinforce the outcomes of Facilitated Dialogues and knowledge sharing activities. A single Facilitated Dialogue at a state or a national level is far from sufficient – it often just begins the process of understanding language needs and problems better. These issues need to be revisited several times in order to reach the point of full agreement about new directions and to ensure momentum is gained and that action ensues. Another challenge is ensuring the participation of the senior and appropriate public officials.

However, the importance of developing competence and training in the language planning and policy field will only grow as language problems in the global age become more and more complex. Multilingualism across the globe already presents many unmet challenges for the education system and for progressing educational inequality. These challenges are becoming more complex due to ongoing and increasing mobility across the globe, and because networking and communication technologies allow networks of people to form and stabilize outside of the home territory of ethnic groups. This results in language communities also developing outside traditional home territories. All of these changes mean that the delivery of education must change rapidly to meet existing, as well as evolving, education and language needs.

9. UNICEF EAPRO 2016 – 2020: Way Forward

The key roles and responsibilities by UNICEF EAPRO vis-à-vis the country offices are to provide: 1) oversight; 2) quality assurance; 3) technical assistance; 4) technical leadership; 5) representation; 6) knowledge generation and management, and also 7) support to advocacy, partnerships and networking. In the 2016 – 2020 timeframe, EAPRO will build on work undertaken through the LESC Initiative, as well as projects with other key partners in UNICEF EAPRO Education Programmes, in order to increase understanding of the ways in which language policies and practices in education can undermine or promote social cohesion in multi-ethnic Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

UNICEF EAPRO will consider developing an action plan (see Section 12) focused on the following six areas in order to increase awareness and institutional capacity of EAP countries to address issues of conflict and social cohesion in a strategic and systemic manner.

9.1 Inclusive Language Policy and Planning

Critically linked to languages in education is the positioning of languages in society. Any prospects of alleviating conflict through adoption of inclusive language policies needs to encompass multiple levels of society and not be limited to school level activity. Because curriculum choices and timetable restrictions demand that selections be made on what is feasible to teach in schools, tension can arise between national and ethnic language interests. The picture of language selection becomes more complicated when we take into consideration other languages that seek to be included in the curriculum, such as immigrant and international languages.

A key finding from the LESC Initiative was of the importance of a comprehensive view of language policy through the process of language planning. This finding is perhaps the most important conclusion of the LESC Initiative. In Myanmar, the LESC Initiative has now led to a national language policy process as part of a broader peacebuilding strategy. The Myanmar example is already bearing fruit. More than 12 Facilitated Dialogues at state and national level have been conducted and have produced a consensus of the principles for language policy across the country. In this example, we see bottom-up policy and top-down policy working together so that a coordinated and efficient set of decisions on language in education, government, and community levels can be taken. The core idea of the Myanmar experience is to treat the 135 languages of the country as a resource that should be cultivated, in a similar way to how we should cultivate the forests and rivers of the natural environment, as an essential good for the entire community.

LESC Initiative has clearly shown that one way forward for recognition of the linguistic realities across the Asia Pacific is to engage in nationwide inclusive language policy writing and that development of language policies that support the widest range of language and literacy abilities of all citizens are the most promising. However, some language problems are more localised and specific and in these settings, language planning can prioritise a more limited and specific objective. One example of this is the case of South Thailand. The Kingdom of Thailand, through its Royal Institute, has been working towards a multilingual national language policy. In this context, the LESC Initiative in Thailand has been to establish a set of principles in order to institutionalise a working status for the Patani Malay language in the Deep South provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat.

The aim was to give Patani Malay a specific role in conjunction with the national official language of Thai for some public information functions of government in the Deep South provinces. An audit of language use was conducted, documenting written and spoken communication between government offices and community members in the Deep South. The outcomes from this initiative represent a solid basis for a local language policy.

In Malaysia, Facilitated Dialogues were undertaken in three different contexts, in Peninsula Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. Outcomes from these dialogues also demonstrated the importance of nationwide, inclusive processes, along with the importance of attending to the inevitable differences and needs which evolve in such a complex, multilingual nation, with diverse historical, educational and economic contexts across its regions.

