

# First Language First: Community-based Literacy Programmes for Minority Language Contexts in Asia



United Nations Educational, Scientific  
and Cultural Organization  
UNESCO Bangkok

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**Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All**

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## FOREWORD

Some 6,000-7,000 languages are spoken in the world today. However, only about 300 widespread or majority languages are spoken by over 90 percent of the world's population. More than half of the remaining languages are endangered, and 61 percent of these are found in the Asia-Pacific region. Language plays an important role in learning. Since language is the main medium of communicating meaning in most learning activities, it is essential that a language that learners understand and speak is used in education. Usually people understand their first language best, and are most comfortable speaking it. Multilingual people may be equally proficient in several languages. The first language is also often called the mother tongue, or the home language. Generally, the first language is a language one has learned first; one identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others; or one knows best.

For linguistic minorities, acquiring proficiency in the national language is also essential. Such proficiency broadens the learner's communication outside the immediate community, and provides greater opportunities for further education and future employment. The main question is how this can be best done. Research and experience shows that "first language first" bilingual education may be the answer. "First language first" education programmes use the learners' first language for teaching beginning literacy and initial curriculum content, then gradually introduce the second language, usually a national language, as another medium of instruction. Programmes such as these have also been called "mother tongue first bilingual education" or "mother tongue-based bilingual education."

UNESCO has a strong commitment to support mother tongue instruction and bilingual/multilingual education to improve the quality of education, especially for disadvantaged groups, and to promote cultural and linguistic diversity in all societies. UNESCO Bangkok has supported Member States of Asia and the Pacific in undertaking action research on using the mother tongue/bilingual approach in pilot literacy projects for ethnic minority communities. Experiences from these countries were shared at the Regional Workshop on Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programmes for Ethnic Minorities held in Kunming, China, from 17 to 22 May 2004.

The workshop also developed the capacity of non-formal education personnel working in the area of literacy for minority communities. Twenty participants from both NGOs and governments in nine Asian countries, namely Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam, joined the workshop. Five countries (Bangladesh, China, India, the Philippines and Thailand) have already developed literacy curricula and materials for ethnic minorities using the mother tongue/bilingual approach in their pilot projects. These countries shared their experiences with the other four countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal and Viet Nam) that are now starting pilot projects. In addition, the participants had an opportunity to visit two ethnic minority villages – Ban Li Village and Haozhiba Village, Lancang County, Yunnan Province. During these field visits, they observed bilingual literacy classes and village homes.

UNESCO Bangkok's *Manual for Developing Literacy and Adult Education Programmes in Minority Language Communities*, produced in 2004, was also used in each workshop session to provide the participants with useful information on specific topics. The manual is available for free download at UNESCO Bangkok's e-books website (<http://www.unescobkk.org/ips/ebooks/>).

***First Language First: Community-based Literacy Programmes for Minority Language Contexts in Asia*** deals with education programmes that use learners' "first language first" as a medium of instruction, for adults as well as children, in various Asian contexts. It is divided into two parts. Part I addresses the planning and implementing of a sustainable multilingual literacy programme. It highlights experiences from nine countries focusing on community mobilization, identification of learning needs, development of minority language writing systems, development of curriculum and materials, training of facilitators, strategies/tools for evaluation, strategies for government policy and sustainability. Part II contains resource papers and examples of good practice from countries participating in the project. It includes papers written by well-known linguists and descriptions of best practices in mother-tongue literacy from five countries in the region.

Policy makers, planners and practitioners are welcome to make use of this publication in planning and organizing quality literacy programmes for minority people.



Sheldon Shaeffer  
Director  
UNESCO Bangkok  
Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education

**Part I**  
**Outcomes of the Workshop**

# CHAPTER 1

## Overview on the Use of Local Languages in Education in South-East Asia

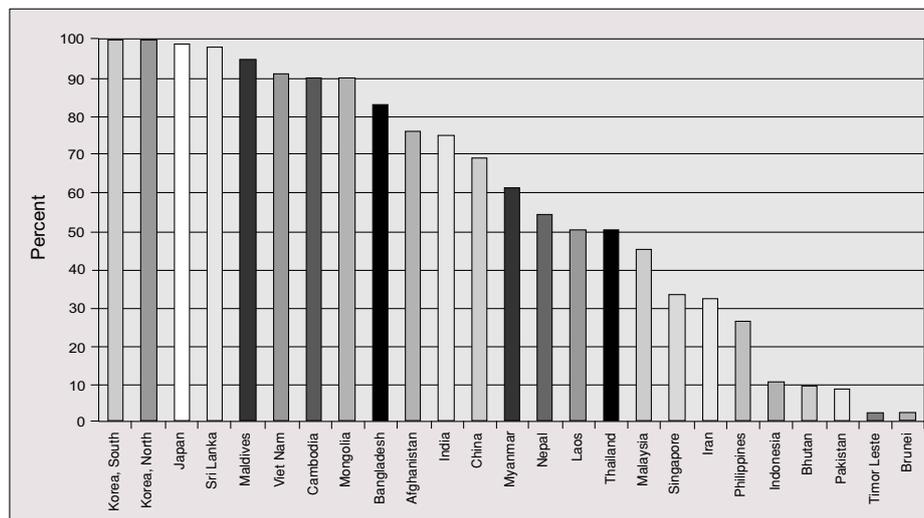
Kimmo Kosonen, Ph.D.

SIL International and Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand

### Introduction

A significant proportion of the population in South-East Asia speaks a local language as their mother tongue. There are hundreds of such languages in the region spoken by various ethnolinguistic minorities. However, not all speakers of these languages have sufficient knowledge of the languages used in education. Therefore, they are underprivileged in terms of educational access, retention and achievement. In some cases, speakers of local languages are marginalized and threatened by being completely excluded from education due to prevailing language policies.

Figure 1 shows an estimated percentage of national populations in East, South and South-East Asia having access to education in their mother tongue (or first language, L1). Basically, the figure shows the percentage of people in a given country that speak as their mother tongue the language



Source: SIL International Literacy Office, Dallas

**Figure 1. Estimated populations with access to education in their first language in East, South and South-East Asia**

used as the medium of educational instruction. If several media of instruction are used in a given country, the total population speaking those languages as their mother tongue is counted. As exact figures for the populations speaking various languages are not always available, all figures presented should be considered as estimates. However, the graph shows that in many Asian countries, the issue of language in education is a major one.

This section provides an overview of various language usage in education throughout South-East Asia. In addition, the cases of China, Mongolia and Papua New Guinea (PNG) are included. The use of local languages in China and PNG is more extensive than in South-East Asia. Unfortunately, other countries of Asia are not included, because the author has researched only the national cases of South-East Asia and China. The focus of the discussion is, thus, on local minority languages and their use in basic education for both formal and non-formal systems.

## **Language-in-Education Policy and Practice in South-East Asia**

### **Brunei Darussalam**

It is estimated that 17 languages are spoken in Brunei. Standard Malay is the official language, but the most widely used language in the country is *Brunei Malay*. Languages used as the media of instruction are Standard Malay and English, and local languages are not used. The situation in Brunei is unique in the region, as basically two foreign languages are used as the media of instruction.

### **Cambodia**

About 20 languages are spoken in Cambodia. The largest ethnic group, the Khmer, make up approximately 90 percent of the population. In Cambodia, the medium of instruction at all levels is the national language, Khmer. Recently, several minority languages have been introduced as the media of instruction in pilot projects targeting the Eastern Highlands. These projects provide bilingual education in both formal and non-formal systems of education for adults, as well as children. Indeed, the draft of the new education law gives ethnic minorities the right to instruction in their mother tongue.

### **Indonesia**

Indonesia, with more than 700 languages, is linguistically the most diverse country in all of Asia. The official language, Indonesian is also the language of instruction at all levels of education. Yet, only about ten percent of the population speaks Indonesian as their mother tongue. The constitution and an education act support the use of students' mother tongue as the media of instruction in early grades. In practice, however, local languages are rarely used in formal government schools apart from being taught as subjects in some areas. Local languages are more widely used in non-formal education, particularly in adult literacy.

### **Lao PDR**

The estimated number of languages spoken in the Lao People's Democratic Republic is 82. The language of instruction at all levels of education is Lao, the official language, which is spoken as

the mother tongue by about half of the population. At present, local languages are not used in education. Nevertheless, local languages are widely used orally in schools in ethnic minority areas.

### **Malaysia**

About 140 languages are spoken in Malaysia. Malay is the official national language. Most schools use Malay as the medium of instruction. In 'national-type' primary schools, languages such as Mandarin, Tamil or other Indian languages are used as media of instruction. In Malay-medium schools, Tamil, Mandarin and some indigenous languages can be studied as subjects. Recently, several indigenous peoples of East Malaysia began education programmes using local languages, taught mainly as school subjects. However, these endeavours cannot yet be considered bilingual education.

### **Myanmar**

More than 100 languages are spoken in the Union of Myanmar. The language of instruction in the government system of education is Myanma, the official language, and local languages are not used in the government system of education. However, local languages are widely used in non-formal education and adult literacy programmes by civil society organizations and language communities, particularly in northern states that are predominantly inhabited by ethnolinguistic minorities.

### **Philippines**

Some 170 languages are spoken in the Philippines. Most languages have writing systems, and more than 100 languages have some literature in them. English and Filipino are the languages of education, and the official languages of literacy for the nation. Local languages have been used in some government schools as "transitional" or "auxiliary" languages for initial instruction in early primary grades. However, local languages are mostly used orally to explain the curriculum. Local languages are used more widely in the non-formal sector that focuses on adult literacy. Such education projects are usually run by NGOs and community organizations.

### **Singapore**

More than 20 languages are spoken in Singapore. English is the sole medium of instruction at all levels of education. Three other official languages, i.e. Malay, Mandarin Chinese and Tamil, are taught as second languages. Apart from Tamil, other Indian languages can also be studied as subjects. Unlike in most nations in South-East Asia, local languages are not at all used in education.

### **Thailand**

More than 70 languages are spoken in Thailand. Standard Thai is the official and national language of Thailand, and the medium of instruction at all levels of education. In minority areas, teachers have used local languages orally in early grades. In some areas, local language classes are taught in the slot of "local curriculum." Some local languages are used in non-formal education. None of these projects, however, are actual bilingual education.

## **Viet Nam**

Approximately 100 languages are spoken in Viet Nam. The national language is Vietnamese, and it is spoken as the first language (or one of the first languages of bilingual people) by around 90 percent of the population. Bilingual education and the use of local languages in education are strongly supported by various policy documents. Yet, Vietnamese remains the main medium of instruction at all levels of education, also in predominantly non-Vietnamese areas. Local languages are used in education in some areas, and are mostly studied as subjects, accounting for up to 20 percent of the primary education curriculum in some areas.

## **Language-in-Education Policy and Practice in Other Countries**

### **China**

More than 200 languages are spoken in the People's Republic of China. Mandarin Chinese is the official language. There are laws and policies supporting the use of ethnic minority languages as the media of instruction in minority areas. However, such policies are not implemented everywhere, and they apply only to the 55 designated national minorities. There is a lot of variation in the use of local languages in education, depending on the geographical area and ethnolinguistic group. Some half a dozen local languages are used as the medium of instruction from primary school through high school. In these cases, Mandarin is taught as the second language. However, the most common forms of local language use in bilingual education in China are programmes that start with the students' mother tongue, but transfer to Mandarin fairly quickly. In many minority areas, local languages are taught as a subject at different levels of education.



### **Mongolia**

It is estimated that 12 languages are spoken in Mongolia. About 90 percent of the population are Mongols who speak some variety of the official language, Halh or Khalka Mongolian. Mongolian is used as the medium of instruction at all levels of education, although English is playing an increasing role at the university level. Halh Mongolian is spoken as the second language by practically all ethnic minorities. The 1992 constitution supports the use of minority languages as the medium of instruction. However, currently only Kazakh is used in bilingual education.

### **Papua New Guinea**

About 850 languages are spoken in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Papua New Guinea is providing pre-school and early primary education in some 350-400 languages. No other country in the world uses local languages as widely as PNG. Previously, the formal education system used English as

the medium of instruction. Based on positive experiences using local language for NFE programmes, the formal system was reformed. In the new system, the first three years of formal education are taught in the learner's mother tongue. English is the instructional medium in later grades. Elementary schools using local languages are run by local communities. Reasons for the successful use of local language include strong community participation, decentralisation, local relevance, cost-effectiveness, and the active involvement of NGOs.

## Use of Local Language in Education – General Situation and Trends



In most countries discussed above, local languages are used in education, but the extent varies significantly. Of the Asian countries, China provides the most elaborate forms and widest range of local language education models. Many local languages are used at various levels of education, in some cases up to the university level. However, most ethnolinguistic minorities in China are able to use only Chinese in education.

No country in South-East Asia has such elaborate systems for including local

languages in education as does China. Yet, there are promising pilot projects in other countries, such as those in Cambodia. In Malaysia, mother tongue-based bilingual education is provided only in major languages such as Mandarin Chinese and Tamil. Generally, 'bilingual education' in South-East Asia means education in the national language and English. Cases of this can be found in Brunei, the Philippines, Singapore, and to some extent, Malaysia. Oral use of local languages is fairly common in all countries.

In most South-East Asian countries, development towards a wider use of local languages is apparent. For instance, in Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand there is a gradual movement towards potential mother tongue-based bilingual education taking place. In these countries, as well as in other parts of the world, such a movement usually starts with community and NGO efforts in adult and pre-primary education, and is non-formal in structure. As a result, the government's formal system may include local language components in the curricula, mainly by using these languages orally in class or by teaching them as subjects. This practice then paves the way towards true bilingual education, or even to a change in the national language policy, as has been the case in Papua New Guinea.

The majority of South-East Asian governments support, in principle, the use of local languages in education by means of legislation and policies. However, these formalised measures are not always implemented. In many countries, an evident mismatch in policy and practice exists, most notably in Indonesia, Myanmar and Viet Nam.

Regionally, there is an increased interest in the use of local languages in education. Minority communities themselves are active in contributing to the use of their mother tongues in some form of education. This can be seen in an increasing number of countries with educational pilot projects using local languages. International organizations, such as UNESCO and UNICEF, as well as various donor agencies, are also focusing more than before on the use of the mother tongue in education. The non-formal sector uses local languages more widely than the formal sector does. Indeed, civil society and non-governmental organizations implement most educational activities – usually a form of non-formal education – using local languages. In some cases, such endeavours have become a part of the national system of education, either formal or non-formal. Cambodia, for instance, seems to be heading this way.

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# CHAPTER 2

## Project Overview and Country Summary Reports

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### Overview of the UNESCO-APPEAL “Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programme for Ethnic Minorities” project

Under the project “Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programme for Ethnic Minorities,” UNESCO Bangkok is currently supporting five countries (Bangladesh, China, India, the Philippines and Thailand) to undertake baseline research, identify participating ethnolinguistic communities and prepare literacy materials using mother tongue/bilingual approaches.

The general objectives of this project are:

- to increase literacy rates among ethnic minority communities (contributing to the achievement of EFA Goal 4<sup>1</sup>) through the provision of opportunities to access basic education (EFA Goal 2<sup>2</sup>), and;
- to improve the quality of life and preserve traditional culture through the provision of relevant and comprehensive literacy programmes.

Community baseline studies have been conducted in each country in order to identify ethnolinguistic minorities among whom pilot projects can take place, determine the situation of the local population, its learning needs and the languages spoken and written by members of target communities. Participating groups develop an appropriate writing system if there is no current appropriate orthography for the target communities. Based on the identified needs, the project team prepares and field tests mother tongue/bilingual learning materials in cooperation with community members, professional linguists and education specialists. Teachers and facilitators receive training in the skills needed to use these materials in a multilingual context with ethnic minority peoples. These materials are used in literacy classes within target communities. Ongoing evaluation of the curriculum development and materials production process is crucial to the programme review process.

