

Discussion and comments

Myanmar: On the nature of child physical development gains in SC's ECCD program: There was a clarification that children in the States (Karen and north and south Shan states) showed significantly more gains than those from the Divisions, in *height* and *weight*.

Myanmar: On whether ECCD improvements are lasting: A delegate observed that it had been noted elsewhere that gains from early childhood programs tend to fizzle out by grades 3 or 4—did SC intend to track the early improvements to see if they are maintained later? SC answered that it hopes to do an assessment of the transition from ECCD to formal school but there are many negotiations to be conducted with the government before this can proceed.

Myanmar: On language focus. A delegate wondered that the emphasis of the program seemed to be on the Myanmar language; what was happening to the local language? SC answered that this was a critical point and emphasised that it is trying to support families and communities to ensure that their rich and historical cultural background is maintained and preserved. The program tries to help the children with language support at school, but not at the expense of their own language. It works with parents and communities on local stories, games, etc, so they are maintained and communities themselves document their own richness and diversity. In relation to whether there is any space to teach minority languages as a subject, SC said the official policy is rigid and it was necessary to be creative.

Languages in Nepal: One delegate felt that some mother tongue languages were missed out in the government's census (officially Nepal has some 102 languages). Another delegate said that some of the counted languages are actually dialects.

Language in schools in Nepal: There was a clarification that there are now school materials in 17 languages; the main criteria for choosing these were demographics and whether there was a written script. From Grade 4 to 5 children are beginning to switch from mother tongue to Nepali. By Grade 6 they should be learning in Nepali. Delegate Toya Nathu Bhattarai, Nepal, said that Nepal is still considering multilingual policy for its constitution; the language of official business will be recommended by a commission.

Multi-lingual classrooms: What to do when there are different mother tongues among learners in the same classroom? Kimmo Kosonen said there are no answers on this issue yet. He had written a paper on this, proposing multi-grade teaching, but it has not yet been piloted, though SC and others are doing some multi-grade programs. Perhaps they could add language to these.