Whether language policy is done on a national or a regional level, it should always have provision so that citizens can fully participate in designing the actions of the policy. One aim should be to regard multilingualism as a positive resource for the whole community while ensuring national unity, cohesion and efficiency. Language policies should aim to build peaceful co-existence between communities and the specific mechanisms will be different in different countries. But the general principles will be to join ideals of unity with diversity, to support the communication skills needed for the social and political life of both local and national communities. From the data and research of LESC Initiative, some significant actions can be recommended which inform other such initiatives across the Asia Pacific region.

9.2 Advocacy and Public Education

A priority for improving education outcomes in many countries across the Asia Pacific region is the development of a deeper understanding of language education. Facilitated Dialogues are crucial in moving towards collaborative development of educational and language policies. The process of writing language policies collaboratively, meaning, language planning through Facilitated Dialogues, can foster peace and justice by focusing the attention of policy makers and government officials directly on improving the educational lives of children. This includes supporting their learning of ethnic languages, national languages and international languages, such as English. It also involves identifying and addressing impediments to effective language planning; encouraging consensus on action, research and teaching required for a socially-just and educationally-effective language planning.

The evaluations completed as part of LESC Facilitated Dialogues show a high appreciation of the effect of consultative and guided language decision-making. Participants often expressed surprise at how much progress is possible in collaborative and guided facilitation and the great majority of participants in the LESC Initiative acquired an enhanced awareness of language problems and some insight into how to tackle these problems. Many issues of dispute, such as arguments about when to introduce minority languages or when to replace them as language of instruction with the national language, can be resolved with a focused attention to local resources, policy alternatives and different models of practice.

9.3 Knowledge Sharing

It is critical that opportunities are provided across the region for countries to share their experiences, challenges, and successes in addressing language issues when trying to create harmonious and cohesive societies. Such undertakings also provide a chance to show the benefits of how language and education policies can be used as a means to build peace in post-conflict societies.

An example of a knowledge sharing activity through the LESC Initiative was the *Language, Education and Social Cohesion Knowledge Sharing Workshop*, held on 15 -17 September, 2014, in Yangon, Myanmar. The workshop was designed as a platform where the LESC participants (from Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand) shared their experiences, best practices, lessons learned and findings from the work that had been carried out in their respective countries. The workshop also allowed other countries in the region, including Cambodia, Vietnam, Papua/West Papua - Indonesia, some of which experience similar language problems, to learn from the LESC countries findings and see whether similar approaches might benefit in their countries. Outcomes from the Workshop included a call from UNICEF EAP Country Offices, for the development of an EAPRO regional strategy to take forward these important beginnings towards a region-wide approach.

9.4 Intercultural Education for Social Cohesion

A failure to recognise difference and diversity as a social reality within education systems and society more broadly, can contribute to negative ethnic hierarchies. Asymmetrical power relations have strong correlations with poor educational attainment and present considerable challenges in the progression of adult literacy rates, employment outcomes and financial advancement (See, e.g. in the Thai context, Draper, 2014 and Kosonen & Person, 2014).

In education systems that are ethnically stratified, there is a danger that students' experiences and understanding of their broader community will be limited by their own cultural, linguistic and religious experiences. This limiting experience of other communities can be further reduced when there is a fear among students of the events which have shaped internal ethnic community relations with the dominant or majority population. These experiences can limit contact and communication across the groups and ultimately also perpetuate socio-economic disadvantaged and provoke conflict (UNICEF, 2008).

Intercultural education engages with the breadth of school curricula – it can be explored through any subject area, and aims for a sustainable and peaceful way of living together 'through the creation of *understanding* of, *respect* for and *dialogue* between the different cultural groups' (UNESCO, 2013a, p. 19). It allows students the opportunity to articulate the differences within and between groups and to work towards accommodation and acceptance of differences. In doing so, students aim to reconstruct a positive conceptualisation of the intergroup relationship, while diminishing negative intergroup relations (see Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). Intercultural education is therefore not just a matter of 'adding on' to the existing curriculum, but involves the whole learning environment including decision-making and governance of a school, teacher training and education, curricula development, language in education policies, students engagement and development of resources. It involves

incorporating intercultural perspectives into all aspects of school planning (UNESCO, 2013a; Portera, 2011).

