

# Making school systems multilingual: Moving from 'Why' to 'How'

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# Language and Education in Asia



Language of instruction is critical for EFA and MDG2

- Barrier to access for marginalized groups
- Low learning outcomes

Evidence that children learn best in their mother tongue, and learn other languages through second language teaching strategies

Successful multilingual education pilots and shifts in policy

Few examples of how to bring multilingual education to scale through national education systems

- *Each dot represents the primary location of a living language listed in the [Ethnologue](#).*

# Action research

## Research Questions:

- What components of Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) programs can be replicated and brought into education systems?
- What strategies are needed to support institutionalising these critical components?

## Product:

- Guidelines for education officials/managers on how to move towards multilingual education

Countries: Vietnam, Bangladesh, India

Timeframe: October 2009-2010

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# Action research process

1. Consult with local and national stakeholders on current programs and practices
2. Identify barriers to scale-up and institutionalisation
3. Develop and implement action plans to tackle these barriers
4. Review progress and learning
5. Conduct interviews and discussion with change agents in other settings, to capture wider perspectives and experience on MTBMLE



# Bangladesh - Chittagong Hill Tracts

## Program overview

- 200 + sites, 3 language groups
- Preprimary 1&2. Bangla introduced in Year 2
- Mother tongue as primary language of instruction, used for literacy
- Partners: Zabarang Kalyan Samity (ZKS), SIL



## Elements for scale-up

- Community-led development and approval processes for alphabets and local-language materials
- Graded reading and learning materials
- Teacher training approach



## Progress with scale-up

- Scale up process to 8 languages and primary through UNDP / EC program
- 2009 draft national education policy; recognizes mother tongue education up to primary level

# Bangladesh - Chittagong Hill Tracts

## Constraints to scale-up

- Primary schools not implementing MTBMLE
- Community-based model, local NGO partner
- Scale-up must be done through Hill District Council
  - Need to define teacher training structure
  - Need to clarify decision making responsibilities
- Complex political situation
- Lack of documented outcomes



## Program response

- NGO partner in support role to Council
- Continue community-led development and approval of local language materials
- Facilitate definition of CHT education management structures and standards
- National MLE network to promote top down support
- Study on MLE and school readiness



# Vietnam

## Program Overview

- 8 schools, 4 language groups
- Preschool- Grade 3
- Teaching Assistant (TA) to strengthen oral development of mother tongue, and support children's participation and understanding
- Vietnamese 2nd language teaching strategies and literacy
- Partners: District education offices and MoET



## Elements for Scale-up:

- Use of Teaching Assistants
- Teacher/TA partnership model and training modules
- Second language teaching strategies
- Curriculum adaptation towards competencies



## Progress with Scale-up

- Scale up within larger SC projects and WB minority education programme
- Government recognition of Vietnamese as a second language for minority children

# Vietnam

## Constraints to scale-up

- Different Teaching Assistant models
- Diversity of Ethnic Minority groups in Vietnam
  - different solutions appropriate for different groups
- Strong system and hierarchy for education implementation
  - central approval critical

## Program response

- Research comparing Teaching Assistant models
  - Need pathways for minority teacher certification
  - High turnover and teacher rotation
- Advocacy for ethnic minority teacher development
- Central collaboration on material and resource development
- Raise awareness of parliament - policy enforcement/support role.



# India

## Program Overview:

- Government managed MTBMLE for tribal children, funded by EFA Fund
- Orissa: 10 language communities, 747 schools
- Andhra Pradesh: 8 language communities, 2422 schools
- Script, curriculum and material development
  - Led by State government
  - Supported by local communities, mother tongue teachers, linguists and local and international MLE consultants
- Teacher training

## Progress with scale-up

- Assam, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh implementing some elements
- Local language assessment system under development in Andhra Pradesh



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# India

Primary challenge to institutionalizing MTBMLE: expansion without all necessary elements in place

- Some officials in charge lack experience with MTBMLE; frequent changes of role
- Learning materials rolled out without sufficient field testing and revision
- Inadequate basic training and support for teachers
- Trainers themselves sometimes lack MTBMLE experience
- Need solutions in multiethnic contexts



# Themes in international responses

## Central and South America:

- Commitment to multilingual education in place, but not understood at local levels what it meant to put this into practice

## Asia:

- Concerns about resistance to change
- teacher accountability challenges;
- concerns about multiple mother tongues

## Africa:

- Concerns about teacher capacity;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> language in education seen as existing to select, streamline and certify achievement, not for communication.
- A 'neutral' language of school not linked to any local ethno-linguistic group seen as extremely important for multilingual communities.

# Overview of learning

- Building in extra analysis and reflection was useful to identify and address barriers to scale-up of MTBMLE
- These barriers are complex but often predictable
- They can be characterized in three ways:
  - Attitudinal
  - Language related
  - Core education capacity

# Attitudinal barriers

## Concerns:

- Reducing volume of second language in school seen as losing second language learning
- Education may no longer transmit national cultural / linguistic values
- Questions about how much minority cultural / linguistic information is 'enough'

## Some responses:

- 'Branding': highlight second language opportunities, unity in diversity
- Strong leadership orientation, particularly new leadership
- Continued dialogue about expectations, esp. with managers and parents
- Strong focus on evaluation and relevant evidence – local and similar contexts

# Language-related barriers

- New recruitment strategies needed for speakers of local languages
- Teacher training needs to incorporate MTBMLE techniques
- Curricula need to be adapted to support MTBMLE teaching
- Assessment needs to be progressively upgraded to enable testing in local languages- and/or simple L2 instructions
- Support print and production capacity for local languages
- Processes to develop and validate new writing systems involving parents, representatives of language groups and education leadership are needed

# Core education capacity barriers

- Child centered, competency based education and MTBMLE are mutually supportive and dependent
- Education capacity is often weakest where the need for MTBMLE is strongest – between and within countries
- MTBMLE uses language for communication & meaning: traditional education places emphasis on accurate reproduction of language of instruction
- Many school systems have not fully taken on board child centered education

## Response:

- Acknowledge the gaps in the system, not just language gaps
- MTBMLE and child centered education should be planned and developed together

# Key learning for policy

- Support MTBMLE through long and short-term policy commitments, integrated with existing reforms and linked to resources
- MTBMLE must be approached from multiple angles to fully support children's learning
- Policy implementation can be progressive, rather than 'all or nothing'
- Same country, but different regional linguistic, social, political contexts may make different approaches most supportive of children's learning
- Different types of 'scale' can be aimed for: Nationally led, networked etc.

# Getting MTBMLE implementation right

- Identify gaps and critical components to boost children's learning outcomes and experiences
- Replicate both tools and processes which produce them in context
- Focus on the basics of good education, as well as language
- Build in strong quality control systems and evaluation
- Identify strategic partnerships for gaining support at outset
- Link to political decision making and implementing structures
- Seek broad awareness and recognition of other models and actors

*Thank you!*

