

Discussion and comments

On recruitment of teachers: When recruiting local teachers, is there a problem of compromising on quality if recruitment is only carried out from within the immediate community? Save the Children (SC) answered that in Bangladesh, teacher recruitment is carried out by local district central management committees who know the community and know who is available. They are the ones who must judge how the school is doing and how teachers are doing.

Progression and loss: A delegate wondered what happens after children move from learning in their local languages to national languages? Is anyone keeping track? In terms of the Chakma language, (Bangladesh) children did not get exposure to their own script, so what happens then? Many local languages have a rich oral legacy that also relates to biodiversity in their areas, the delegate added. SC answered that it is advocating with local and higher government departments on how children can retain Chakma and other languages in primary school; in particular, it is advocating that children can continue in their own languages until Grade 5. This advocacy has had some results with government but any plans for implementation are still at the very early stages and unknown.

MLE only for the poor? A delegate said that rich and powerful parents do not tend to send their children into MLE education. What is being done about this? SC answered that the challenges in this arena are overwhelmingly for children who are not from rich or powerful backgrounds. It is sad that rich children are losing their mother tongues; it is a real loss, but those families have a choice while poor children do not. There was further discussion on whether the fact that it is the powerful who have the power to influence MLE policy meant that advocacy efforts should be more integrated and widened so as not to focus only on the marginalised.

Cultural losses: In Bangladesh if one wants the words for many rich aspects of culture and biodiversity, one has to go back to the indigenous languages. If the state doesn't take note of this, much of this rich heritage will be lost.

Nepal: there was a clarification that in 2010 there was government approval for MLE implementation guidelines.