The purpose of inserting intercultural perspectives into the common curriculum for all students is to allow learners the opportunity to articulate the differences within and between groups and to work towards accommodation and acceptance of differences. In doing so, students aim to reconstruct a positive conceptualisation of the intergroup relationship, while diminishing negative intergroup relations (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). In the longer term, incorporating intercultural contact principles and curriculum content and activities about different component groups of the national population, aims to give students positive experiences of diversity, skills in interaction across ethnic differences, a sense of social inclusion and a commitment to intercultural and interfaith dialogue. Because education is principally focused on the cognitive domain, the acquisition of skills and knowledge, intercultural education aspires to develop the complex thinking and affective capacities that underpin understanding of difference. These differences are encountered within a single but multicultural society, but also globally in an increasingly more interconnected and mobile world.

A central LESC Initiative activity involved mapping how intercultural education works as a *general capability*. Understood in this way, intercultural education is conceptualised not as an optional extra, nor as a temporary exercise to reduce tension in situations of stress or conflict, but a permanent activity for all students, to operate across the whole curriculum and be applied through content in different learning areas, rather than in a specific subject or curriculum unit. The LESC Initiative devised an intercultural learning continuum (based on ACARA, 2014) consisting of three key components:

1. *Recognising culture and developing respect*
2. *Interacting and empathising with others*
3. *Reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility*

Activities were mapped to specific subject areas and an explicit learning element within the curriculum. Such a curriculum exercise represents important groundwork in creating a dialogue around difference and how it is represented and engaged with in education systems. This achievement of the LESC Initiative is available as a model for application and adaptation to other settings.



Photo 4: Siblings walk to school at Ban Triem Early Childhood Development Centre in the town of Ban Triem, Kuraburi District South of Thailand.© UNICEF/NYHQ2009-2046/Estey

9.5 Multilingual Education – The Development of Programs and Languages

One key solution for national development challenges and for children’s rights in education is the implementation of or scaling up of multilingual education programs. This is applicable for all parts of the Asia Pacific region. The crucial first step is to recognise that mother-tongue learning is a key factor in addressing educational inequality - by refusing to gloss over it as ‘too hard’ because it presents challenges. The next step is to try and move towards a consensus on MTB-MLE that takes into account all key stakeholders in communities, and eventually, in whole societies. As the central authority in education systems, governments play an essential role in recognising the importance of MLE in improving educational outcomes for minority children and in garnering support from across other key stakeholders and community groups. Partners such as UNICEF and the Asia Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group (MLE WG) can play a key supporting role in providing information, support and training on MLE. While this is a complex and difficult process, the results of ignoring the importance of mother-tongue learning will cause more problems than attempting to incorporate it into education systems in the long run. Fostering inclusion through recognition of differences bolsters political and social cohesion.



Photo 5: Dayak Bidayah Bilingual Preschool, Sarawak, Malaysia, 2014. Photo: Joseph Lo Bianco.

There is also a practical dimension to these identification processes. If minority populations achieve high rates of functional literacy in their mother tongues and the official languages of their society, they gain meaningful access to the narratives, skills, knowledge and practice of the wider society. This cultural capital enhances material success in education and the economy, and processes of citizenship integration. Success in schooling makes access to higher education possible, improves skills acquisition, labour market access and ultimately produces greater economic productivity and competitiveness.

For this reason, the LESC Initiative focused on MTB-MLE. It also designed and conducted workshops for the difficult, but crucial task of developing and expanding ideas and concerns about how best to implement such changes, as well as, providing safe and supportive spaces to voice language concerns more generally. Again, Facilitated Dialogues played a crucial role in creating the space for stakeholders with divergent views in order to have discussions around the challenges, benefits and drawbacks of multilingual education.

As part of the LESC Initiative, a study on scaling up bilingual education in South Thailand was also undertaken over a two-year period (UNICEF, 2016f). A small-scale experimental pilot bilingual education program has been producing important improvements in children’s learning of their mother tongue, of the Thai language, and in assessed learning in general. Such programs need to be

trialed and implemented across the region, and once evaluated, expanded from pilot programs to full implementation in a progressive fashion.

However, there are numerous components of MTB-MLE that are required to be addressed beyond establishing and scaling up programs in order to ensure every chance of success. These include support for corpus planning for minority languages. If, for example, a language does not have an orthography – a writing system, assistance will be needed to facilitate this, along with the development and modernisation of vocabulary. Leading on from this progression, assistance can also be required for developing resources and materials for teaching the languages, training in appropriate methodologies for teachers, as well as assistance in curriculum development of implementation.

