



## The best start: Supporting minority language speaking children in their early years of education in Myanmar

Mar Mar Thwin  
Education Programme Manager

Philippa Ramsden  
Education Adviser

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Save the Children in Myanmar

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# The Best Start!

- Context and challenges for ethnic minority children communities in schooling in Myanmar
- Overview of Save the Children's ECCD programme, particularly in the States
- Save the Children in Myanmar's language policy
- How the policy is brought to life
- Research and evaluation demonstrating the impact for children from ethnolinguistic communities



# Context and challenges

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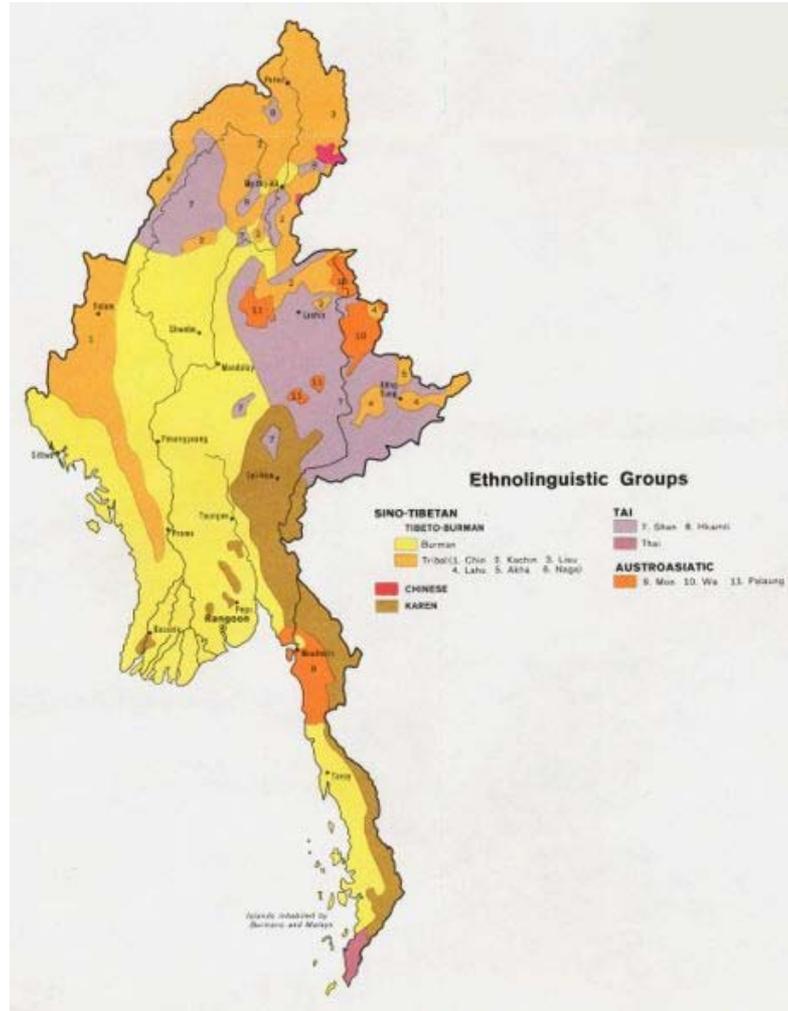
- Administrative context – States and Divisions
- Ethnolinguistic context
- Teaching medium/Language of instruction
- Diversity and variables



# Myanmar States and Divisions



# Ethnolinguistic map



# Context and challenges

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- Most children in our ECCD programme in the States are not exposed to the second language L2 at home.
- Therefore, the second language L2 requires to be taught so that children have a minimum level for school.
- This is the rationale underpinning Save the Children's work in ECCD centres – enabling children from ethnolinguistic communities to learn adequate levels of Myanmar language to equip them for starting school.