The project emphasizes the importance of capacity-building, community empowerment, poverty alleviation and programme sustainability. The partner organizations responsible for these pilot projects, together with language community members – community leaders, facilitators and other

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<sup>1</sup> EFA Goal 4: Achieve a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

<sup>2</sup> EFA Goal 2: Ensuring that by 2015, all children – with special emphasis on girls and children in difficult circumstances – have access to completely free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

stakeholders – will share the responsibility for formulating action plans, developing an appropriate writing system and preparing curriculum and learning materials. The multilingual approach is new for many ethnolinguistic communities, and it is anticipated that participation in the project will build confidence and give experience in community-based literacy programmes. Such capacity-building will empower minority language communities to take leadership of future community managed literacy programmes.

The content of the learning materials that have been developed cover areas that respond to needs identified in the target communities. Areas such as health, nutrition, environment, preservation of traditional culture, and income generation through farming contribute to improving the community's quality of life. Documentation on the effectiveness of using the mother tongue to begin a child's multilingual education is an important aspect of this project. The outcome of this research will contribute greatly towards government policy-making on mother tongue/bilingual approaches to education for ethnic minorities.

Finally, if the responsible organizations, in partnership with community members, successfully implement multilingual education projects, it is expected that these minority language education projects should be sustainable at the local level.

## **Project Expansion**

In addition to the five countries mentioned above that are currently implementing pilot projects, four additional countries are beginning to participate in the **UNESCO-APPEAL “Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programme for Ethnic Minorities”** project. These countries are Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal and Viet Nam. Cambodia has begun a preparatory phase towards programme implementation, and the other countries in this group are in the process of identifying partner organizations.

## **Workshop on Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programmes for Ethnic Minorities**

### **Workshop Objectives**

- Exchange country experiences
- Build knowledge, attitudes and skills in implementing mother tongue/bilingual literacy programmes through workshop sessions and field visits
- Develop strategies for policy dialogues for sustainability and expansion
- Formulate country action plans

## Summaries of Country Reports

### Bangladesh

Bangladesh has a geographical area of 147,570 square kilometres. It has a high average population density of 775 people per square kilometre, with an annual growth rate of 2.1%. According to the 1991 Bangladesh Census, the size of the indigenous population was 1.2 million (actual number is 1,205,987) which constituted around 1.13% of the



country's total population. There are about 58 indigenous/tribal people groups in Bangladesh. Broadly speaking, there are three linguistic families among the tribes in Bangladesh. These are:

- Tibeto-Burman: tribes of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and the Garos, Kochs, Tipras
- Austro-Asiatic or Mon-Khmer: Khasis, Santal, Mundas, Mahalis
- Dravidian: Oraons, Paharis

Tribal people in northwest Bangladesh have little land of their own. Most tribal people are either sharecroppers or work as labourers. Income is small in comparison with expenditure, and many tribal people are forced to borrow money. There are no constitutional safeguards accorded to tribal people. An extremely low literacy rate prevails in the tribal communities of Bangladesh. According to the 1991 Census, only 14.1% are literate. Female literacy among tribal people is lower at 7.41%, compared to 20.5% male literacy.

Since 1990, the non-governmental organization ASHRAI has been working with tribal people in northwest Bangladesh towards socio-economic development. ASHRAI seeks to integrate both tribal and non-tribal poor within the national stream of economic development through local community human resource development and empowerment for self-reliance. The organization partners with various stakeholders – SDC,<sup>3</sup> BRAC, NETZ<sup>4</sup> and UNESCO – to support indigenous communities through education and training. It has begun institution-building among the Adivasis,<sup>5</sup> organizes savings and credit groups, and also runs over 300 Lahanti<sup>6</sup> Circles for female adults.

ASHRAI provides non-formal education for both children and adults, and is now running 133 traditional schools. In October 2002, an action research project on mother-tongue literacy and curriculum development for the Oraon community of northwest Bangladesh was launched with the assistance of UNESCO. The Oraon are the second largest indigenous people group in northwest Bangladesh. The purpose of the project is to explore the development of mother-tongue educational

<sup>3</sup> Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

<sup>4</sup> NETZ Partnership for Development and Justice (based in Germany)

<sup>5</sup> Indigenous Peoples

<sup>6</sup> Lahanti is a Santal word. It means "total or over-all development." Lahanti is a programme under which adult tribal women are offered education and training in life and livelihood skills. For example, in a tribal village, one Lahanti Centre is established where 25 tribal women participate, usually in the evenings.



materials for children. The research team contacted local stakeholders, read and reviewed secondary sources related to mother-tongue education in Bangladesh, and made extensive field visits in order to collect information on language structure and dialects. The research team also contacted key informants and collected cultural data. One pilot school with Oraon children was begun in February 2003, and educational materials were developed, tested and modified. The team prepared the following books:

- Hamar Bai – Parthom Bhag (Literacy for Class I)
- Awaw Anko Shikhbaei – Parthom Bhag (Mathematics for Class I)
- Hamar Dekhal Paribesh – Parthom Bhag (Social Studies for Class I)

In February 2003, a pilot school opened in Agholpur village, which now has 26 students in Class II. In January 2004, another pilot school was opened in Edolpur (an Oraon village) with 35 children in Class I using the Sadri language. In the Agolpur school, materials for Class II have been developed, and are being tested in the classroom. These materials will be evaluated and revised before final publication.

ASHRAI has a 3-year plan for tribal people's educational development. Gradually, ASHRAI will extend its assistance to around 4,000 groups formed by ASHRAI, which include 80,000 indigenous women. ASHRAI is now running 133 non-formal primary education schools for ethnic minority children, and in January 2005, another 20 schools are expected to begin. ASHRAI will explore the potential of expanding its education programmes for indigenous peoples and plans, in the near future, to use the educational materials developed in the Sadri language in every school where Oraon children are studying.

This initiative from ASHRAI, in conjunction with UNESCO-APPEAL, will enhance the confidence and enthusiasm of marginalized tribal communities, contribute towards poverty alleviation and be a factor in achieving the government pledge towards "Education for All" by 2015.

## **Cambodia**

The kingdom of Cambodia has a population (1998) of 11,426,223 (female: 5,917,019). With a total land area of 181,035 square kilometres, the population density is 64 people/km<sup>2</sup>. There are 24 provinces and major cities with 182 districts and 1,623 communes containing over 13,000 villages.

Cambodia is primarily a subsistence agricultural economy. Those involved in farming activities account for 77.5% of the population, while 18.2% of the population work in service industries.

Within the Cambodian non-formal education (NFE) system there are 3,264 teachers. These are primarily lowland Cambodians teaching Khmer literacy. Of the more than 3,200 NFE teachers, 910 are female. There are 5,039 Khmer literacy classes, serving 69,519 literacy students. In 2001, the Khmer literacy rate was 37%.



There are between 30-40 ethnic groups found in Cambodia, and the minority population numbers approximately 443,000. Ethnolinguistic minorities can be found in the provinces of Ratanakiri, Kratie, Stung Treng, Mondulkiri and Prey Vihear. The average income of the minorities is less than US \$1 per day. The Cambodian minorities' primary livelihood sources are slash and burn farming, hunting, fishing, and collecting resin. These minority communities use both Khmer and their indigenous minority languages.

Mother tongue/bilingual education occurs within the non-formal system. Since 1996, there have been 152 teachers. During the year 2003-2004, there were 54 classes running with 2,246 students. The languages of instruction include Bunong, Krung, Kavet, Tampuan, Brao, and Khmer. These classes are being held in two northeastern provinces, Mondulkiri and Ratanakiri. NGO's participating in the



non-formal bilingual education programmes include International Cooperation for Cambodia (ICC), EMU, Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP), YWAM and CARE. There are plans to research other ethnic minority languages – including Kuy, Cham, Jarai – so that they can also be included in the non-formal bilingual education programme.

Mother tongue/bilingual education is also included to a limited extent in the formal education system for Grades 1 and 2. The curriculum used is based on the national primary education curriculum. Teachers receive six months of training – this is in-service training where the teachers come together for one week each month. There are currently six classes – one in each of six villages. The languages of instruction used in the formal system are Krung, Tampoun and Khmer.

## **China**

### **Policy on ethnic minority languages in China**

In general, the Chinese Government has a supportive attitude towards the use and development of ethnic minority languages. Specific policies exist to address issues associated with language and education for minority communities.

### **Bilingual literacy in China**

There is a need to reconcile the need for bilingual education among some communities in China with the national policies on language in education. Access to bilingual education varies for different ethnic groups and in different regions. Approaches to bilingual education need to be responsive to the broad range of contexts found within China.

There are many challenges in the development of responsive bilingual literacy programmes for ethnic minority communities in China. Through implementation of bilingual literacy in pilot programmes, some common difficulties have been identified. These include the lack of qualified bilingual teachers, lack of theoretical research on bilingual education, insufficient funds and the lack of bilingual literacy materials.

### **Lahu pilot project**

The Lahu are one of the oldest nationalities in Asia, and the population is scattered in the mountainous areas of Yunnan Province, China, Burma, Thailand, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam. The total population is over 600,000, with the Lahu in China numbering 400,000 – 66% of the total. About 60 percent of Lahu people in China live in Lancang County, Yunnan Province. Lancang County has been nationally listed as one of the most poverty-stricken counties that needs great support.

Among ethnic minority groups in China, the Lahu nationality spends the lowest average length of time in formal education. According to the population census in 1990, the average length of schooling of the Lahu is only 1.4 years. The adult illiteracy rate, especially amongst women, is the highest among the minorities in China. Because of illiteracy, many women are not willing to send their children for schooling, which results in a cycle of intergenerational illiteracy.

Poor educational opportunities for the Lahu hinder economic development and affect the quality of life for the Lahu. Through field surveys among Lahu villages in 2002, researchers at the Research and Training Centre for Literacy Education (RTCLE), Southwest China Normal University, Beibei, Chongqing; language experts from the Education Bureau in Lancang County; and other personnel – including some skillful literacy facilitators in Lancang County – selected two Lahu villages, Nanuoke and Banli, as project sites.



## India

### Brief background information on socio-economic situation

A Country Assessment based on commonly acknowledged data on the demographic, cultural, political and socio-economic situation in India has identified nine priority problem areas of concern in India, including population stabilisation, gender equality, health of women and children, primary education opportunities, food security and nutrition, water and sanitation, employment and environmental issues.

### EFA plan focusing on non-formal education and literacy

The National Literacy Mission Authority was set up on 5 June 1988 to promote literacy in India. It has a three tiered programme of Total Literacy, Post Literacy and Continuing Education that focuses on illiterate people in the 15-35 age range.

### Policy on mother tongue/bilingual education in the country

Forty years after its development, the 3-Language Formula<sup>7</sup> has yet to be effectively implemented throughout the country. However, despite socio-economic changes in India and market pressures, the 3-Language Formula remains relevant.

### UNESCO-APPEAL Project – Bilingual literacy programmes for minority communities

There are many minority language groups in India, particularly in Assam, that do not have reading materials in their mother tongue. The Assam State Resource Centre (SRC) decided to prepare learning

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<sup>7</sup> **3-Language Formula**

- **The First language** to be studied must be mother tongue or regional language
- **The Second language** – 1.) in Hindi speaking states will be any modern Indian language or English, and 2.) in non-Hindi speaking states will be English or Hindi
- **The Third language** – in both Hindi and non-Hindi speaking states, will be English or a modern Indian language not studied as the second language

materials for minority language groups in Assam as a contribution to the eradication of illiteracy. For its first project, the SRC has begun materials development in the Rabha language.

### **Outcomes of the project**

One of the main aims of the project has been to produce educational materials in the Rabha language. SRC Assam has produced five bilingual books and three primers with handbooks/teacher's manuals. These have been well-received. This has motivated others to publish Rabha language materials. A significant outcome is that other ethnic minority communities have now approached SRC Assam to help facilitate activities towards the preservation of their languages and culture, including the production of literacy materials. In order to promote local ownership and sustain the programme, the Rabha language project is integrated with the existing literacy programmes conducted by the Goalpara District Literacy Committee. In order to bring about economic empowerment in Rabha communities, self-help groups for women have been formed, thus involving the community as a whole in the project, and women in particular, as a means to build capacity, develop awareness of issues such as health, universalise primary education, prevent school dropouts, upgrade skills and support the literacy campaign.



### **Current challenges**

Since the Rabha language has become standardized with printed matter of its own, the other cultural minorities are discontent and recognize that their dialects face the threat of extinction. The current demand for literacy primers is greater than can be currently met.

### **Future Plans**

The District Literacy Societies will be responsible for reprinting the teacher training manual that was prepared by SRC Assam. This will lead to greater independence for the district societies. The District Literacy Societies will be given training in conducting literary classes. There is a plan to complete an ongoing study of comparative learning abilities among the Rabha population in Goalpara District, Assam.

There are many languages in India that do not have written scripts. Mother-tongue education will become feasible only when there are learning materials available. In the future, SRC Assam aims to participate in the preparation of learning materials in these languages.

### **Indonesia**

Since 1998, Indonesia has continued to work to improve every aspect of its national life, basing development upon principles of justice and equality. Government decentralization endorses the

role of local government in making the best use of local resources in the development process. Results are positive: the economic growth rate has reached 4-5%, the current inflation rate (2004) is about 7/8%, and income per capita is US\$ 830 per year.

In Indonesia, education is implemented through both the formal and non-formal system. In 2003, literacy programmes targeted about 7 million people between 10-44 years old. The implementation of literacy in Indonesia has become the responsibility of the Directorate of Community Education, the Directorate General of Out-of-School Education and Youth, and the Department of National Education.

National policies and strategies on literacy in Indonesia cover the expansion of the former programme, which only focused on the eradication of illiteracy, prioritizing people aged 15-44, into a three-level programme for literacy development: basic skills, guided learning, and self-learning. There is a plan to expand access to functional literacy in order to meet a wide range of learning needs for diverse levels of learners living in all parts of Indonesia. The new approach aims to develop the capacity of local staff and organizers for both programme design and implementation.

In general, government policies related to mother tongue in Indonesia are based on Indonesia's Constitution (Undang-Undang Dasar 1945) – particularly the article concerning language – and Article 20 of the Constitution (2003) concerning the national education system. Article 20 specifically enables the mother tongue to be the delivery language of teaching/learning activities. There have not been many multilingual literacy programmes implemented in Indonesia in relation to the number of languages used in the country – there are nearly 700 vernaculars throughout the 30 provinces of Indonesia. Literacy programmes in Indonesia are implemented by both government and non-governmental organizations.



The Sundanese and Sasak languages are the focus of the pilot programme for the UNESCO-APPEAL “Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programme for Ethnic Minorities” project. Learning media is mainly focused on literacy, income generation and basic knowledge related to daily activities.

The central theme of the pilot project is “The Development of a Learning Model for Functional Literacy Integrated with Community Development Using the Mother Tongue Approach.” The objective is to develop a model for literacy that enables learners to:

- develop bilingual literacy capability beginning with their mother tongue,
- use literacy competencies to improve their quality of life,
- wisely harness natural resources as daily living/income resources, and
- mobilize every resource they have for community development.

## Nepal

Nepal is a land-locked country with 42% of its 26 million population living below the poverty line. The literacy rate among the population aged 15 and over is estimated to be 45.2% (male 62.7%/female 27.6%). Infant mortality is about 71/1,000 live births. Life expectancy of the total population is 59 years (male 59.36, female 58.63). Total fertility rate is 4.39 children born/woman.

Nepal is a land of many ethnic and linguistic groups. The Population Census 2001 mentions 102 social groups, mainly indigenous peoples (IP), and identifies 92 languages in the country. The languages (except Kusunda) belong to four language families – Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic (Munda) and Dravidian. Each of these languages has several regional and social dialects.