9.6 Facilitated Dialogues and Training

Alongside consultations with a wide range of individuals and organisations, a key component of the LESC Initiative has been the use of Facilitated Dialogues - expert-led, democratic and collaborative methods to facilitate discussion. Language education can be a contentious issue. Some people suggest that policy is often a reflection of power and requires aid from international organisations to ever have any impact. Others suggest that policy is secondary to economics and that advances in health and education can only come about through broad economic development, which is often a slow and tumultuous process.

However, these approaches tend to downplay the role of locally generated solutions. The LESC Initiative has demonstrated that through debate and consensus - supported by Facilitated Dialogues - local groups, governments, teachers, parents, and community members can generate local solutions to problems of inequality, conflict or dispute in education. The essential aim of dialogues is to create policy alternatives for problems already being debated and which are the cause of conflict, tension or policy paralysis. For this reason, Facilitated Dialogues have proven to be a practical and cost-effective way to immediately and flexibly address language issues.

There are, of course, challenges inherent in such activities, particularly ensuring sustained and long-term progression. A constraint is the need to repeat and reinforce the outcomes of Facilitated Dialogues and knowledge sharing activities. A single Facilitated Dialogue at a state or a national level is far from sufficient – it often just begins the process of understanding language needs and problems better. These issues need to be revisited several times in order to reach the point of full agreement about new directions and to ensure momentum is gained and that action ensues. Another challenge is ensuring the participation of the senior and appropriate public officials.

However, the importance of developing competence and training in the language planning and policy field will only grow as language problems in the global age become more and more complex. Multilingualism across the globe already presents many unmet challenges for the education system and for progressing educational inequality. These challenges are becoming more complex due to ongoing and increasing mobility across the globe, and because networking and communication technologies allow networks of people to form and stabilise outside of the home territory of ethnic groups. This results in language communities also developing outside traditional home territories. All

of these changes mean that the delivery of education must change rapidly to meet existing, as well as evolving, education and language needs.

UNICEF would like to continue supporting the use of targeted Facilitated Dialogues, along with workshops, training and knowledge sharing forums, to deal with language-related points of tension, including MTB-MLE and its associated challenges and language planning and policy development. These activities represent important drivers of change, seeking to strengthen the awareness of UNICEF Country Offices, governments, educational practitioners and CSOs to include peacebuilding/social cohesion components into policies and programming, so that these people and organisations can be better able to support conflict reduction and social transformation in their respective countries.

10. Moving Forward: Addressing Challenges in Peacebuilding, Education and Social Cohesion Initiatives

There are numerous challenges and constraints in undertaking language, education and social cohesion initiatives in the East Asia and Pacific region, given a range of contingencies which must be negotiated, including on-going civil conflict; political and social unrest; natural disasters, and entrenched discrimination in the education system through inequitable access to schools and to the curriculum. The LESC Initiative was undertaken across three complex, multilingual societies with differing historical, education and economic contexts, as well as, differing political and environmental challenges. A significant encumbrance across all three projects was the complexity and range of activities which language planning encompasses, and the limited number of people who have professional training in the field. The level of engagement with language related issues in each context, and the ability to achieve consensus and progression around these issues therefore varied significantly. While the aim of comprehensive language policies should be to ultimately address the full range of communication needs of a society, this was beyond the remit of the initial LESC Initiative.

However, the importance of developing competence and training in the language planning and policy field will only grow as language problems in the global age become more and more complex. Multilingualism across the globe already presents many unmet challenges for the education system and for progressing educational inequality. These challenges are becoming more complex due to ongoing and increasing mobility across the globe.

A vital aim of the LESC Initiative has been to develop a new and better understanding of the links between language and its broader roles in society, as a deeper understanding of the complex interaction between language and conflict in multi-ethnic societies, under contemporary conditions is urgently required. **Important conclusions were drawn from the overall LESC Initiative** that can inform and guide ongoing and future initiatives, particularly those related to language planning and policy.

When language education is a cause of tension, this tension can be relieved through focused and well prepared interventions

Social tensions that are derived from ethnic, religious, or economic differences are often more intractable than language based conflicts. The use of Facilitated Dialogues through LESC has shown that it is possible to achieve a high level of agreement about language education goals in a relatively short period of time if the discussions are guided by research evidence, professional mediation and good will. Language identities prove to be more malleable than other kinds of identity such as racial and religious identities.

