



Multilingual Education in Bangladesh:

Promoting Quality Primary Education for Indigenous Children

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General feature

- •45 different Indigenous groups, with major concentration in CHT
- •60% drop out in primary education cycle
- •Language of education Bangla, the national language
- Language barrier identified as one of the prime causes of drop out of Indigenous children
- Most of the IPs do not have written form (except some advanced groups like Chakma, Marma, Garo, Tripura, Bawm etc.)



Challenges in education of indigenous students









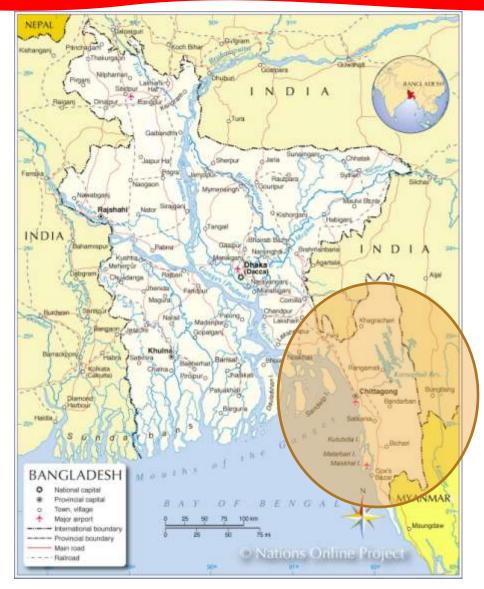
- Lack of accessibility of education: both physical and culturally
- Low quality of teachers
- Language barrier
- High drop-out rate, double the national rate
- Inconsistency of education system with local cultural and livelihood practices
- Absence of local control on education
- High level of poverty rate



The Chittagong hill tracts



The Chittagong hill tracts



Evolution of MLE in Bangladesh

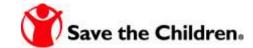
Local initiative to Nation-wide initiative

Three languages to 8 languages (12 languages decided)

Few actors to Many actors including UN (replications)

Eventual achievement to date National Education Policy

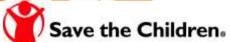
2010, decision to introduce mother tongue in primary level, initially up to grade III



We initially started in 3 languages







Scripts used for 3 languages

Chakma uses own script

- Marma uses Burmese script
- ပထမ အမို့ ဘာသာ

• Tripura adopt Roman script

Kokborok



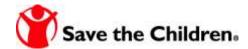






Overview of the programme

- 2 yrs Pre-primary with transition to primary schools in grade I
- Bridging starts at pre-primary stage as children have to enter to formal primary education
- Culturally appropriate curriculum in line with national curriculum and standard
- Language development and language training



Overview of the programme

- •Teaching learning materials-big books, small books, alphabet charts, alphabet books, number books etc
- •Community entirely involved in the implementation of MLE (Artists, Language Committee etc.
- Advocacy
- A national MLE forum is formed to bring forward the issues of MLE to policy makers
- Policy formulation (National Education Policy), decision of introducing Pre-primary education in Mother tongue





Community participation in MLE

- development and approval of education materials







Community participation in MLE (Cont..)

- making decision on orthography, writing system, relevant themes etc.







Community participation in MLE (Cont..)

- Strengthens ownership of community
- Ensures relevancy of education materials to the local contexts
- Establishes strong foundation for future sustainability





Teachers

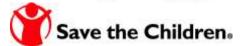
- Recruited from local communities
- Provided with basic Training
- Regular follow-up and refreshers training
- Provided with training on mother tongue writing system /orthography





LESSONS LEARNED

- Short duration of bridging process (6 months) is not enough for children's confidence
- Common understanding on MLE among the actors is still required
- Orthography and script issue is still an issue of debate, consensus required
- Evidence of MLE pre-primary is already created by the actors,
 which is crucial tool for policy advocacy
- No example of successful MLE in primary schools anywhere
- HDCs lack capacity, role of actors not clearly defined
- Central government is more active than the local government on MLE



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- More awareness building/knowledge sharing initiatives for the different level of stakeholders is needed
- Scripts and orthography issue should be resolved through effective and meaningful participation of respective language speakers
- Expert accompaniment to the upcoming government initiatives is needed
- Full implementation of CHT Peace accord
- Clear action plan for implementing government commitment on MLE

CURRENT ACTORS IN THE FIELD OF MOTHER TONGUE BASED MLE

- NGOs: Ashroy, Zabarang, GK, CIPRAD, BRAC, Caritas and many others
- UN/International Agencies: UNDP, Save the Children, SIL
- Govt: HDCs, DPE, MoE, NCTB