# Save the Children in Myanmar – overview of Education/ECCD programme

## Save the Children operations in Myanmar



- 13 Townships
- 3 Divisions (Sagaing, Magwe and Ayerawaddy)
- 3 States (Kayin, South Shan, North Shan)

## Save the Children in Myanmar – overview of Education/ECCD programme

**To increase access to, and the quality of, basic education for over 150,000 of the poorest children in Myanmar**



# Expected programme outcomes

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- 150,000 children, within the ages of 0-8 years, will be reached through ECCD-related services and engagement with grades 1 and 2 of primary school (50% from ethnolinguistic communities)



# Save the Children in Myanmar

## Early Learning and Transition to Primary School Programme

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- ECCD Community based and managed provision linking work across Township/State/Division/National levels
  - 0 – 3 Parenting Education
  - 3 – 5 Centre based ECCD
  - 6 – 8 Transition to school (TC) and support to Grades 1 and 2



# Save the Children – Language Policy

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- Sets the country context alongside accepted theory around language acquisition and teaching medium.
- Recognises that, although learning is more effective in the early years of primary education if in mother tongue, the reality for many children from diverse ethnolinguistic communities in Myanmar is that they will be taught in L2.
- Sets out strategies to enable children to equip them with adequate Myanmar language so that their learning is not impaired when they go to primary school.

# Bringing the policy to life!

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## *Parenting Education*

- *Encourage parents through parenting programmes to continue development of L1 at home and through community and other games, songs, stories and activities*



# Bringing the policy to life!

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## ECCD centres

- *Employ ECCD staff who speak/understand the ethnic language(s)*
- *Peer learning: “pair-up” children who can speak some Myanmar language to work with those with none*
- *Start all activities in ethnic language and, over time, introduce Myanmar*
- *Learning activities undertaken bilingually and in stages*
- *Tell illustrated stories first in ethnic language and then introduce some key Myanmar language*

# Bringing the policy to life!

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## ECCD Centres

*Staff use verbal instructions in Myanmar language, with non-verbal instruction (gesture, diagrams, pictures etc.) using their faces and bodies as expressively and exaggeratedly to communicate the meaning of what they are saying in L2.*

- *Identify key L2 words reinforced from a previous learning activity, and new L2 words/phrases to introduce as new, building on what is familiar children to introduce new concepts and new language.*

## Transitions Curriculum

- Principles and Framework of Transitions Curriculum
- Techniques
- Teaching and Learning Materials

# What our work looks like

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## Research and evaluation demonstrating the impact for children of ethnolinguistic communities

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- Development Gains Assessments (cohort monitoring)
- Regular joint monitoring visits
- Mid Term Evaluation

# Development Gains Assessments

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## *Receptive Vocabulary*

- In the States, *highly significant* gains in all categories.

## Draw –a-figure

- In States, all the result similarly show **highly significant** gains in all groups including girls, boys, poor girls and poor boys.
- Children from the States show greater improvement than children from Divisions (the starting point is lower)

## Transitions Curriculum – Joint Monitoring Visit

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- Teachers in Pa-Oh villages report that TC, particularly use of TLMs is enabling more effective learning.
- Children were asked what they like best about school - learning, playing, writing, singing/saying rhymes, playing with pictures and drawing
- Teachers teach children songs and poems with actions, sing together with the children, the teacher holds the child's hand to help learn the Myanmar alphabet. Numbers are taught using sticks. Cards are used, painting, colouring with crayons, vegetables are taught with pictures.

# Mid Term Evaluation

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*The evaluation found impressive evidence of improved learning and development outcomes for young children that have benefited from the ECCD intervention. These include health, cognitive, language, physical, social, and 'learning skills' (from PE and ECCD centres).*

*The physical development gains have been particularly marked for ethnic children from the States.*

# Mid Term Evaluation

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As a result of ECCD:

- Significant and highly significant gains in receptive vocabulary (in the mother tongue)
- Significant and highly significant gains in visual-motor perceptual skills
- Increased average weight and height, especially for ethnic children in States
- *By comparing cohorts of children before and after the introduction of ECCD, these findings are important in demonstrating definite development gains for children as a result of participation in an ECCD programme.*

# Conclusions

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- Programming must be relevant to the context
- An approach which combines community and national level policy combines credibility and evidence with the potential for wider scale up
- Creativity!
- Demonstrated change for children from ethnolinguistic communities

Thank you!

