

## **Early Years Foundations for Effective Primary Education.**

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The goals of Education for All are centrally concerned with access and equity. If children are excluded from education, they are denied their linguistic and educational rights and prevented from developing their potential. Challenges in achieving universal primary education (UPE) include expanding access to underserved and marginalized communities, particularly learners currently excluded by ethnolinguistic identity. Strategies are required to address the persistent inequalities in educational participation and attainment of learners from ethnolinguistic minorities.

A child's early experiences set a foundation for cognitive and academic development. The early years of schooling establish attitudes towards formal education that impact retention of learners in the school system and positive pre-school experiences will facilitate smooth integration into formal primary education. The extent to which the student's home language and culture are incorporated into the curriculum; and communities are encouraged to participate in their children's education can be inclusive strategies that reflect value for local ownership. Local language in the classroom and in school management processes can encourage mechanisms enabling greater participation in decision making for development.

Drawing on experiences in Asia, this paper focuses on pre-primary education for children from non-dominant language communities. It describes ways in which appropriate community-based curriculum design, materials development and classroom management strategies can validate the pre-school experiences of learners and how mother tongue-based early childhood education prepares children to learn the national language of education and additional languages without sacrificing their home language and ethnolinguistic identity.