

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

**By Philippa C Ramsden and Mar Mar Thwin**

The language of instruction in Myanmar schools is the Myanmar (*Bamar*) language. There are, however, a number of other languages in use in the country, particularly in the states<sup>1</sup> where there are many ethnolinguistic communities and where children often have exposure only to their mother tongues until they go to school. While it is recognised that children learn better in their mother tongue, this is not an option for children from ethnolinguistic minorities when they enter primary school in Myanmar.

Since 2005, Save the Children has implemented a programme of Parenting Education, ECCD and Transitions to Primary School. The goal is that the most marginalised children have increased access to, and complete quality basic education. Integral to this is the approach of supporting children in gaining skills and competence in the Myanmar language, thus supporting their transition to primary school.

---

<sup>1</sup> Myanmar is administered through a structure of States and Divisions. The States (for example, Shan, Kachin, Kayin and Mon) are mostly populated by ethnic minority groups. The Divisions tend to be predominantly of the Myanmar (*Bamar*) majority.