In view of the importance of the mother tongue in education, particularly in basic and primary education, His Majesty's Government of Nepal has made the constitutional provision to provide primary education in the mother tongue. The government has developed primary level text books in several minority languages, and

plans to use them in 6,000 primary schools throughout the country. However, this will be possible only if the government allocates sufficient resources for the development of training packages, and if adequate numbers of teachers are trained.

World Education's basic literacy materials in the Tharu and Limbu languages have been used in several literacy centres during the past three years. Supplementary materials on anti-trafficking in the Tharu language are also being used for many of the projects in midwest Nepal.

## Philippines

Action research for the development of bilingual literacy education for the Magbikin tribe in Morong Bataan, the Philippines was spearheaded by the Philippines Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE), in collaboration with the Department of Education field offices, local government units and the Magbikin tribal leaders.

The project is an initial effort to address the 11.8 million indigenous peoples (IP's) of the Philippines, who are often the last to benefit from government social and educational services.

The main objectives of the action research are:

- as a result of community dialogue/surveys, to develop a curriculum and literacy learning materials in the language of the target group
- to use the learning materials in literacy sessions for members of the Magbikin tribe

The action research has two interrelated phases:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Phase – Community needs assessment, identification of learning needs, development of IP curriculum and preparation of learning materials based on the IP curriculum
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase – Capacity-building for facilitators from the local community, and organization of learning sessions with literacy materials developed during 1<sup>st</sup> phase.

Using a participatory approach, the following learning materials were developed:

- *Malini na Kahawangan, Yaman Mo, Yaman Ko* – Clean Surroundings – Your Wealth and Mine
- *Taw Tagapangalaga Ong Kalusugan* – Guardians of Health
- *Kalinihan Gawaon Ha Kalusugan* – Cleanliness for Healthy Living
- *Halamang Gamot* – Medicinal Plants



#### **Outcomes:**

Within the community, visible outcomes include the following:

- Community Participation – there is a shift from apathy-dependency to pre-critical thinking stage
- People Empowerment – two community leaders are now serving as literacy facilitators; they were also involved in the development of the local IP curriculum and learning materials
- Leadership and Governance – the tribal council, headed by the barangay captain (elected community leader) now regularly meets and discusses plans for the community; an IP youth group was organized, and is also involved in the decision-making processes

#### **Future Plans:**

- Expand the implementation of the project to other IP communities
- Prepare project documentation reflecting best practices and processes
- Develop a Magbikin language dictionary that will promote the preservation of the IP dialect

### **Thailand**

Even though the Office of Non-formal Education Commission has long experience in running literacy programmes for ethnic minorities, particularly the hilltribes, the department has lacked information on strategies associated with a bilingual/multilingual approach. Therefore, supported by

UNESCO-APPEAL, the Office of Non-formal Education Commission has piloted a research project to develop bilingual literacy materials to promote literacy for the Pwo Karen in Omkoi District of Chiang Mai, northern Thailand. The purposes of the project were to study conditions and learning needs of the people in the target area, develop a curriculum framework and content for materials development, develop bilingual materials in cooperation with Pwo Karen community members, pre-test the materials, and disseminate these to the learners. It was anticipated that this would provide an effective educational model for potential replication to other ethnic minority communities.

Action research approaches were adopted in cooperation with many different agencies – administrators, academics, Pwo Karen teachers from non-formal education learning centres, Pwo students and Pwo Karen children and adults from the village site of Nong Ung Tai, Omkoi. They learned together, shared experiences and worked with SIL International<sup>8</sup> consultants to develop a Pwo Karen writing system. The project, therefore, was designed to promote ownership by the Pwo teachers and community.

Research findings from SIL International, based at Payap University, provided the foundation for development of the target area's Pwo Karen writing system. The process involved examination and analysis of the Pwo sound system, word list checking with Pwo people at the village site and a workshop for Pwo alphabet design. The Pwo Karen continued to test the writing system by producing materials, including a draft alphabet chart, picture dictionary, spelling guide and "The Rabbit and Snail" booklet. The teachers studied the cultural themes of the village, and made a cultural calendar as a basis for curriculum development. They produced six big books for teaching, and these big books were also duplicated into small booklets for individual learners. Word cards were also made. The teachers were encouraged to produce more big books and other materials for literacy class to promote further use of the writing system.



## Viet Nam

The Vietnamese (or the Kinh) are the largest group in Viet Nam, accounting for about 88% of the total population. The remaining 22% of the population are members of some 53 ethnic minorities, mostly living in the mountainous regions. There are 24 ethnic minority groups with scripts.<sup>9</sup>

In Viet Nam, the ethnic minority people tend to live in mixed communities – it is common for several minority groups to live in one commune or geographic area. Using only one minority language in a class as medium of instruction poses a serious obstacle to learning for those who do not speak

<sup>8</sup> SIL International is a non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to promoting language-based development with minority language communities. SIL works in partnership with governments, educational institutions and other NGOs facilitating language development through linguistic research, translation, literacy programmes and practical service.

<sup>9</sup> They are Tay, Thai, Hoa, Kh'mer, Nung, H'mong, Gialai, Ede, Bana, Xo Dang, Ko Ho, Cham, Hre, Mnong, Raglai, Xtieng, Bru (Bru, Van Kieu), Kotu, Gie Trieng, Co, Ta oi (Pa Co), Cho ro, Chu ru, and Lao.

that language. Learners whose mother tongue has not been selected as the language of instruction, especially people from small ethnic groups whose languages do not have their own script, then need to learn another ethnic minority language in addition to Vietnamese. One ethnic minority



group often has several sub-groups, often geographically scattered. This produces different dialects within one language. Lack of a political centre for many ethnic people has caused difficulty in standardizing their written language. Some ethnic minority languages have been used in certain schools since the 1960's. These are Tay-Nung, Thai, Hoa, Kh'mer, H'mong, Gialai, Ede, Bana and Cham.

2003), the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), with technical assistance from UNESCO, is supporting quality development of Community Learning Centres in predominantly ethnic minority populated Central Highlands and Binh Phuoc province. Based on ongoing efforts in promoting and strengthening ethnic minority education, and in consultation with provincial authorities, MOET has selected the province of Gia Lai as a pilot project site, working with the Jrai ethnic minority group.

Within the implementation framework of the EFA National Action Plan 2003-2015 (approved by the Prime Minister of Viet Nam on 2 July

# CHAPTER 3

## Community Mobilization and Identification of Learning Needs

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When members of a minority language community want to develop an adult education programme, one of their first priorities is to form an *implementation team* that will be responsible for planning and initiating the programme. The team should be composed of *insiders* (MT speakers from the community, including facilitators, writers and others who will be involved in the programme itself) and *outsiders* (advisors and trainers from outside the community).

A good implementation team includes representatives from each of the population groups involved in the programme: the learners themselves, facilitators, writers, trainers and supervisors and the outside advisors/trainers. Both groups of team members – insiders and outsiders – have their own roles. Community members need to think critically and creatively as they identify and analyse needs and plan the programme. Outside advisors and trainers need to build relationships and learn from and about the community so that they can provide information and suggest action that is relevant and useful.

Mobilization is concerned with learning about people's goals and needs, and supporting them as they take action.<sup>1</sup> In the development of a community-based adult education programme, a number of principles can be identified:

### Principle 1

Linguistic and cultural differences are a rich resource, rather than a problem to be solved. Local communities are a valuable resource:

- Community members are experts concerning their language and culture.
- Community members are experts at communication, mobilization and management within their communities.
- Community members are experts concerning their communities' needs and aspirations.

### Principle 2

Community involvement in decision-making and management is vitally important throughout all steps of facilitation and implementation. Programme planning includes:

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO. *Manual for Developing Literacy and Adult Education Programme in Minority Language Communities*. Bangkok: UNESCO, 2004, p. 22.

- Project Identification
- Needs assessment, analysis and prioritization
- Programme
  - planning
  - implementation
  - monitoring
  - review/revision
  - evaluation

### Principle 3

Within a community-based, community-managed literacy programme, a team of local implementers and managers should be selected by the community. A good implementation team includes representatives from each of the population groups involved in the programme: learners, facilitators, writers, teachers, trainers, and evaluators.

When programmes are just beginning or are very small, individuals may need to fill several positions. For example, the programme coordinator can also be a supervisor and trainer. Facilitators can also write and edit mother tongue reading materials and perhaps even illustrate them. Experienced facilitators can help with training. Since minority language education programmes begin in the learners' mother tongue, facilitators should be mother tongue (MT) speakers of the language. In addition to speaking the same language, facilitators from the local community already have good relationships with the learners. They share the learners' knowledge of local history and events, and are more likely to understand and share their problems and goals.<sup>2</sup>

### Principle 4

The key to sustainability and success of a community-based literacy programme is capacity-building for local participants. The investment of time and resources in capacity-building efforts is extremely valuable. The underlying philosophical stance for effective programme implementation is the enablement of local people. Practice and experience has shown that local people are more effective than outside experts in leading a sustainable community-based project.



<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

For more information on processes associated with recruitment for community-based literacy programmes, roles and responsibilities, see UNESCO, pp. 27-8.

## Case Study: Cambodia – Community Mobilization and Partnerships

Community ownership is best promoted through involving community members in all the processes associated with programme development – for example, training teachers from within the respective communities to work in their own villages to produce learning materials.

Partnerships between various community members, local and national organizations serve to develop skills and knowledge at the local level. Consultation in decision-making at every stage of the process is vital. Often, “outsiders” and influential community members can act as advocates for marginalized people. There is often a need to promote interaction between minority/majority communities in order that equity of access and resource allocation is maintained. Partnerships for community mobilization should work towards bridging generations (elders/youth) and cultures (Khmer/ethnic minority) in order to break potential barriers to progress. One of the goals of intentional mobilization is to give voice to the ethnic minority communities and empower communities as decision-makers in local development processes.

The promotion of minority language use for development initiatives such as livelihood, education, conflict resolution for land rights, and distribution/use of natural resources heightens the process of community ownership in the development process. Thus, community members can be full participants in development-related activities, using their own language as a medium of communication.

There are a number of ways in which needs can be identified at the community level. Some strategies include<sup>3</sup>:

- Participatory Action Research
- Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)
  - Information gathering with communities
  - Analysis together with communities
  - Validation with communities
- Using local languages in community consultation
- Identifying and mapping stakeholders

## Bangladesh

There are two pilot schools where mother-tongue education is being implemented among ASHRAI’s ongoing 133-school project.

ASHRAI implements action research processes in its existing operational areas. It has organized 70,000 tribal families into 35,000 groups, and these groups form Tribal Development Councils (TDC). ASHRAI has a research team that conducts social research, and this team arranges communication sessions for the staff and TDC leaders. The research team (RT), tribal staff and TDC leaders select

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on strategies for community mobilization see <sup>3</sup> UNESCO, pp. 29-37. Chapter Five in UNESCO pp. 50-53 focuses on “Identifying Learning Needs.”

areas/villages for study/research, promote communication and awareness drives, arrange discussions and explain the project's purpose to the community. Key informants in the community, particularly elderly knowledgeable people, are key resource people. The RT will also consult local leaders and elders about the project, and elicit feedback on methodology and activities for literacy and educational development. On the basis of this research, the RT suggests changes for the project. The Oraon people have been very enthusiastic, and have provided full support in development of the project.



The most pressing educational need that has been identified is the adoption of an appropriate language of instruction. Tribal children appear shy and unable to cope in school because the language of instruction in formal education is the national language. There is a need for curriculum and learning materials to be available in their mother tongue.

## **India**

In the target group, there are now 1,000 learners currently studying, with requests for the programme to expand to up to 5,000 learners. The project is administered under the National Literacy Mission – a government associated organization – and the focus is on adult learners and adult literacy.

Information was gathered for programme design initially by sending extension workers out to talk to people. Questions such as, “How many Rabha speakers do you have in the community that read/write their own language?” “Do you want to preserve your language?” etc. No incentives were given to participants or facilitators at any time throughout the programme, although food was provided for teachers’ training. Village level training, meetings and follow up meetings were held.

The Rabha people, themselves, opted to adopt the Assamese script for use in their local literacy programme. A comprehensive survey was conducted which was a good opportunity to do awareness-raising about the possibilities of literacy. Potential writers were identified from among those people able to write in Assamese. The project did not engage established writers, but rather, writers from the community who would be able to represent the community. Linguists assisted in orthography development.

## **Thailand**

The target community for the UNESCO-APPEAL sponsored pilot project covers two villages. The literacy project is being developed and sponsored by the Royal Project “Mae Fah Leung” Community Learning Centre (CLC). A literacy survey was conducted by CLC teachers who also organized a village forum. There was dialogue with community leaders about the bilingual literacy project. In order to build ownership, the CLC teachers discussed a potential writing system for Pwo Karen



at a community/village forum. Initially, the only form of written language available to the Pwo Karen was from a different dialect.

An orthography development workshop was held in association with members of SIL International, Pwo Karen teachers, young people and community leaders.

Community-based writer's workshops enabled traditional knowledge to be incorporated into the process of materials development. Language committees were established in the

community. People were questioning why they need to read their language because it had never been written before. In the discussions, it was suggested that reading groups start with the young people who seemed more open to mother tongue education, and then encourage them to communicate with their parents about reading in the first language. Materials development by CLC teachers and youth in the villages has continued.

Pwo Karen literacy classes have been organized for both children and young people at the CLC. There is a learning corner where they can learn to read and write. The teachers, all ethnically Pwo Karen, have been selected from within the community. The standard hilltribe curriculum is accredited by the Thai Government and includes a basic skills (Thai and math) section, life skills and a local curriculum which is developed by the local people according to their needs and interests (approximately 20% of the total curriculum time). In this programme, adults and children study the same literacy curriculum.

## Philippines

The target community for the UNESCO-APPEAL sponsored pilot project is an Ayta Magbikin village. There are around 200 people, and the majority of the learners are male. Some of the first steps in project development were community dialogue and project orientation. Incentives such as a meal were used to gather people together. Otherwise, it was felt that people would not come. The initial visits in the community were very informal in order to get to know the community, and occurred in the evenings as this was the best time for the community. Focus group discussions were used on the second visit, as well as interviews with informants, and observations throughout the visit.

The learning needs were observed, categorized and prioritized. These were:

- Health and sanitation (nutrition, hygiene)
- Building the community
- Sustainable use of resources and productivity (livelihood skills development, preservation of wildlife, marketing of products)
- Rights and responsibilities (civic duty, public right, human rights)

Then, a curriculum content grid was prepared and existing literacy materials reviewed. Materials were translated into the Magbikin language, and field tested for two evenings before being finalized and disseminated.

## China

The target community for the UNESCO-APPEAL sponsored pilot project covers two villages. In order to mobilize the community for participation in the project, the implementers looked for government support. Community meetings were held with the participation of religious leaders, teachers and students of primary schools.

Learners told their success stories, and this provided encouragement to others to become involved. Practical learning materials were distributed (posters, books) and other mobilization activities involved the use of audio-visual materials e.g. DVDs and TV were used to show life elsewhere in the country.

The participation and involvement of respectable community personnel is important. In ethnic minority regions, there are often local people who are particularly respected, and it is important to honour and consult these people. Sports and entertainment activities also provided motivation for involvement in the literacy programme. Exchange visits were organized between communities to visit the four CLCs in the area, and bilingual learning materials were developed.

In order to identify learning needs, many strategies were used. Initially, programme planners were involved in a baseline study and documentation analysis (history, culture, education, traditional customs, languages, etc.) of the Lahu community. Researchers participated in community visits where they surveyed the community, interviewed community members and gathered more data. A questionnaire was used with local enumerators asking open-ended questions to stimulate conversation. Participatory methods (role play, activity calendar analysis, etc.) were also used.

