The need to go beyond language: including local/indigenous culture into the school curriculum’

Presentation by Marc Wetz (Quality Education and Ethnic Minorities Specialist)
3 July 2008
Promotion of the use of Mother Tongue in the Education Sector:

→ Using mother tongue as language of instruction does lead to higher learning achievements in children
Art. 29 of the CRC

States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

• c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living.....
Art 30 of the CRC

- In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.
ILO Convention No 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal People

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
International Rights Frameworks always link language with culture!

- The need to emphasize this link in our advocacy
- Using recent achievements in the promotion of the use of mother tongue as language of instruction as an entry point to make the link with the entire cultural heritage and the right of children to receive an education fostering respect towards their own cultural identity
We have to go beyond looking at what language is being used to facilitate the teaching-learning process to WHAT is being taught.
Why is it so important for children/adolescents to respect and value their own cultural identity?

- High self esteem and its positive effects on the life of children
- Crucial for the preservation and revitalization of indigenous culture
Why to advocate for the inclusion of indigenous culture into the school curriculum and not advocate for the revitalization of the traditional knowledge transfer systems?

- Giving instant value to Indigenous Knowledge (IK)
- Revives interest in traditional knowledge transfer systems
- Creates participation of community members in school affairs (one of the main targets in Quality Education Programs)
Community Participation in Schools

What is the highest level of participation we are aiming at?
Contributing labor?
Visiting schools and teaching materials?
Involved in the teaching-learning process!
Including Indigenous Knowledge into the school curriculum in Hmong communities on the Chinese Border in Northern Vietnam
Promoting the Inclusion of Indigenous Culture/Knowledge with Hmong communities in Northern Vietnam 2004-2007 (part of Child Friendly Ethnic Communities Project)
Music Clubs
Embroidery Clubs
Herbal Medicine Clubs
The members of the Herbal Medicine Club

- Children
- Support Teacher
- Support Parents
- Support Medical Officer
Visiting knowledgeable community members to learn
Going to find herbs in the forest
Collecting herbs and planting them in a herbal garden in school
Learning how to process herbal medicine
Some important points on the process

• Make together with children and community members a community map on who has what IK
• Consultation on what to include first
• Consultation with education authorities
• Technical help to community members transmitting IK
Thank you

Marc Wetz
marcwetz@yahoo.com