

**Enhancing Awareness and Building the Capacity of SEAMEO in Establishing Mother  
Tongue-based Multilingual Education Programmes  
in Southeast Asia.**

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Southeast Asians speak hundreds of languages. This diversity in the region is remarkable. But it poses a huge challenge to education. Many children in Southeast Asia are taught in languages that are not spoken in their community. Thus, educators are confronted with the difficult questions: How do we provide education for all and achieve universal primary education? How do we remove the barriers that hinder students and learners from access to education?

Since 2007, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and the World Bank have been collaborating on a project to explore how Southeast Asian countries, through appropriate language policies, can achieve Education for All by widening access, reducing repetition and dropout rates, and improving learning outcomes.

Through the project, SEAMEO produced a compendium of policies, case studies, and “good functioning” models of using the mother tongue as bridge language of instruction. Regional discussions on “good functioning” models offer opportunities to adopt and adapt some principles in the use of mother tongue as a bridge language of instruction in some SEAMEO member countries. Collaboration between SEAMEO and the World Bank continues to sustain awareness and build capacities of a core group of Southeast Asian educators in establishing multilingual education programmes in Southeast Asia. The project entails developing the competencies of a core group of trainers from SEAMEO member countries to train others in adapting curricula and developing instructional materials in non-dominant languages.

This presentation will provide an overview of the ongoing project and discuss its results so far. Two key aspects of the project will be presented: language-in-education policy development in Southeast Asia; and the SEAMEO strategy to build capacity of a core group of trainers that will help SEAMEO countries establish mother tongue-based MLE programmes, sustain the project gains and further enhance awareness in linkages between language and achieving the MDGs and EFA.