# CHAPTER 4

## Developing Minority Language Writing Systems<sup>1</sup>

Catherine Young, SIL International (Asia)

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Before a minority language community can develop literature in its own language and start a literacy programme, they need to develop a writing system. Each language group's situation is unique, and each group will need to adapt the process for developing an appropriate writing system to their own context. However, there are some general principles. A writing system should be:

- developed with the involvement of the community at all levels, and be acceptable to the majority of mother-tongue speakers of the language. The mother-tongue speakers of a language are the true experts on their language, and they need to be closely involved in all aspects of the decision-making process;
- acceptable to the national and local government of the country;
- representative of the sounds of the language;
- as easy as possible to learn to read;
- designed to enable mother tongue speakers to transfer between reading in both the majority and minority languages; and
- easy to reproduce and print.

### “Smalley’s Maximums”

William Smalley<sup>2</sup> was a linguist who worked in South-East Asia for many years. He developed a list of factors that he thought were the most important things to remember when developing an orthography. These are often now known as “Smalley’s Maximums.”

*Maximum motivation:* The orthography should stimulate and motivate people to read and write in their language.

*Maximum representation:* The orthography should accurately represent the language that people speak in their everyday life.

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO. *Manual for Developing Literacy and Adult Education Programmes in Minority Language Communities*. Bangkok: UNESCO, 2004, pp. 38-49.

<sup>2</sup> Smalley, William A. “How shall I write this language?” *Orthography Studies: Articles on new writing systems*. London: United Bible Societies, 1964, pp. 49-69.

*Maximum ease of learning:* The orthography should make it as easy as possible for mother-tongue speakers to learn to read and write.

*Maximum transfer:* The orthography should make it as easy as possible for mother-tongue speakers to bridge between their first and second languages when they read and write.

*Maximum reproduction:* The language community should be able to reproduce the orthography using the publishing and printing technology that is available to them.

Not all of these “maximums” necessarily carry equal importance in a given situation, and it is likely that one maximum will conflict with another. Smalley stresses that balance is the aim, and that each ideal must be considered and weighed according to the situation.

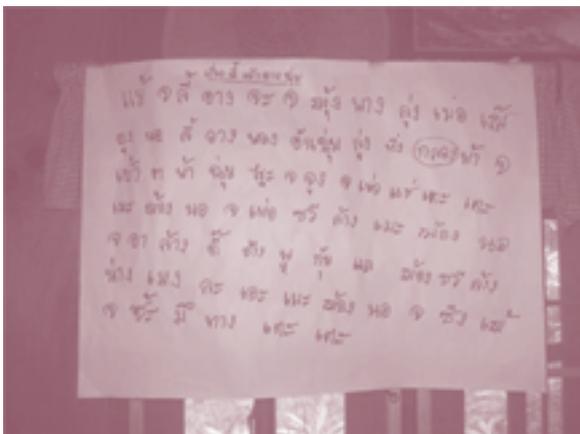
## Who should be involved in the development of minority language writing systems?

Among those developing the writing system, there should be those who have knowledge of:

- the national orthography policy and existing, related orthographies;
- the language and its variants;
- the reading process, acquisition of literacy and familiarity with methods of teaching literacy.

It is often very helpful to have a number of different agencies involved in the development of a writing system alongside community members. These could form a Language Committee to take overall responsibility for the writing system development process. Fluent mother-tongue speakers – both those who are not literate and those who are literate in another language – can work alongside language specialists (linguists) and government representatives. Representatives from relevant government education departments can give input on the processes of learning to read used in the country. If a language has many dialects, representatives from each of the dialect groups should participate in making decisions about creating a writing system.

Reproduction of the language in print is an important consideration. Those developing minority language writing systems should assess ways in which the community can produce reading



materials in the language with the technology that is available locally. If the writing system requires special characters, this may require adaptation of typewriters, printing presses or computers that are available in the community. This is not always possible. The choice of characters in the writing system should ensure that the community will be able to form and print the characters using the technology that is available.

It is important that the principles of linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and education work alongside political factors to develop an easily reproduced writing system.

### **Testing a writing system**

Testing a tentative writing system is important because it is through using an initial writing system that people identify its strengths and weaknesses. Orthography development can become a very emotional issue since language and identity are so closely related. It is by participation in the decision-making process that people sense ownership of the writing system and from there, make it their own.

## Country Reports

### Bangladesh

The national language of Bangladesh is Bangla which is written in the Bangla script. There are national linguists working in the country. Decisions were made relating to writing system development for the minority language involved in the UNESCO-APPEAL project. The following steps reflect the process used:

- Linguistic analysis of the Oraon language including phonological analysis
- A core group working with local people, discussing issues associated with the selection of script
- A community workshop for the selection of the script to be used
- Consultation with “secondary sources” – local educators, teachers, documentation on other writing system designs – to validate community level decision-making

The decision was made to adopt the Bangla script for writing Oraon. There were three scripts discussed and considered in the process. The decision on the script to be used was largely made on the basis of ease of transition into literacy in the national language for participants in first language education.

The selection of an appropriate writing system for the Oraon language was a challenge for the research team. Another challenge for the research team was that the Oraon community speaks two dialects, Sadri and Kuruk. Kuruk is a very complex language which has emerged from the Dravir language group. Sadri, however, is a popular language among the working people of the Oraon community. Sadri is rich with words from Bangla, Urdu and Persian languages. At the suggestion of community leaders, Sadri was chosen for the development of elementary-level primers.

### India

In selecting the writing system that was to be used for the minority language education project, several factors were considered by the implementers:

- Information and opinion was gathered through community level discussion. On the basis of this, the Rabha Literacy Society decided to adopt the Assamese (state language) script for writing Rabha.
- Linguistic input in the decision-making process was obtained from the Linguistic Department of a local university, SIL<sup>3</sup> linguistic consultants and Rabha language experts.

There is no process for orthography approval required by the India Government. The main authority is the Rabha Literacy Society.

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<sup>3</sup> SIL International is an INGO involved in language development activities.

## Thailand

Stages in the development of a writing system for the Pwo Karen:

### *Examination and analysis (phonetic analysis)*

- Collecting and transcribing Pwo Karen words
- Pairing words for phonemic analysis
- Examination and analysis of consonants, vowels and tones
- Sound recording of the tones and vowels for further analysis and examination through computer data management software

### *Wordlist checking with the minority community*

- Checking the word lists with Pwo Karen
- Collection, transcription and translation of short folktales
- Tape recording further vowel samples for acoustic phonetic analysis using computer software



### *Alphabet Design*

- Discussion regarding reasons for writing the Pwo Karen language with members of the Pwo Karen community (youth, teachers, elders)
- Presentation of the characteristics of a good alphabet (simple, consistent).
- Presentation of the script representing Pwo Karen sounds identified in the stories and discussion of options for representation of sounds not found in Thai
- Test by Pwo Karen of their own writing system by writing lists of words for each consonant and vowel
- Production of materials to further test the writing system

There are differences between Thai and Pwo Karen, and there was a need for extra symbols to write Pwo Karen. The decision was made to use some old Thai symbols. The Thai Government did not require information on the finalized script for Pwo Karen, though government officials were involved in the development of the literacy programme.

## China

Prior to the 1940's, there was no commonly used writing system for Lahu. The Chinese Government helped the Lahu to develop a writing system based on Roman script. The Lahu writing system is not based on the Chinese script.

# CHAPTER 5

## Developing Teaching/Learning Materials and Graded Reading Materials<sup>1</sup>

Catherine Young, SIL International (Asia)

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The lack of literature in learners' first language frequently poses the single greatest challenge to the sustainability of multilingual education programmes. Many communities lack the graded reading materials needed to help children gain reading fluency and comprehension in their mother tongue, and to help them transfer what they have learned about reading and writing into their second language. Experiences throughout the world have revealed that teachers and other mother-tongue speakers can, with basic training and support, generate much of the reading material necessary for learners.

### **Different groups of readers within a community**

Within any language community, there are different groups of readers – different audiences – and these should be considered when developing literature. Each of the following groups has different needs:

- children and young people
- women and men
- people in rural areas and in cities
- people with different reading abilities

Also, people have different reasons for reading. Some general categories for motivation in reading can be:

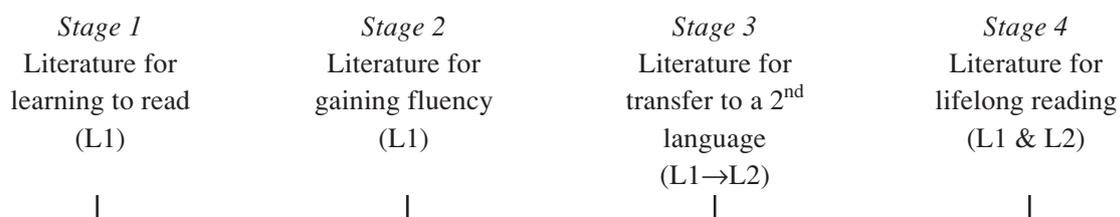
- to get information
- to learn about the world outside their community
- for spiritual growth
- to gain marketable skills
- for enjoyment

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO. *Manual for Developing Literacy and Adult Education Programmes in Minority Language Communities*. Bangkok: UNESCO, 2004, pp. 84-100.

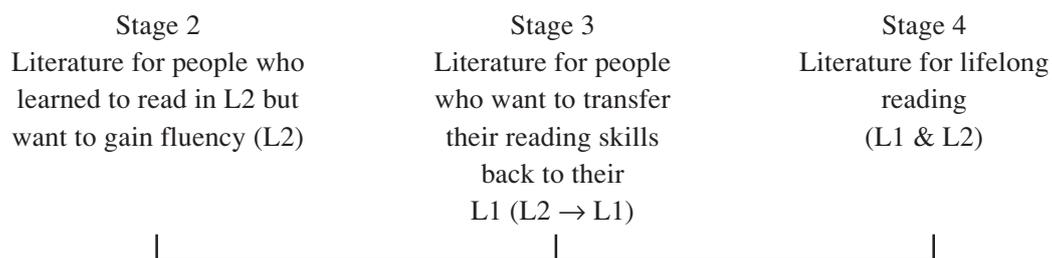
## Literature to help people move from mother tongue/L1 to L2

Some people begin reading in their first language (L1)/mother tongue. They gain fluency in the mother tongue, but they then want to transfer what they know about reading in their MT into their second language (L2), which may be a language of wider communication within their country, the national language of their country or an international language. Then, they want to continue reading both in L1 and in L2. There needs to be literature to help readers in this process.

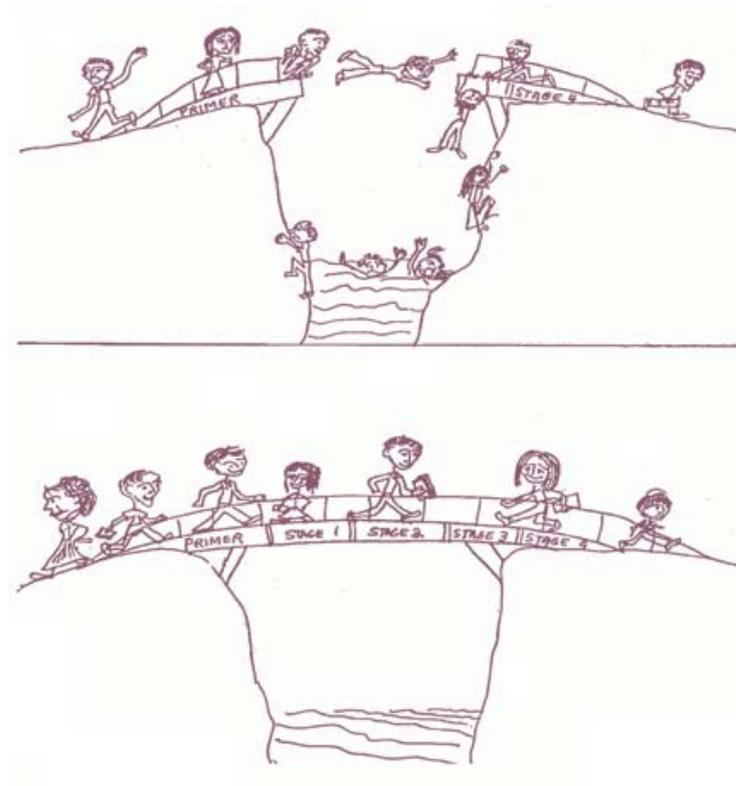


## Literature to help people move from L2 to L1

Other people have already learned to read in the national language or international language, and want to learn to read in their L1. They want to be able to continue reading in both languages. Literature is needed in order to help them in this process.



## The Literature Bridge



The “Literature Bridge” contrasts inadequate planning and supply of literature for new learners with a well-planned and structured provision of literature for readers. In the upper portion of the picture, the learners have access to a primer, for example, and perhaps some basic level reading materials. However, there is a gap: there are no sequential, graded reading materials to move the learners “step-by-step” towards reading fluency. The graphic depicts people falling off the bridge into the river – paralleling with learners who drop out of the literacy programme and do not become lifelong readers. Only a few, with great personal effort, can make the jump from primer/basic level reading to fluent reading in both their mother tongue and L2. However, in a well-structured reading programme where graded literature is available, readers can move from primer level through Stages 1 to 4, and become lifelong readers in two or more languages.

### **Mother-tongue speakers can develop their own literature**

Members of the language community can be participants in the literature production process. They can:

- write original materials based on their own experiences and created from their experiences and imagination
- put their traditional oral literature into written form

- adapt majority language materials that originate from outside the community to the local language and context
- translate materials from another language into the mother tongue

## Types of literature

There are many types of literature that can be produced by language communities. These include:

- Stories
- Songs, poetry
- Biographies, histories
- Folktales, legends
- Jokes, riddles, wise sayings
- Travel, geography
- Information, awareness-raising
- Problem-solving
- Instructions, directions
- Religious, moral teachings
- Skits, dramas
- Pictures
- Language learning (alphabet)
- Games, activities
- Calendars
- Promotional materials, advertisements
- Letter

Writers can employ a number of different formats for sharing the literature they produce. These include:

- Small reading books
- “Big Books”
- Flip charts
- Posters
- Cards
- Board games
- Signs
- Leaflets

## Country Reports

### Bangladesh

The process of materials production begins with linguistic analysis of the focus language. Through community consultation, an appropriate writing system is developed, and then secondary sources are consulted for curriculum development. In the Oraon pilot project, a review of existing government and NGO curriculum/materials took place and, through workshops, subjects and content areas were selected. Three subjects were identified – literacy, mathematics and social/environmental studies. Local resource people participated in the development of primers, and then these instructional materials were revised in workshops at the community level based on input coming from both teachers and students. The materials were then finalized and put into the class for testing.

During Class 1, only the mother tongue is used. English is introduced, as a subject, in Class 2. Bangla will be introduced in Class 3 in order to enable mainstreaming when students enter Class 4. Class 4 is not yet planned for the pilot programme, but would probably include the mother tongue as a language of instruction with Bangla as a subject. According to government policy, mother tongue instruction can continue through Class 5. After Class 5, learners must go into the government system. Observation indicates that children who proceed through this system achieve at a much higher level than those in the government school system.



### India

Literature and instructional materials production in the pilot programme began with the recruitment and identification of writers and artists from the local community. Topics and issues for inclusion in literacy materials were also identified. Writers were trained in methods of material preparation, and participated in visits to the field in order that both writers and artists were familiar with local culture and values. Draft materials were then produced. Initial evaluation of materials took place among the writers through peer editing and evening sessions where the writers read aloud to each other. Field testing happens when hand written materials are taken to the field. On the basis of the field testing, materials are revised and then an initial printing takes place. Evaluation, correction and editing takes place before the final printing.

