



# 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



Marma



# Scripts used for 3 languages

- Chakma uses own script
- Marma uses Burmese script
- Tripura adopt Roman script

ပုတီးကလေး ဝ-ကလ

ပထမ အမိ ဘာသာ

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



**THANK YOU**