Democratic and collaborative decision forums are highly effective

A key aspect of the success of the LESC Facilitated Dialogues has been the full involvement of affected parties. Community representatives are able to listen to the perspective of public officials and incorporate this into their claims and requests for education change. Public officials respond to and accommodate the perspective and interests of community-based representatives. Both are influenced by the research presented. When properly digested and applied to practical problems in education, research can have the effect of replacing emotive disputes with a more feasible and effective set of decisions and assist those with opposing views to move towards a shared understanding and commitment to change.

'Bottom-up' language planning needs to be supported to achieve more consensus on language policy

Governments have tended to neglect the importance of seeking and negotiating consensus for language policy. Processes of 'bottom-up' planning are those in which teachers and community members are actively involved in policy and its implementation, not just as observers or benefactors of government decisions, but as key agents of educational change. When teachers and parents, as well as community and professional civil society organisations, are active participants in shaping policy development, the result is more understanding of policy aims and constraints on what can be achieved, resulting in more commitment to the goals and aims of policy.

There is a large gap between perceptions of minority groups and officials on language education

The LESC Initiative has exposed a serious gap in the perceptions of language rights and needs, particularly in relation to language planning. This is a major problem because across the board, indigenous groups expressed alarm at the neglect and occasional disrespect they perceive to be directed towards their ancestral languages. There is also substantial scepticism about the overall aims of language-related decision making, and of the specific experience of schooling and language education programs. It is crucial that this gap is understood by all parties for progress to be made.

There is a need for evidence-based consultative processes of decision making on some key disputes

Through the LESC Initiative, some key disputes identified through the bilateral meetings, Facilitated Dialogues and site visits, proved to be amenable to resolution. Facilitated Dialogues with expert content proved to be very effective in resolving language problems. These varied across contexts, but broadly included issues surrounding the name of the national language and how it is used, and how and when to introduce a national language to children with other mother tongues. Further questions include how to assess competence in national languages as part of both primary and secondary school decision making; how and when to introduce English, as well as what particular multilingual program models produce high levels of spoken and written language outcomes. These questions have not been addressed or remained unanswered in many locations and must be encouraged through collaborative processes.

There is an urgent need for locally focused success stories to be documented and shared to encourage curriculum innovation

Evidence-based decision-making means drawing from the best and most disciplined research in the world. However, this evidence requires localisation to make it convincing and applicable. The LESC research and other EAPRO education programs have identified education and language initiatives of the highest calibre across the EAP region. These initiatives need to be better documented and used to encourage improvement through lighthouse modelling of excellence.

The issue of multiple languages is badly misunderstood, it is relatively easily solved yet is often used to make language rights seem impossible

The LESC research uncovered instances in which education officials and local communities expressed the view that it is impossible to meet all the language needs of the community. These comments expressed that there are too many languages, they are of uneven intellectual and literary development, and that these socio-linguistic facts make language support for children from those language communities impossible to implement and support. Within the Asia and Pacific region, and also internationally, there are many models of effective responses to the challenges of meeting multilingual needs in administratively efficient and cost-effective ways.

Still, there are many challenges that must be recognised and supported in developed sustainable models of multilingual education. At the initial stages, this will need to include support for corpus planning, that is for the development of writing systems and teaching materials. It may also be that deliberative processes will need to be supported in instances when decisions have to be made around which dialects to support in the education system. The Mae Sot Facilitated Dialogue through the Myanmar LESC Initiative, which was held in 6 languages involving 12 ethnic groups, successfully demonstrated the progression that can be achieved through expert, guided dialogues. A pan-ethnic group was formed to provide mutual support for linguistic development of each language, as well as a consensus on languages in the education system.

There is an urgent need for inclusive, democratic, language planning to take account of all communication needs of communities

National language planning activities should address, in a comprehensive way, the totality of a Nation's communication needs. These include the needs of all major groups but also of small minorities. Deaf and blind communities and the communication needs of special populations should be incorporated into a single coherent process of national language policy writing. Multilingualism is a resource whose long term health and vitality should be cultivated. The learning of economically and strategically important foreign languages should form a natural part of this endeavour.