A number of different graded reading materials have been developed to accompany literature for readers. There are supplementary materials: Red (simple), Green (medium), and Blue (more difficult). “Improved Pace and Content of Learning” materials are available at 3 levels paralleling the national level materials. Three are primers for adults. There are nine lessons per book and drills with revision every three lessons. Students are tested after three books are completed. This is done by the National Literacy Mission who has adopted testing norms. It takes about 200 hours to complete the series

of books. There are teacher instruction handbooks for each of the primers. Income generation projects are included, and enterprise programmes are set-up. The teachers are volunteers.

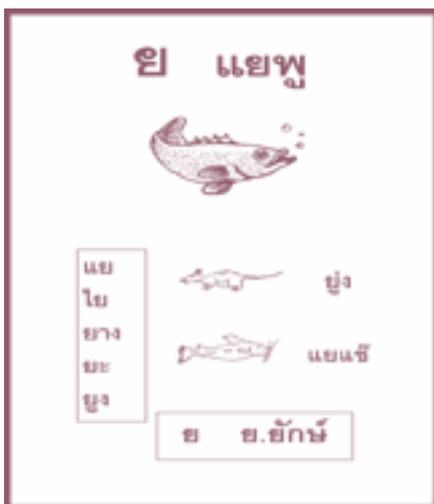
In literacy classes, there are different levels in each class. Although all students start at the same time, some students progress at a faster rate than others. There is an optimal teacher/student ratio of 1:10; however, sometimes there are more teachers available. There are nine days of training for teachers, and there is in-service training for teachers after each book has been completed. The District Literacy Committee is responsible for implementation of literacy classes, and the State Resource Centre prepares materials and teacher training.



## Thailand

In terms of the development of teaching materials, it is important to identify the target group for whom the instructional materials and the literature are intended. Establishing the goals and objectives for the organization of the bilingual literacy classes will inform decisions about the materials that should be developed. Information on adult learning psychology and learning styles inform the process of materials development. It is important that the content is relevant and related to the lives of students. Literacy facilitators learn how to make teaching materials – both big books and other materials – like learning games.

The Pwo Karen learning materials are not printed in colour. They are printed in black and white, and the teachers colour them using pencil crayons. Materials are tested for the suitability of pictures and concepts. After initial testing, the materials are edited.



The group is not yet sure of how many primers there will be because they are still in the process of programme development. The group has developed a writing book to enable students to practice writing because there was not enough space to write in the original primers.

The Thai group facilitated writer's workshops using the Writer's Workshop Manual developed by SIL International. The stages of a workshop include:

- Introduction: The importance of literature and literacy
- Writing Experience 1: What makes a good story?
- Writing Experience 2: Write well known folk tales
- Writing Experience 3: Basic writing skills while writing a personal experience story

- Writing Experience 4: Writing skills – continued development
- Writing Experience 5: Writing for new readers

#### *Stages of writing and book production*

- Discuss ideas together and tell a story to a friend
- Write the story down on paper, skipping every other line on the paper to leave room for editing and making changes to the story
- Read the story aloud to someone else
- Let others read the story – other writers as well as local people in the village
- Edit the story yourself
- Enter the story on the computer – type it up or write it out if no computer available
- Print it out
- Check once again for spelling, layout, pagination, etc.
- Make into a book!

Regarding the learner profile, many of Pwo Karen young people are already literate in basic Thai; however, many of the older people have not had any exposure to Thai literacy. The literacy programme has begun with a focus on the youth, who can then develop more reading materials which can later be used by those who have no literacy skills. Eventually all information in the CLC will be put into both languages in order for the learning centre to truly become a bilingual environment.

## **Philippines**

The programme has prepared a curriculum content grid for the Magbikin community which outlines both skills and competencies that should be achieved, as well as content areas – mostly hygiene and health – to be included in the curriculum. The writing outline for the materials includes establishing objectives for the programme, defining the content (reading, writing, computation) of the materials and deciding on the format of the materials (i.e. posters, booklets, modules).



The implementers of the Magbikin programme conducted a review of existing materials available for adaptation before the preparation of new materials. A “Field Writeshop” gives writers, illustrators, layout artists and all others involved in the learning materials development process the chance to visit a Magbikin community. Consultation with the local people gave feedback for revision before the preparation of the final draft. Translation to the Magbikin dialect was completed by the IP’s. Validation/testing of the learning materials was conducted over a period of two nights, and spelling was corrected according



# CHAPTER 6

## Field Visit and Reflections on Observation of Pilot Programme

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### Summary of Field Visit to Lancang County

The workshop participants traveled to Lancang County via Simao in order to visit the pilot programme in multilingual education for the Lahu people. The first site visit was to Banli village.

In Banli, participants had the opportunity to observe a bilingual literacy class, and interview both literacy facilitators and literacy learners. Banli is an administrative village under which there are ten natural villages, with 303 households and a total population of 1460. Most of the villagers are Lahu people, but some belong to other ethnic groups such as Wa and Hani.

Most of the literacy learners in the Lahu pilot project in Banli village were women. The participants were impressed by the happiness of the learners and their active participation in literacy learning, as well as their great progress in bilingual literacy over two years of classes. Before this project was implemented, community members received literacy education in the national language only, and the learners reported difficulty in studying Chinese. However, they now have a bridge from reading and writing in their own language to the official language. Music and song appear to be important aspects of Lahu culture. A song was shared with the workshop participants. The lyrics of the Lahu song are:

*Long ago we had our script  
Later, it disappeared for a very long time  
We don't know why  
Now it comes back  
We are happy*

Due to adverse weather conditions, participants were unable to visit the second project site in Nanuoke village.



## Reflections on Field Visit

### Socio-economic/Livelihood issues

There were few economic activities observed in the villages,<sup>1</sup> and it was suggested that income generating activities need to be more closely integrated into the literacy programme. Housing issues and improved sanitation in the community were identified as a priority if support were to be available.

Local infrastructure development was noted by community members as a challenge; however, in Banli there was a new primary school building, communications and electricity. Some participants interviewed families who could not afford to send their children to school. More girls are involved in the adult non-formal literacy programme because boys are sent to primary school. The facilitator who was assigned to the Banli pilot programme was provided with sufficient financial remuneration for her personal needs.

### Sociolinguistic issues – language attitudes, motivation and use of the mother tongue

The participants appear enthusiastic to learn Chinese. In fact, it seemed that many would prefer to learn to read and write in Chinese rather than the Lahu language. However, it was noted that some of the learners do not speak Chinese and, thus, there is a need for more oral Chinese in the classroom. Some learners observed did not speak/understand Chinese even after a number of years studying Chinese in the programme. It seemed that participants in the literacy programme viewed the Lahu language as a tool, rather than considering the cultural value of the language and its' relationship to Lahu culture. It was recommended that mother-tongue education be integrated into the formal primary school system in addition to non-formal adult education.

### Impact of literacy programme in the community

An observer heard that there were learners in the non-formal system that had learned more about raising chickens and, thus, could then earn more money. Because of this, they were able to send their children to school. Hence, the adult literacy programme is impacting not only adult literacy, but the potential of children to take up educational opportunities.

### Programme planning, management and implementation

It was noted during the field visit that a teacher living in the village was being used as a language facilitator for adults. The primary school also served as the Community Learning Centre, where there were government-prepared literacy materials. Such resources are helpful, but need to be supplemented. It was recommended that learner-generated materials be developed. More systematic project monitoring and evaluation was also recommended. The programme involved the participation

<sup>1</sup> This may have been due to the weather conditions.

of officials at the county level, community officers, and primary school teachers.

### **Project related capacity-building – trainers and curriculum developers**

All stakeholders and all associated with the language programme – including local government and political leaders – should be familiarised with the curriculum and teaching approaches. It was recommended that facilitators be trained in the principles of adult learning, and trained to identify learners' levels and appropriate methodological approaches for adults.



### **Learner-related issues (motivation, achievement, assessment)**

There are very few Lahu materials or Lahu/Han bilingual learning materials. Participants noted that supplementary materials on livelihood could reinforce learning. Some learners could only speak the Lahu language, and were not yet able to read or write Chinese after learning for 18 months. Rapid changes in the socio-economic situation of the community appear to be a motivation for learners. A young female dropped out of Grade 3 in primary school because of poverty, but wanted to study Chinese language in adult non-formal education in order to make life easier when visiting the city. A learner expressed that she was more motivated to learn Chinese through first learning Lahu.

Participants suggested that a system be developed to assess learning. Mixed ability learners in the same classroom all appear to be using the same graded textbook. Participants suggest that other strategies may be appropriate.

### **Responsiveness of programme to community issues**

It was recognized that the programme is in the process of developing awareness for the uses of literacy; however, livelihood and poverty alleviation approaches should be integrated into the bilingual literacy programme. More emphasis on environmental issues would have a long-term impact on sustainable community development.

### **A Framework for Literacy Programme Planning**

A framework for analysis was introduced to assess the information gathered during the field visit and relate this to curriculum planning for multilingual education. It was noted that further participatory research would be needed to develop the framework more fully. The framework for analysis is as follows:

| Topic (include subtopics) | Issues observed/<br>Rationale | Guidance Notes for Implementation | Further research required | Expected Outcomes | Measurable Indicators |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
|                           |                               |                                   |                           |                   |                       |
|                           |                               |                                   |                           |                   |                       |
|                           |                               |                                   |                           |                   |                       |

## MACRO LEVEL

### Topic: Overall curriculum framework for 3 levels

Key Points:

- Learning activities need to be developed in graded steps so that students can successfully progress
- Further research is needed on the difficulties faced by learners, selection of topics/activities, testing materials with teachers and revising the curriculum
- Outcomes should include:
  - Learners will gain more knowledge and understanding
  - Teachers will be able to organize learning activities effectively

### Topic: Focus on means of improving classroom dynamics, interactive learning methods as a means of motivating students

Key points:

- Positive attitude of the learners is one of the most important issues affecting achievement
- Develop needs-based materials for both reading and writing
- Ensure flexibility of programme monitoring systems
- Revision and improvement of programme design based on monitoring

### Topic: Programme design and implementation

Key points:

- Emphasize in-service training
- Develop reading materials

- Monitor attendance of facilitators and learners to assess progress in relation to instructional hours
- Ensure programme is responsive to local needs

## **MICRO LEVEL**

### **Topic: Hygiene and sanitation**

Key points:

- Partnerships and networking are important
- Coordination is possible with government health extension workers who already make visits to the village
- Promote latrine construction from local materials as a practical skill
- Research on best practices in bilingual education
- Activities to be coordinated within the CLC

### **Topic: Poverty alleviation**

Key points:

- Income generation together with literacy is vital
- Poor villagers can't access school, which affects drop-out rates
- Functional literacy should be addressed
- Special strategies should be designed to meet the needs of learners who are prevented from attending school due to poverty
- Existing Lahu language materials should be reviewed to assess relevance to social needs
- Adapt Chinese extension materials to Lahu
- Health/hygiene issues

# CHAPTER 7

## Training for Facilitators of Community-based Literacy Programmes

Darunee Riewpituk, Programme Specialist in Continuing Education, APPEAL, UNESCO Bangkok

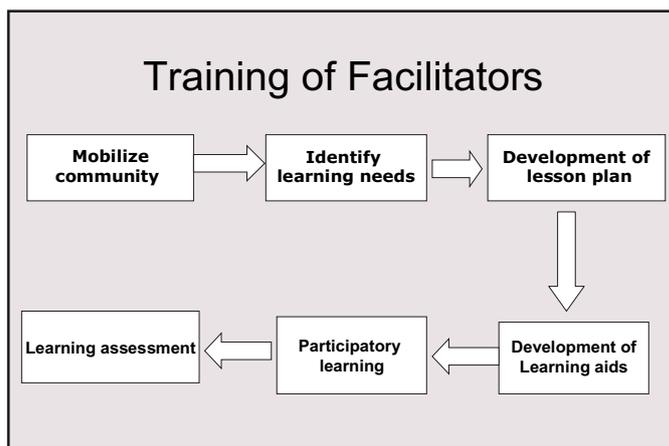
Basing their work on national and community surveys, the project committee and local community team are responsible for developing the components of a community-based, community-managed literacy programme. These components initially include community mobilization, identification of learning needs, the development of an appropriate writing system and curriculum/materials development.

“On the job training” occurs as local members of the project team participate in the development of programme components. Such capacity-building at the local level becomes leadership development for a community-based project.

As learning needs are identified, facilitators undergo training to develop lesson plans and learning aids. Facilitators are also trained in methods of participative learning, programme level evaluation, and assessment of learner progress.

Facilitators are responsible for identifying learning needs by pinpointing what learners already know and what they want and need to learn. Facilitators must be equipped with adequate knowledge

and skill, themselves, in order to assess learning needs. Teachers and literacy facilitators, having assessed the level of the learners, are then responsible for developing a localized curriculum where the topics and sub-topics are responsive to the context of the literacy programme.



A typical lesson plan format may look like this:

| Objectives  | Contents                             | Teaching/Learning methods   | Learning aids and resources          | Duration   | Learning assessment                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| What are you trying to accomplish?                              | Specific topics that will be covered | (see UNESCO handbook)   | Use/make locally available resources | How many lessons for a major topic?<br>How many hours for a sub-topic? | Evaluate:<br>Did students learn?<br>Did they understand? |
| Specific<br>Measurable<br>Achievable<br>Realistic<br>Time-bound |                                      | For example, ice-breakers, energizers, posters and drawing, group discussion, role play, situation analysis, class exercises, demonstrations, games, develop portfolios, etc. |                                      |  |  |
|   |                                      | Be participatory!   |                                      |  |  |

Literacy facilitators need to be trained in the use of such an outline in order for it to be meaningful and helpful to their situation. Objectives included in such a plan should be “SMART” –

- S Specific
- M Measurable
- A Achievable/attainable
- R Realistic
- T Time-bound

The skills required to successfully implement participative teaching and learning methods should be an aspect of the training that facilitators receive. This should begin with an ice-breaker and energizer techniques to maintain learner motivation/engagement, and also strategies such as brainstorming, pair discussion, gallery techniques, role play, simulations, games and quizzes. Facilitators also need to be given training in appropriate use of learning aids and in ways through which teaching materials can be locally generated with learner input.

Teacher training should include a focus on the evaluation process so that the curriculum/materials being used, as well as the learners, are assessed. Materials that are used should match learning objectives and reflect local conditions. It is important that reading materials suit the learners’ level of literacy skill with an attractive layout and appropriate illustrations. The format of material impacts the motivation of the learner to continue with reading activities. Cost effectiveness of the programme and of the materials are important factors, and facilitators should receive training in assessing the impact and benefit of the programme in relation to the implementation cost.

## Training of Facilitators

When?

Training should start at the very beginning of the project, and facilitators should be included in all stages of the project development.

What?

Facilitators should be trained and involved in community mobilization, the identification of learning needs, curriculum development, development of learning aids and methods of learning assessment. It is the role of facilitators to identify what learners already know as a starting point, particularly for adult learners. It can also be important to identify what the learners want to learn – their felt needs. Often, a focus on improving quality of life through the inclusion of practical skills is a factor in programme development. Adults seek immediate application of their literacy skills – literacy is seen as a tool, not as an end in itself.

### Developing a local curriculum

Consider the level of learners when developing a local curriculum – are they pre-literate or semi-literate? The main topics of a localized curriculum can be identified through participatory processes – for example, health, agriculture, civic duty. Sub-topics and activities can then be developed. It is the role of the facilitator to determine the duration of each lesson and series of classes.

## Experiences from Cambodia

The success of any literacy programme is very much dependent on the teachers that are involved. Therefore, it is important that teachers/facilitators are encouraged to develop in the following 5 “C’s” –

- Confidence
- Competence
- Credibility
- Creativity
- Commitment

Experience in non-formal adult education in Cambodia has shown that competence in both the content of the literacy programme and in the methodology employed is important. Community participation in the selection of teachers and in the local programme management are key principles for sustainability and local ownership. It is preferable that teachers are members of the community in which they are teaching, as well as being mother tongue speakers of the language of instruction.

