

**Getting started with Mother Tongue-based MLE:
Laying the groundwork with communities and schools
in the Philippines.**

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Save the Children in the Philippines began its operations in the South Central Mindanao region in 2007 focusing on the provinces of South Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat, which are home to indigenous people, Moro and Christian settlers. While the unique and diverse culture has been nurtured by the people, schooling has historically failed to take into account their language and culture: the Philippine educational system emphasized English and Filipino as the languages of instruction, regardless of a child's background. A recent policy shift in 2009 opens the door for mother tongue-based instruction in the early years of primary. The challenge now is to move from the policy to good practice for children across the country.

To respond to this need, Save the Children is piloting Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) as a means of enhancing children's literacy and overall school performance in partner schools and communities. In 2009-2010, the following preliminary activities were conducted: 1) formative research on language perception and use in communities; 2) community mobilization and awareness raising activities; 3) formation of language advisory committees; 4) teacher training on curriculum adaptation and materials development, including the development of alphabet primers and books in three languages.

This paper shares experiences initiating MTBMLE with three language groups, getting into the "nuts and bolts" of how we set up a new programme, including specific approaches and methodologies, and discussing successes and challenges along the way. It will be of special interest to others who are preparing to initiate new MTBMLE programming.