Current language planning activities are often fragmented, uncoordinated and partial and should be reinvigorated

A comprehensive approach to language planning is required; one that combines a focus on all aspects of a society's ecology: the national language, ethnic languages/mother tongues/indigenous languages and international languages. The LESC research has shown that what is needed is comprehensive, evidence-based and facilitated policy, with bottom-up elements added to win

support and understanding from the community. The current policy processes are needlessly fragmented and overly politicised.

Language policy involves areas well beyond education, and comprehensive language planning should address all related areas of concern

The LESC research produced ample evidence that when a more inclusive approach is taken there is an increased likelihood of community understanding of other citizens' language rights. Beyond education, language policy involves areas such as the status of languages in a multi-ethnic society; the official recognition of minority and regional languages; access to literacy and mother tongue teaching, access to prestige international languages; learning of the national language; script policy and the special communication needs of disabled children, and of sign language, among other.

Reaching beyond education into civic and economic life also has the benefit of supporting national unity and pride in the nation that would take its citizens' unique communication needs seriously. In this way language policy processes can achieve social cohesion by responding to the needs of national unity and cohesion at the same time as supporting minority, indigenous, migrant and disadvantaged populations.

11. Partnerships for Change

Improving educational outcomes for children is immensely important in alleviating and preventing poverty, increasing health, political participation and social tolerance. UNICEF, in its role as a champion of children's rights, is committed to striving for equitable education practices as a fundamental human right. To achieve the aims outlined in this strategy, it is critical that EAPRO continue to work with the broad range of key stakeholders, governments and CSOs already making significant contributions towards ensuring that equitable, research-supported, multilingual education practices are available to all children. Working in partnership with other agencies such as UNESCO, ASEAN, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) particularly SEAMEO Regional Centre for Quality Improvement of Teachers and Education Personnel (QITEP) in Language and SEAMEO Regional Language Centre (RELC), and the Multilingual Education Working Group (MLE WG), we have been helping create, and will continue to create, an educational landscape that instils democratic, peaceful and just values in young learners by facilitating more equitable and accessible learning opportunities for all children.

Current Initiatives and groups that work with UNICEF EAPRO on education include (UNICEF, 2015c):

- Asia-Pacific Technical Working Group on Education For All, which UNICEF co-chairs with UNESCO
- Asia and Pacific United Nations Girls' Education Initiative with multiple partners
- Out Of School Children Initiative (OOSCI) with UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and host governments
- South East Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) with the South East Asia Ministers of Education Organisation
- Asia-Pacific Regional Policy Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)
- Pacific Regional Forum for Early Childhood Care and Education (PRC4ECCE)
- Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group (MLE WG)
- Asia-Pacific Coalition for School Safety (APCSS), particularly in the development of the Comprehensive School Safety Framework
- Regional partnership on the rights of children with disabilities with the Australian Government (DFAT)
- School Grants Policy with UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)
- East Asia Pacific Early Childhood Development Scales (EAP ECDS)
- Multi-country research initiative on Language, Education and Social Cohesion (LESC), with Professor Joseph Lo Bianco from The University of Melbourne as lead researcher

EAPRO will continue working with EAP nations, along with other regional partners to strengthen children's rights through closer cooperation across Asia and the Pacific area.

12. Action Plan

To support greater advancements in education across the EAP region, UNICEF EAPRO will strive to address issues of inequity, conflict and social cohesion in a strategic and systemic manner. These issues have multiple causes and engagement and action needs to be undertaken in numerous areas, as identified through the key focus areas. While EAPRO will steer some of the region-wide initiatives, it will work with UNICEF Country Offices and current partner organizations, government agencies, CSOs and educational institutions driving local initiatives, to support a sustainable approach to institutional capacity building in EAP countries in order to address issues of language, education and social cohesion.

The following Action Plan consensus and Action Plan is based on deliberations and feedback from a consultation meeting with the Asia Pacific MLE Working Group and other key partners on 8th December, 2015, facilitated by UNICEF EAPRO. Feedback on the Action Plan was also received at the country level, through UNICEF Country Offices. The meeting in December was attended by over 16 personnel from a range of institutions, including Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), Thailand; Mahidol University, Thailand; Foundation for Applied Linguistics, Thailand; SEAMEO Regional Centre for Quality Improvement of Teachers and Education Personnel (QITEP) in Language; UNESCO Bangkok; CARE Cambodia; the Summer Institute of Linguistics, the University of Melbourne, Australia, and UNICEF Thailand and EAPRO.