In the Cambodia experience, teachers in some pilot project areas have little personal formal educational experience, and are more confident in delivering drills than in facilitating discussions. However, through practice and training, improvements are occurring. The programme in Cambodia has

emphasized frequency, not duration, of training – bringing teachers to a central point more often, rather than having them stay for a long time. Teachers enjoy sharing their teaching experiences with each other, particularly because work in a village setting can leave teachers feeling secluded. The frequent training process helps assuage this isolation.

Once trained, formal school teachers tend to prefer to stay in urban areas; therefore, there is a shortage of teachers for rural, and especially remote, areas. In Laos, currently a project is underway that trains girls as teachers under the proviso that they return to their home villages. Community teachers and mobile teams of teachers/teacher trainers are an excellent resource for remote areas.

Payment of NFE teachers is a difficult issue. In some countries, they are paid; in others, there is no payment. During teacher training, some countries pay expenses and a small incentive allowance. Decisions on payment need to be based on the local context.

## Experiences from Thailand

Thai participants shared two perspectives on teacher training – the former system and the pilot project approach that is currently being implemented.

### Former System

- A. Purpose of Functional Literacy for Hilltribes
  - Bridge to Thai language and culture
  - Vocational skills
  - Problem-solving skills
  - Civic responsibility
- B. Logistics for Functional Literacy Project
  - ‘Volunteer teachers’ sent out to the community – called volunteer, although they are paid a salary for daytime classes with children; evening classes are held for adult learners
  - Teachers participate in community development activities
- C. Thai-only literacy class results (200 hours of study)
  - Inadequate fluency – not fluent in literacy or in mathematics
  - Discontinuity of skill practice
  - Learning materials not relevant to community – developed by outsiders from Bangkok
  - Inadequate practice for children
- D. Adult literacy rates are still very low
  - Average (among the hilltribes) is 16.39%
  - More than 2,000 villages are still without educational services of any kind

E. Developed Hilltribes Curriculum (1981: Hilltribes Area Education – HAE)

- Required time: 6,000 hours for children; 1,200 hours for adults
- Content:
  - Basic Thai language skills (for those with no exposure to Thai)
  - Thai language and Mathematics – 35%
  - Life Skills and Social Studies – 65%
- Contextualization
  - Central content = 80%
  - Local content = 20% (community can initiate this part of the curriculum)

### Introducing Bilingual Education Component

Initial questions should be asked by those implementing the bilingual education programme relating to the identification of the target audience for literacy, and focusing on the skills that are already present within the community. The theory or philosophy of learning that is being implemented in the development of a pilot programme for Pwo Karen minorities in Thailand is referred to as ‘Constructionism.’ It begins with the notion that everyone can teach and everyone can learn if an appropriate learning environment is created. You cannot teach people, but you can facilitate their learning if participants have the time and resources to apply what they learn. Within this approach, time should be given for reflection. Teachers are encouraged to talk to others about what they have done, what they have learned, what they are doing and what should be done next. The facilitators participate in the development of the orthography and learning materials. Experience shows that it is possible to mix adults and children together – children can write down the old people’s stories.

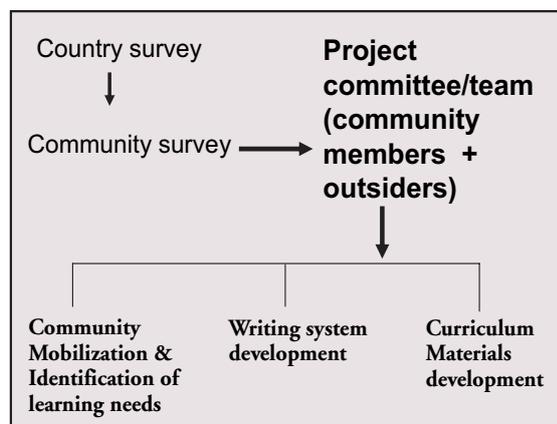
Programme planners should learn from the context in which the literacy programme is to be implemented about the kind of educational materials and activities that should be promoted. For example, changes in a community’s housing structure may suggest that the forest is being cut down, and this has serious implications for environmental degradation. In this way, community development can be incorporated into the literacy programme. In the Thailand project, it was suggested that people plant gardens. The teachers modelled the activity and taught by example.



This approach allows teachers to develop into more than “just teachers.” They are truly facilitators of positive change! They do, however, need to be encouraged to have confidence in their abilities to develop teaching materials and curriculum content since this process is key to the success of this approach.

## The APPEAL Bilingual Project: Practical Steps

- Country survey – important to prevent duplication of activity among NGO’s and other organizations
- Community survey – once the target community has been identified, it is necessary to analyse the readiness of the community. Are they willing, motivated and excited to participate in a community based multilingual education programme?
- Formulate project team – both community members and outsiders who bring special skills to the process



**Project Team:** Must have their capacity built, primarily through on-the-job training. Other types of training are also appropriate – for example, seminars, workshops or mentoring. Regular training should be provided in order for the project team to perform the following functions:

- Community mobilization and identification of learning needs
- Writing system development
- Curriculum and material development
- Conduct literacy classes
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of both the programme and the learners

### DOCUMENTATION IS IMPORTANT!

UNESCO can help to locate funding for multilingual education programmes for minority languages. UNDP, UNICEF, JICA, etc. might be interested in allocating funding, but this depends greatly upon documentation associated with the programme development and evaluation material available to the funders.

# CHAPTER 8

## Strategies and Tools for Evaluation

Anne Thomas, Consultant for Education and Community Development, Phnom Penh

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### Why are programme evaluations necessary?<sup>1</sup>

Evaluations provide information that enables stakeholders (programme leaders, learners, the community donors, government agencies and others) to:

- Assess the degree to which the programme is accomplishing its stated objectives
- Change the parts of the programme that are not working well and strengthen the parts that are working effectively
- Report to donors, government agencies, NGO's and other potential supporters
- Maintain a record of the programme

### Principles

5 key areas exist within development evaluation.<sup>2</sup> They are:

- **Relevance:** It is important that the relevance of an educational intervention is considered and the significance of a project considered. Is the objective of a development project appropriate and worth the investment of time and resources?
- **Effectiveness:** Evaluation should include an assessment of progress that is being made towards the achievement of stated programme objectives.
- **Efficiency:** An assessment of efficient and effective use of resources is a key aspect of the evaluation process.
- **Impact:** Impact evaluation assesses the changes that the programme produces for the intended beneficiaries.
- **Sustainability:** In what ways can programme activities be continued when outside intervention of the project initiators is withdrawn? Evaluation considers the potential for replication and expansion that exists with development programme design and the capacity building with the community that has occurred in order to foster sustainability.

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO. *Manual for Developing Literacy and Adult Education Programmes in Minority Language Communities*. Bangkok: UNESCO, 2004, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> See also [www.davida.com](http://www.davida.com).

A good evaluation begins before programme planning starts, continues until after the programme, itself, has ended and assesses all aspects of the programme:

- *Context evaluations* take place before the programme begins. They help programme leaders learn about the community in which the programme will be implemented – the goals and needs that community members have identified, the resources that might be available and the factors that are likely to affect the programme.
- *Input evaluations* take place during planning and initiation of the programme. They help stakeholders assess the degree to which the programme plan meets the community's expectations. Input evaluations are also concerned with the effectiveness of training and the relevance and acceptability of learning and reading materials. They assess the degree to which resources are being utilized effectively.
- *Process evaluations* take place at regular intervals during the programme (for example, in the middle and at the end of each class year). They assess learners' perceptions of their own progress and the community's perceptions of the programme in general.
- *Impact evaluations* take place at the end of the programme or when a group of learners complete the programme. They help programme leaders assess the degree to which the literacy programme has helped the learners and the community, in general, to achieve their goals.



## Evaluation Process

Participatory planning and evaluation of literacy for development programmes involving community members can lead to stakeholders implementing the evaluation outcomes. The results of the evaluation and the feedback of the evaluation can be shared with stakeholders for verification and lead to further capacity-building among community members. Programme ownership can be enhanced as a result of adapted programme implementation based on the results of participatory evaluation. Encouraging community members to take part in evaluating their programme is an important way of ensuring that, as it expands and is sustained, the programme will help them achieve their own and their community's goals.

The best way to equip community members to plan and conduct evaluations is to go through the process with them:<sup>3</sup>

- Identify the *focus* of the evaluation.

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO. *Manual for Developing Literacy and Adult Education Programmes in Minority Language Communities*. Bangkok: UNESCO, 2004, p. 110.

### Four Types of Evaluation in Literacy-for-Development Programmes<sup>4</sup>

|                                    | CONTEXT EVALUATION<br>(pre-planning research)  | INPUT EVALUATION   | PROCESS EVALUATION   | OUTCOME/IMPACT<br>EVALUATION  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| <b>Objectives</b>                  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Define the situation before the programme begins</li> <li>2) Identify and assess needs and goals</li> <li>3) Diagnose the problems underlying the needs</li> <li>4) Identify external factors that will affect the program</li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Be aware of potential resources</li> <li>2) Assess the appropriateness and feasibility of the programme plan and its components</li> <li>3) Identify stakeholders</li> </ol>                             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Identify or predict strengths and weaknesses in the programme plan and its implementation</li> <li>2) Provide information for stakeholders</li> <li>3) Maintain a record of the implementation process and its impact on the community</li> </ol>  | <p>Relate outcomes of the programme to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) the original situation in the community</li> <li>2) the goals and needs identified by the community</li> <li>3) the objectives described in the programme plan</li> <li>4) the resources that were available to the programme</li> </ol>  |
| <b>Methods</b>                     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Gather baseline information about the community, in general, and the intended learners</li> <li>2) Identify people's goals and needs</li> <li>3) Learn their assessment of problems</li> <li>4) Assess uses of literacy, attitudes to literacy in different languages</li> <li>5) Assess literacy abilities in the community</li> <li>6) Identify key factors</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Describe &amp; analyse potential resources</li> <li>2) Learn about other programmes or activities to which the literacy programme might be linked</li> <li>3) Identify potential stakeholders</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Document the implementation process for each component of the programme</li> <li>2) Interview stakeholders to learn their assessment of the components and of the programme, in general</li> <li>3) Conduct regular assessments (qualitative and quantitative) of learners progress</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Document the situation at the end of the programme cycle and compare that with the original situation</li> <li>2) Interview community members to get their assessment of the programme's value</li> <li>3) Document the linkages that were established and the stakeholders' assessment of the programme</li> <li>4) Describe the resources that were used and their internal and external sources</li> <li>5) Compare this information with the original situation and with the original programme plan</li> </ol> |
| <b>Relation to decision-making</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For 1) setting priorities</li> <li>2) writing realistic objectives with realistic time frames</li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For 1) using resources appropriately</li> <li>2) planning appropriate activities</li> <li>3) developing appropriate linkages</li> </ol>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For 1) adapting programme components as needed</li> <li>2) adapting objectives and/or time frame to fit the changing situation</li> </ol>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For deciding to continue, terminate, modify, expand or refocus the programme</li> </ol>  |

<sup>4</sup> Susan Malone 2003.

- Identify the *purpose* of the evaluation. (Who will use the information that is collected? How will they use it? How will the evaluation improve the programme? How will it benefit the learners and the community?)
- Identify the *indicators*. (The things that will show if the programme – or a component of the programme – is achieving its objectives.)
- Identify the *sources of information*.
- Identify the *people* who will collect and analyse the information.
- Plan the *time frame*. (When will the evaluation activities begin? How long will they last? When will documentation be completed?)
- Identify the evaluation *methods* that will be used to collect the information.
- Develop the *instruments* that will be used.
- *Train* the evaluators to use the instruments.
- *Collect, check and analyse* the information.
- *Prepare a report* of the results.

The chart below (Malone 2003) identifies key questions in the evaluation process.



The recommendations on the basis of evaluation should be useful to those for whom the evaluation is intended. The outcomes of the evaluation should be:

- Clear and concise, presented in a manner which will be useful for the programme implementers

- Constructive
- Achievable and realistic
- Disseminated in the local language and be accessible to members of the community in which the development programme is taking place

A programme evaluation can benefit from the perspective of an outsider. However, it is important that the evaluator comes to the evaluation process with the attitude of a learner and a participant in the process of developing an effective programme. The role of “auditor” is often not effective in development programme evaluation.

## **Discussion from workshop participants**

Evaluation is seen as an ongoing process – a formative approach in order that programme modifications can be made. The audience for evaluations should be carefully considered, and the reasons why each audience needs or wants evaluation.

- The government requires evaluation in order to ascertain whether a programme is compliant to government policy.
- NGO’s want to assess the impact that the programme has had upon the lives of the learners and be able to tell the learners how well they have done.

It is important that evaluation is seen to be participatory – that as many stakeholders as possible can be involved in the process.

Evaluation is for different purposes:

- Programme evaluation examines the design and structure of the programme – is it effective? What is the impact?
- Learner evaluation examines the participants’ progress towards achievement of the stated goals and their progress through the materials?

Adult learners may be reluctant to take tests as they do not want to fail. Thus, assessment can be included within the learning materials themselves and is part of the process of the use of the learning materials. In this way, the evaluation is seen as “low key.” The facilitator has the responsibility of recording the progress of the learners. Anecdotal/qualitative information can also be gathered in order to record the impact of the literacy programme upon the daily lives of the participants.

## **Evaluation within the context of the UNESCO “Multilingual Education for Ethnic Minority Communities” literacy programmes**

As the programmes sponsored by UNESCO are pilot programmes in each country with the view towards replicating the programmes as appropriate, it is important that each component of the programme is assessed and evaluated. Learner assessment is important in order to determine whether the programmes are achieving their goals. For example, have learners learned how to read and write? Have the participants mastered the curriculum content?

It is important that the programme goals are explicitly stated in order for evaluators to have a basis for identifying the achievement of programme goals. Both the long-term and short-term impact of multilingual education programmes need to be demonstrated. Can the learners apply the information and skills learned within the programme to their daily lives? Are there demonstrable advantages to programmes where the learner begins to study in their mother tongue, transitioning into other languages of education?

Governments need evidence of programme effectiveness before they will replicate the pilot programmes, and expand to different areas and language communities. It seems that some governments are sceptical that initial mother tongue education actually provides the foundation for better quality basic education. There appears to be the need to demonstrate that a structured multilingual approach can be more effective than a national language only approach.

However, it may be that there would need to be an experimental design with both an experimental and control group in order to provide valid evidence of programme effectiveness. There will also need to be a baseline study of the educational environment in which the multilingual education is taking place. It was suggested during the workshop that UNESCO should implement a longitudinal study of the programmes in which the pilot multilingual education projects are taking place in order that systematic evidence of the effectiveness of multilingual education can be gathered.

It was emphasised that it is important to distinguish between mother tongue education – teaching learners to read and write in their mother tongue – and the strategies of bilingual or multilingual education where the learners begin their literacy education in their mother tongue but, through a structured approach, become competent users of both their mother tongue and the national and/or international languages of education in their country.



# CHAPTER 9

## Strategies for Government Policy and Sustainability

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### National Policies Concerning Ethnic Minority Education

#### Bangladesh

There are two documents which support education in the mother tongue:

- **Primary Education Development Project** (Chapter 2) states that minority languages should be developed in order for educational materials to be produced for use in schools.
- The **1997 Peace Accord** with the Chittagong Hilltribes includes a clause indicating that the Government should take the initiative in developing education projects in minority languages. However, this has not yet been fully implemented.

Thus, some materials are being produced in vernacular languages, but not yet in many languages. Resources need to be mobilized to address minority people's needs.

#### Cambodia

Cambodia is a signatory to many international conventions relating to human rights, women's rights and children's rights, all of which support the use of minority languages in education. In 2003, a government policy came into force promoting the participation of ethnic minorities in continuing/lifelong education. The EFA national plan includes strategies to promote literacy for minority people of all ages – both adults and children. There is a national Education for All committee, which extends to provincial, district, and commune levels. These committees focus on non-formal education activities, and aim to include bilingual education through initial instruction in the mother tongue. Various efforts are being made to fulfil commitments to such EFA initiatives, but much is still in the planning stage.

In 2003, the Ministry of Education officially approved the use of 5 local language scripts for both child and adults education. This was a key action in support of bilingual education for minority peoples. NGOs (ICC and CARE) helped support this move.

The Draft Law for Education, Chapter 7, Article 44 Language of Instruction states:

*“The Khmer language will be the official language of instruction in public schools. The ethnic minority peoples have the right to use their own language in the public schools for at least primary grades 1 and 2.”*

## **China**

There are many languages spoken in China, particularly in the northwest region. The Chinese law and constitution states that every nationality has the freedom to use and develop their own language. If at all possible, schools which have students from ethnic communities should have textbooks in the local language. The law allows the medium of instruction for education to be the local language. Regulations for illiteracy eradication established in 1998 state that people can use local language for literacy, and that the criteria for illiteracy eradication can be set by provincial or local governments. Pilot projects at the local level are supported by local governments, which value the relationship of language and cultural preservation.

## **India**

According to the national census, there are 400 languages listed for India. In the Indian Constitution (1951), states were divided according to the major languages. In Assam, there are 18 languages with two of those being official languages. India has the 3-Language Formula for the use of language in education:

1. The first language to be studied must be the mother tongue or regional language.
2. In Hindi-speaking states, the second language will be any modern Indian language or English; in non-Hindi speaking states, the second language will be either Hindi or English.
3. In both Hindi and non-Hindi speaking states, the third language will be English or a modern Indian language (not studied as a second language).

In the eight northeastern Indian states, there are over 200 languages spoken. The State Literacy Commission is allowed to develop materials in any language. There are guidelines regarding the relationship of the content to livelihood (e.g. health, citizenship); however, the content may be adapted to any local language and appropriately designed for the local context.

The Government has recognized 4 vernacular languages for use in primary instruction in Assam. A number of languages still need script development and lack of funds has been a major constraint. Thus, in reality, the regional language, Hindi, and English are usually the languages of instruction.

## **Indonesia**

Since 2000, many autonomous local administrations have been established. However, one of the key issues at the local level has been the low educational level of teachers and others involved in the education process at the district level. The Indonesian Government encourages literacy education beginning in the mother tongue. For example, all non-formal literacy programme materials are in the mother tongue because that is the medium of communication at the local level. Indonesia is

a linguistically diverse country. There are 267 languages in Papua, alone. Some international NGO's are assisting in the development of mother-tongue education. A study in the 1970's identified two significant problems:

1. Students do not understand the medium of instruction when the national language is being used.
2. Students do not understand lesson content when the national language is the medium of instruction.

Thus, the Indonesian Government endorses the use of the mother tongue to improve quality of learning, and respond to the needs of learners.

## Nepal

Until very recently, there was no policy on ethnic minority languages in Nepal. There was a policy of "One Nation, One Language" with all texts being written in the national language, Nepali. However, there has been a movement in the rural areas for greater inclusion of local languages. Thus, in 2001, there was an amendment in the Education Act allowing for the use of the mother tongue in primary schools. Previously, all education was in Nepali.

The development of materials in mother tongues is now being encouraged. Even though Nepal is a small country, there are 92 languages and several more dialects. There are 12 major languages in the country. If resources are available, local communities are allowed to start education in the mother tongue. Thus, there is no clear-cut policy concerning mother-tongue education, and a variety of practices has resulted. In the formal sector, for example, there are currently 4 different models of education:

- The assimilation model, starting in the mother tongue, and continuing to national language immersion
- A pluralistic model, which recognises the importance of the language spoken at home; thus, first language teaching is not restricted only to the early grades
- An immersion model, where initial instruction is given in the national language with oral discussion and instruction permitted in the local language
- Sole instruction in the national language, with no teaching in the mother tongue

In the non-formal sector, there is no language-in-education policy. The national NFE curriculum is produced in Nepali, largely because it was cheaper to print all materials in one language. However, NGO's and community-based organizations (CBOs) have slowly been producing and using materials in the vernacular languages of Nepal. For example, World Education has developed materials in 2 local languages. One uses the same script as Nepali, the other a different script. There have also been post-literacy materials developed in the Tharu language that focus on anti-trafficking. They have been very popular in those areas where trafficking of girls is quite common.

## Philippines

The Bilingual Education Act originally focused on English and Filipino.<sup>1</sup> However, it has been recognized that there should be a policy for implementing mother-tongue education, and the Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) has initiated a series of workshops with different partners, including the Institute of National Languages.

The 1987 Bilingual Education policy of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports focuses on the attainment of competence in both the international and national languages of education: English and Filipino. The mother tongue can be used as an auxiliary language for Grades 1 and 2, and as the language for literacy instruction where needed. In 1999, legislation specified that instruction in Grade 1 could be in the mother tongue, with English taught orally in the second semester of Grades 1 and 2. The vernacular could also be used as the medium of instruction in literacy. This facilitates the preservation of the mother tongue, and gives greater access to content subjects for learners.

It is important that local people should be the facilitators of community-based education programmes. Since 1987, there have been challenges in implementing this, including the process of training facilitators. Therefore, there has been major training for staff at all levels, from training trainers at the national level who, in turn, trained their counterparts at lower levels. It has been difficult to develop new materials in local languages, and so materials have been translated, which has been costly. Awareness raising, social mobilization and lobbying of local government groups was also needed because some did not value local language instruction. It should be noted that private schools are not required to follow the bilingual education policy, and many have English as the medium of instruction.

The Bureau of Non-Formal Education coordinates with NGO's and the National Commission for Indigenous Peoples to financially support multilingual education. This is especially important as NFE gets very little governmental financing. The BNFE has begun to translate materials into the 7 major languages of the country. The Government has also begun to develop primary school materials in the 4 major "lingua franca" of the country. The international NGO, SIL, in cooperation with local communities, has developed materials in more than 70 languages.

## Thailand

In Thailand, there are over 60 ethnic minorities including the hilltribes. There is no specific policy or strategy for multilingual education. However, the Constitution and the National Education Act include provisions for multilingual communities. Educational decentralization, which is being implemented throughout the country, emphasises responsiveness to the local community in education, as well as the recognition of "local wisdom" and indigenous knowledge. There is, indeed, evidence of greater openness towards multilingual education.

In such a situation where a specific language-in-education policy is lacking, there needs to be continuing capacity-building and support for teachers wanting to use local language in education.

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<sup>1</sup> The national language is Filipino. Tagalog is one of the languages of wider communication. Filipino is based on Tagalog.

There is a desire to replicate and expand the current Thai (Pwo Karen) project being conducted with the support of UNESCO-APPEAL. Initially, the project will be expanded in a focused geographical area, rather than diluting human resources over too broad a geographical spread. In cooperation with Thai universities, national, and international organizations, there is a desire to extend research on multilingual education to other ethnic groups within the country. This research has the potential to influence both the Ministry of Education and education law by documenting project successes.

## Viet Nam

In Viet Nam, the Kinh majority numbers 88%, with ethnic minorities numbering 12% of the population. The national education policy promotes the attendance of ethnic minorities in primary and secondary school. Since the 1960s, the primary education law supports equity of educational opportunity for ethnic minority peoples.

There is an Ethnic Minority Department at the Ministry of Education that focuses on the development of ethnic minority education. In Viet Nam's central university, there is a department working on writing systems. Currently, twenty ethnic minorities have their own scripts. At the national level, the Ministry of Culture and Information also has an agency for ethnic minorities.



## Discussion on Policy and Sustainability

### Research

Governments often do not like to take risks, and may not like pilot projects. Thus, it is important to document experiences which can then impact governments and key decision-makers at the national level. Politicians and government agencies generally look for research outcomes and objective data. It could be important for UNESCO-APPEAL to support a research component in several of the countries implementing multilingual education projects for minority peoples in order to provide supportive data on the effectiveness of multilingual education. UNESCO recognises that these pilot projects can demonstrate the importance of mother-tongue education to the respective authorities. In reality, very few of the ten countries involved have actively implemented policies on multilingual education for minority language communities. Originally, the UNESCO-APPEAL project title was "Research on Mother-Tongue Education for Ethnic Minority Communities." Only Thailand has become involved in rigorous research since the beginning of the project. UNESCO encouraged the new countries to document their whole process of programme development and implementation.

## Capacity-Building

Training can be a challenge. However, the Philippine BNFE department trained trainers at the national level who then replicated training at the local level in order to build grassroots capacity.

## Materials Development

Because there are general materials already available at the central level, the Philippines BNFE have chosen to translate this material. However, they have discovered that these materials are not well understood at the community level. Thus, the centrally produced materials are being used as prototypes for adaptation to the local situation. There is great benefit in locally produced materials, particularly those developed with the full participation of community members.



## Strategies for the Sustainability of Multilingual Education Programmes

### Why do we do pilot projects?

Pilot projects are conducted in order to explore some innovative ideas that differ from those being implemented in current projects. In this way, solutions can be identified for certain problems and issues. Pilot projects contribute to research on the effectiveness, viability, reliability and feasibility of new strategies. Thus, before widespread implementation, a strategy can be reviewed and, if necessary, discarded if found to be inappropriate. For efficient utilization of resources (human, financial, etc.), it is important to determine whether wider application is justified based on validation of an approach's effectiveness. A pilot project can be the venue for initiating projects that are not on the government's priority list, but are important and may contribute towards policy formulation.

In a pilot project, stakeholders all need to be aware of the ethical issues associated with implementing an experimental approach in a community. Care should be taken that there is no financial burden placed on the community (whether in labour, materials, etc.). The implementation of a pilot project within a community should not jeopardize the potential of other forms of development in the community. There needs to be a careful strategy that includes a response should the project fail or not be sustainable.

### What are the goals of the pilot projects?

A pilot project is implemented in order to reach those who have not yet had their needs met. In respect to multilingual education for minority communities, the intent is to expose the learners to a multilingual approach, using the mother tongue as a bridge to learn the international/national/

regional languages of education, and to address issues associated with government policy concerning multilingual education.

### **What are the characteristics of and strategies for effective pilot projects?**

The characteristics of an effective pilot project for multilingual education in minority language communities should lead to sustainability of the project. A pilot project should be small, innovative and relevant to the lives and experience of the target communities. A pilot project should also be flexible and responsive to the needs of the community, involving all stakeholders from the beginning in order to promote community ownership. The use of the local language in all aspects of programme development and evaluation will serve to promote ownership. In order that the results of an effective pilot project can be replicated appropriately, there should be comprehensive support for all aspects of the programme structure – particularly monitoring and evaluation, documentation and advocacy. The need for comprehensive documentation (in both print and electronic format) links closely with the potential of a programme to fulfil an advocacy role, as well as have impact on language policy and planning. If a small scale programme is successful and the key factors of programme effectiveness are well-documented, programmes are more likely to be effective at the national level.



A pilot project should be locally based and use local resources. However, outcomes of pilot projects can be widely disseminated so that others can make decisions on the appropriateness of applying the pilot in their context. Sustainability is an important concept – even if there is input from outside, evaluation of the project should include an assessment of the degree to which local resources can be used to support the continuation of the project.

**Part II**  
**Resource Papers and Full  
Country Reports**

# RESOURCE PAPERS

## Education for Multilingualism and Multi-literacy in Ethnic Minority Communities: The Situation in Asia<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

Since 1990, the worldwide emphasis on “Education for All” has led to greater commitment on the part of most governments in Asia to provide quality education for their citizens, with special focus on girls and women, the disabled and people with HIV/AIDS. Until recently, however, there has been less awareness that the “all” in “Education for All” also includes the speakers of ethnic minority languages. In spite of lobbying by language groups and NGOs and clearly stated support from some multi-lateral agencies,<sup>3</sup> few governments in Asia have yet demonstrated a commitment to providing linguistically and culturally appropriate education for their minority peoples.

Even so, the number of programmes that promote multilingualism and multi-literacy among minority language speakers is slowly growing. This paper argues that linguistically and culturally appropriate education in ethnic minority communities is both necessary and feasible. It discusses the current situation in Asia with respect to multilingual education (MLE), presents an overview of the types of MLE programmes that have been established and describes the programme features that seem to be essential for achieving the programmes’ long term goals.

### Education in ethnic minority communities: current situation

Almost one-third of the world’s 6,000 languages are spoken in Asia. A study of language and education policies and practices in the region, however, reveals that in most countries, a limited number of languages are associated with power and privilege while the rest are merely tolerated,

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<sup>1</sup> Malone, S. (2003) This paper was taken from a plenary presentation at the Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalization and Multilingual Education in Bangkok Thailand, November 2003. It can be found on the conference website ([www.sil.org/asia/ldc](http://www.sil.org/asia/ldc)). A modified version was also published in ABD (Asian/Pacific Book Development). Vol. 34 No. 2, January 2004.

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<sup>3</sup> UNESCO’s clearly stated position paper, “Education in a Multilingual World” (2002), emphasizing the right of all people to education in a language they speak and understand is on the internet at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001297/129728e.pdf>.

ignored or actively suppressed. Nowhere are these differences more clear than in education. Although there are exceptions (described below), most formal education systems tend to under utilize the knowledge and experience that ethnic minority children bring to school:

*Only Language of Wider Communication (LWC)*<sup>4</sup> allowed; the children's heritage language is banned in the classroom and on the school grounds.

*LWC used as Medium of Instruction (MOI); Minority Language (ML) allowed informally.* All instruction is in the LWC; children are allowed to converse in their heritage language during "free time" within and outside the classroom.

*LWC used as MOI; ML used to explain new concepts, as needed.* Instruction is in the LWC; teachers use the children's heritage language to explain new concepts.

*ML used for special classes.* Instruction is in the LWC except during "Culture Time" classes (1-3 hours a week) in which the children's heritage language is used to talk about their culture. If the teacher does not speak the ML, mother tongue speakers from the children's community are invited to teach the class.

*ML used to introduce children to school.* The children's heritage language is used when they first begin school; the LWC is immediately introduced in oral and written form and quickly becomes the MOI.

*ML used as initial MOI with rapid transition to LWC.* The children's heritage language is the MOI for the first (and sometimes part of the second) year of school and is the language of initial literacy. LWC in oral and then in written form is introduced in the first year and then becomes the MOI.

The negative consequences of hierarchical language and education policies and practices for ethnic minority communities have been noted throughout the region and, indeed, the world:

*...for the learners themselves*

*Lack of access to formal and non-formal education of any kind* because there are no schools at all in the minority language areas or because the few schools that have been established are too far from many of the learners' homes

*Schools that are inappropriate to the minority communities* because most teachers – if there are teachers – do not speak the learners' language, and teaching and reading materials – if there are any available – are in the majority language, which the learners may not speak or understand and which focus on topics that are unrelated to their lives

*High attrition rates* for many of those who do enter formal or non-formal education because they understand neither the language nor content of instruction

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<sup>4</sup> The following terms (with abbreviations) are used in this paper to talk about the languages used in education: Language of Wider Communication or *LWC*: usually a dominant or majority language which is often also a national and/or official language; minority language or *ML*: the heritage language, or mother tongue, of ethnic minority community members; medium of instruction or *MOI*: language used for classroom instruction.