The Action Plan seeks to guide regional, national and local activities, which facilitate advancements in multilingual education and social cohesion. Based on the six areas identified in Section 9, the matrix identifies immediate, medium and long-term activities that can be undertaken across the East Asia and Pacific Region. The recommended actions are ranked in order of priority (1st to 3rd) and allocated a time line: Immediate (IMD), Medium (MED) and Long (LNG) term agreements. While this strategy focuses on EAPRO UNICEF's (and its partners) engagement and commitments at the regional level, many of these recommended actions are required to be undertaken collaboratively and independently at multiple levels - the regional (REG), national (NAT) and local (LOC) levels. The increasing number of ticks indicates that these activities are required at a higher frequency at these levels.

Recommended Action	Priority Rating			Time Line			Level of Action		
	1st	2nd	3rd	IMD	MED	LNG	REG	NAT	LOC
1. Advocacy and public education	✓			✓			✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
2. Knowledge sharing		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
3. Language policy and language planning for MLE		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Expanding successful pilot schemes into full implementation	(country/context specific)								
5. Intercultural education	(country/context specific)								
6. Extending facilitated dialogues	(country/context specific; but regionally as the need arises)								
7. Training/capacity building in MLE advocacy and LP processes	✓			✓			✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
8. More research and evidence building, on models of successful policy	✓			✓			✓		
9. Resource Mobilization or Fund Generation			✓		✓		✓		

Table 2: Action plan: Multilingual education and social cohesion activities, East Asia and Pacific region, developed 8th December, 2015.

As can be seen in Table 2, there are three actions that have been determined to be the most important actions for UNICEF EAPRO and its partners, having been classified as 1st priorities, for Immediate Action. These are 1. Advocacy and public education; 2. Training/capacity building in MLE advocacy and LP processes; and 3. More research and evidence building, on models of successful policy. These three elements play a critical role in developing the groundwork and knowledge base required to effectively bring about change and progress through the other actions.

For Actions 4 to 6, each country should determine its own priority ranking and the frequency required for each activity. As education is the domain of national governments, the expansion of successful pilot schemes into full initiatives (Action 4) must be government-led and government-supported initiatives, based on country and context specific needs. Intercultural education (Action 5) is also directly related to education curricula and therefore within the sphere of national governments. Intercultural education is integral to changes in cultural outlook and social harmony,

as well as language education dimensions of schooling. Intercultural education can be integrated through different approaches:

1. A contributions approach – where activities are undertaken which focus on discrete cultural elements
2. An additive approach where the teacher incorporates new content but the structure of the curriculum does not change
3. A transformative approach where the fundamental goals, structures and perspectives of the curriculum are changed, enabling students to views concepts from differing points of view; and,
4. A social action approach that builds on the transformation approach by requiring students to make decisions and take action - helping them become participants in social change (Banks, 2006. P. 140-43)

Whether these activities are undertaken as a simple task or involve the mapping of intercultural education across a national curriculum, it is imperative that they involve agreement and commitment from governments, through to schools, teachers, students and parents.

Cultural education and intercultural education are also core components of MLE. Principal 1 of the UNESCO guidelines on intercultural education states that ‘Intercultural Education respects the cultural identity of the learner through the provision of culturally appropriate and responsive quality education for all’ (UNESCO, 2013a, p. 33). Key elements of this include access to mother tongue instruction in schooling, the incorporation of local content, and the promotion of learning environments that are respectful of cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2013a).

The importance of intercultural education is also clearly captured in the SDGs, particularly in ensuring inclusive and quality education for all (Goal 4), reducing inequality within and among countries (Goal 10) and in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development (Goal 16).

Similarly, Action 6 is a key responsibility of national and local authorities, dependent on country and context specific needs. While the Facilitated Dialogues undertaken by UNICEF through the LESC initiative have previously focused on local and national levels of action, a new dimension that could be undertaken by UNICEF, as the need is identified, is the use of Facilitated Dialogues at the regional level in order to address cross-border and international issues. The document, *Guidelines: Facilitated Dialogues*, produced by UNICEF EAPRO (in progress, 2016), can provide essential direction in how to undertake these activities.

Taken as a whole, this matrix acknowledges the critical importance of partnerships between governmental and non-governmental agencies, universities and civil society groups in seeking to alleviate factors that contribute to inequitable access to education and perpetuate inequitable educational outcomes.

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