*Lack of skills necessary for paid employment* because of inadequate education and, therefore, inadequate LWC language skills required for most jobs

*Alienation from heritage language and culture* because both are replaced in the curriculum by the majority language and culture which are presented as the norm

**...for many minority language communities**

*Loss of ethnic identity* as young people are estranged from (and made to feel ashamed of) their home communities, and fail to pass on their own language and culture to their children

*Demoralization* as communities lose awareness of their linguistic and cultural heritage, their history and their unique place in the larger society

*Disproportionately high rates of alcoholism, crime, poverty and suicide* as a result of the factors above, as well as other forms of social, economic and political discrimination

**...for many nations and for the world in general**

*Societies that are divided*, rather than enriched, by linguistic and cultural differences

*Loss of accumulated wisdom and knowledge* that are embedded in indigenous languages and cultures

*Loss of the world's linguistic and cultural diversity* – a consequence as tragic as the loss of biological diversity

**The need for policy and programme change**

Three types of action are needed if linguistic and cultural diversity is to be preserved, and if ethnic minority communities are truly to be included in “Education for All”:

*New language and education policies* that affirm and protect language diversity and provide linguistically and culturally appropriate education for ethnic minority communities;

*New models of development* that meet the needs of all segments of society and that encourage integration, rather than forcing assimilation of ethnic minority groups into the majority society; and

*New education programmes* that enable ethnic minority learners to achieve their educational goals without forcing them to sacrifice their linguistic and cultural heritage. Such programmes would:

- Provide a strong *educational foundation* in the language the learners know best, enabling them to build on the knowledge and experience they bring to the classroom;
- Provide a *good bridge* to speaking and listening, reading and writing the new language using sound educational principles to build the learners’ fluency and confidence; and
- Encourage and enable them to use *both/all* their languages to continue learning.

Research studies have repeatedly demonstrated that a strong foundation in the first language and a carefully planned process of bridging to the new language is an important factor in minority language learners' success in education. In the report of their long-term study of over 40,000 children from non-English speaking backgrounds in United States schools, Thomas and Collier concluded that

*The strongest predictor of L2 [second language] student achievement is the amount of formal L1 [the children's first language] schooling. The more L1 grade-level schooling, the higher L2 achievement* (Wayne Thomas and Virginia Collier, 2001).<sup>5</sup>

Results of studies from other parts of the world (cf. Williams, 2001; Muskin, 1999) also affirm the importance of this kind of "strong foundation and a good bridge."

### Variety of MLE programmes in Asia

Presently, most MLE programmes in Asia are found within non-formal education systems and are the result of "grassroots" movements – local communities usually supported by NGOs and occasionally by universities. However, a limited number of programmes have also been initiated in primary schools with varying degrees of support from local, state or national governments. Programmes are established for children and adults, in some cases to help ML speakers bridge into the LWC for education and/or employment, and in other cases to help learners bridge back into their heritage language, usually as part of a larger language revitalization movement.

Four categories of MLE programmes can be identified (Malone, 1998):

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Type 1. ML→LWC for children</b><br/>For educational success and maintenance of heritage language</p> | <p><b>Type 3. ML→LWC for adults</b><br/>For employment, access to information, education, socio-economic integration, etc.</p>                |
| <p><b>Type 2. LWC→ML for children</b><br/>For revitalization and/or maintenance of heritage language</p>   | <p><b>Type 4. LWC→ML for adults</b><br/>For access to heritage language texts, for revitalization and/or maintenance of heritage language</p> |

*Type 1. Programmes for ML children who must learn the LWC to succeed in formal education.* MLE classes for ML children begin in the children's heritage language and later add the LWC. Some programmes begin as pre-primary classes and continue as after-school and weekend classes once the children start (LWC) school. Other programmes are incorporated into the formal system. Examples of Type 1 programmes are the elementary classes that have been established in over 300 languages in Papua New Guinea,<sup>6</sup> the Kalinga language programme in the Philippines<sup>7</sup> and the Dong language programme in China.<sup>8</sup> The Dong programme, now

<sup>5</sup> See the Annex for Thomas and Collier's graph which shows the relative effectiveness of several types of MLE programmes.

<sup>6</sup> Kale and Marimyas, 2003; Klaus, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Dekker and Dumatog, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Geary, 2002; Cobbey, 2003.

in its third year, was planned specifically to provide a strong foundation in the ML and good bridge to Chinese. It begins with two years of pre-primary classes in which focus is on the children's oral language development in Dong and on helping them acquire reading and writing skills in that language. The children are then introduced gradually to oral and written Chinese. Over the six years of primary school, the time devoted to Chinese will increase each year so that the children will achieve the government's expectations for Chinese language learning by the time they finish Grade 6. Dong language and culture will remain a vital part of the curriculum throughout primary school.<sup>9</sup>

*Type 2. Programmes for ethnic minority children for whom the LWC has become the first language.* The purpose of Type 2 programmes is to help ethnic minority children who have lost most or all of their heritage language learn to speak, read and write that language. In Asia, MLE/language revitalization programmes of this type may be established inside the formal system, sometimes incorporated into the "Culture Time" component of the school curriculum, or as after-school or weekend classes. An example of a Type 2 programme in the formal system is the Chong language revitalization programme in Thailand.<sup>10</sup> In this programme, ML classes begin in Grade 3 and focus on helping the children become comfortable using oral Chong, then help them bridge into reading and writing the language. Because the Chong orthography is based on Thai script with only a few adaptations, the children are able to transfer from Thai into Chong literacy relatively quickly.

*Type 3. Programmes for young people and adults with no previous education who are monolingual in their heritage language (ML).* Successful MLE classes for monolingual adults begin by introducing them to literacy in their heritage language. As they gain fluency in reading and writing that language, they are introduced to the oral LWC but bridge to LWC literacy only when they have developed confidence and oral fluency, a process that may take several years. An example of a successful programme of this type is the Central Subanen adult literacy programme in the Philippines. According to reports, the adult learners in this programme have become bilingual and bi-literate (their own language and Filipino).<sup>11</sup>

*Type 4. Programmes for young people and adults who are bilingual in their heritage language and the LWC and have learned to read and write the LWC.* The purpose of this type of MLE programme is to help bilingual adults, who have some LWC literacy skills, bridge back into literacy in their heritage language. Learners may attend these classes for a variety of reasons: to read their sacred texts and/or traditional literature; to write letters to family members; or simply to re-establish their ties to their heritage language and culture. Mother tongue speakers of the language who want to be teachers in the community's MLE programme may also attend these classes. If the ML and LWC use the same script, the bridging process might require only self-study transfer guides and diglot reading materials (text in both ML and LWC). Unfortunately, there are few written reports of these types of programmes, possibly because learning is often informal and independent.

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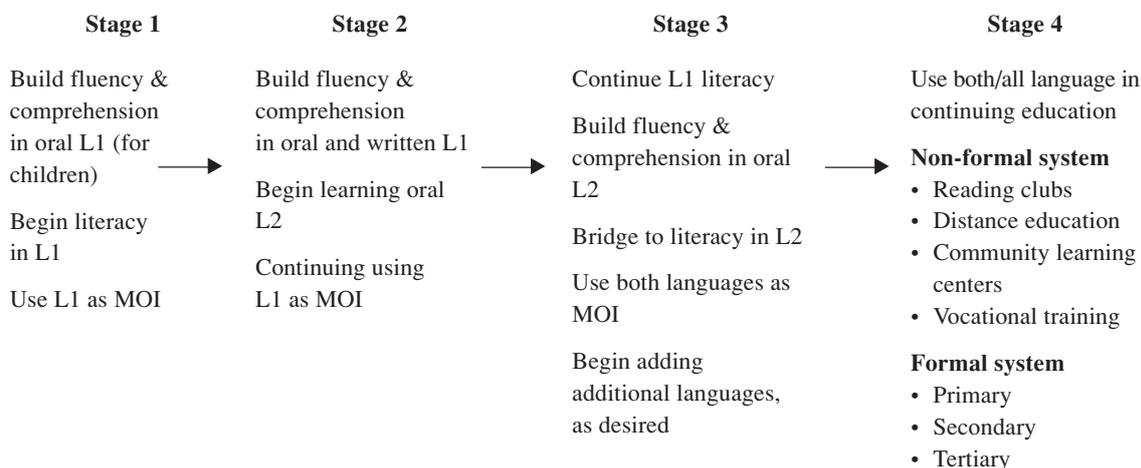
<sup>9</sup> The Dong programme might be classified as a "One-way developmental programme" on Thomas and Collier's graph (see Annex).

<sup>10</sup> Choosri and Sisombat Sirirat, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Pina, 2003.

## Features of strong MLE programmes

Sustainable MLE programmes in Asia can be divided into four general stages although the length of time and specific activities of each stage are context-specific. [Note that in the model below, “L1” refers to the language the learner knows best – their heritage language or the LWC. “L2” refers to the new language that they want to learn, either the LWC or their heritage language.]



### *Stages of MLE programmes in ethnic minority communities*

*Stage 1 – Beginning Literacy.* An early emphasis in Stage 1 of children’s (but not adults’) programmes is on oral language development. Activities involve talking about familiar people, places and activities, singing songs, acting out stories and playing games. The learners (children and adults) are introduced to reading and writing in their L1, which is also used as medium of instruction (MOI). Curriculum and reading materials are based on topics that are familiar to the learners and relevant to their lives.

*Stage 2 – Fluency.* Emphasis now is on gaining fluency in reading and writing the L1, which is still used as the MOI. Also at this stage, teachers introduce the learners to oral L2 (no reading and writing yet).

*Stage 3 – Bridging.* As the learners have attained fluency in L1 literacy and are gaining confidence in using L2 orally, they begin bridging to L2 literacy. The duration of the bridging process is determined by several factors, among them the degree of difference between the oral and written forms of the L1 and L2, the availability of reading materials in both languages, the teachers’ educational level and quality of training, the availability of instructional materials that focus on the bridging process and the age and previous education of the learners. Unfortunately, this crucial stage is too often initiated without careful planning, good teacher training or relevant materials. Consequently, this is the point at which MLE programmes most frequently fail. Careful attention to the bridging strategy, good instructional materials and good training and supervision of the teachers help to ensure that the learners will succeed at this stage.

*Stage 4 – Ongoing education.* At this stage, minority language learners should be able to continue learning in both their first and second languages, either in the formal or non-formal education systems or through informal learning.

### Challenges to developing MLE programmes in multilingual contexts

Most people agree that it makes little sense to force children or adults to learn in a language they neither speak nor understand. Why, then, has there not been more support for MLE? The following reasons are frequently given why MLE “can’t be done”:

*“Supporting diversity will foster divisiveness and lead to ethnic conflict.”* Some LWC speakers claim that linguistic and cultural diversity leads to ethnic strife, arguing that a single language and culture are necessary for national unity. A glance at recent and current history shows the opposite is more often true: it is when their language and ethnicity are suppressed that people are more likely to rebel. Consider the Bangladeshis who fought a war and gained independence from Pakistan over the issue of language, the Lithuanians, whose anger over the mandatory use of Russian in their schools was an early factor leading to their break with the Soviet Union or the Catalonians who are even now agitating against what they perceive as the Spanish government’s linguistic and cultural imperialism. Compare those situations with Papua New Guinea where the government has initiated early education in over 300 of the country’s 820 languages. PNG celebrates rather than regrets its diversity, as noted by John Waiko, former Minister of Education:

*Our greatest national resource is the diversity of cultures in our country. Diversity means more viewpoints to clarify, more ways of solving problems, more creative ideas, a greater ability to deal with change... Where diversity is crushed...the nation becomes weak and divided (Waiko, 1997).*

*“Learning in one’s first language will mean less success in learning a second language.”* The argument here is that ML learners need as much time-on-task as possible in the LWC, even if they do not speak and understand it in the beginning – that giving time to learning the ML will result in poor learning of the LWC. Williams and Cooke argue that the opposite is true:

*It is abundantly clear that education in a language that few learners, and not all teachers, have mastered detracts from quality and compounds the other problems of economically impoverished contexts (Williams & Cooke, 2002: 317, quoted in Benson, 2003, unpublished paper).*

In fact, the argument that it’s better to “submerge”<sup>12</sup> learners directly in the LWC, even though they neither speak nor understand it, makes so little pedagogical sense that one must assume that educators making such an argument have other reasons for resisting MLE.

The fact that this is also the reason why some ethnic minority parents resist MLE programmes for their children emphasizes the need for more and better awareness-raising in their communities. Unfortunately, awareness-raising and/or mobilization among the intended beneficiaries of MLE programmes is too often forgotten in the hurry to establish programmes.

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<sup>12</sup> That is, forcing a learner to learn in a strange language is equivalent to throwing a child into deep water in order to teach the child to swim.

In one situation, when a consultant asked a group of parents for their opinion about the MLE programme established in their community, they responded with the question, “Why are they starting in our language? We want our children to learn the national and international language.” They had not been told (or did not understand) the educational benefits of building a strong foundation in the children’s first language and then of providing them with a good bridge to the new language(s). At the end of that meeting, the parents said, “Go back to [the capital city] and tell the people there that we want that strong foundation and good bridge!”

*“Some ethnic minority languages lack writing systems.”* Indeed, many smaller ethnic languages have not yet been put into written form. A misconception verbalized by some of those who use this argument, however, is that developing a writing system requires designing a new script, an impossible task in countries with large numbers of languages. However, as experiences throughout the world have demonstrated repeatedly, existing scripts can be adapted to a variety of languages (e.g., Roman script for Indonesian and Vietnamese and Devanagari script for writing Hindi and Nepali.) With the help of linguists, minority language communities throughout Asia and elsewhere have adapted scripts from related languages to develop their own writing systems.<sup>13</sup>

*“There are too few mother tongue speakers qualified to teach in the schools.”* ML communities without access to quality education may lack people with the qualifications normally required for teaching in the formal education system. The best solution, of course, is to provide quality education in the minority communities so that ML speakers can become professional teachers. Until that happens, a common practice throughout Asia and in developing countries around the world is to equip non-professional ML speakers as teachers, providing them with careful pre-service training and ongoing supervision and support. In some cases the ML speakers serve as teaching assistants (e.g., in BRAC’s pilot “Education for Indigenous Children” programme in Bangladesh)<sup>14</sup> and in some cases as teachers for early primary grades (e.g., Papua New Guinea’s MT elementary classes which make up the first three years of formal education).<sup>15</sup>

*“There are no instructional materials that ‘fit’ all the minority language communities.”* This is true; simply translating an LWC curriculum into minority languages may result in content that is unfamiliar and inappropriate to ethnic minority learners, especially those in more remote communities. Developing curricula for many different ethnic groups may appear to be an impossible task, but again, solutions have been found. One solution that is quite promising involves the preparation (by the national education department) of intended learning outcomes (or learning objectives) as well as curriculum guidelines for each grade level. ML teachers use these centrally produced materials to help them develop their instructional plans, but use content that is appropriate to the children’s cultural context for teaching the different subjects. An excellent example of centrally produced curriculum guidelines comes from the Department of Education in Papua New Guinea (National Department of Education, 2003).

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<sup>13</sup> Easton, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Sagar and Poulson, 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Kale and Marimyas, 2003.

*“The minority languages lack graded reading materials that can be used in their schools.”* Minority communities frequently lack graded reading materials that enable new learners to gain reading fluency and then encourage them to continue reading. Creating literature in multiple languages is certainly a challenge. However, experiences in many countries have demonstrated clearly that with appropriate training, minority language speakers are able to produce excellent reading materials. Locally developed materials are especially enjoyable and stimulating to new readers because they are about people, places and activities that are familiar to them (cf., D. Malone, in press; Choosri and Sisombat Sirirat, 2003).

*“Minority communities lack funding to support their programmes.”* The majority of ML communities will not be able to sustain their own education programmes without outside assistance. Even when community members offer their homes and other local buildings for use as classrooms and volunteer as teachers and writers, the community will likely need financial support to print instructional and reading materials and purchase classroom supplies. However, these costs do not seem so high when compared to the long-term costs of the inappropriate systems currently in place (cf., Dutcher, 1995). Cooperative efforts, in which a variety of outside agencies and organizations work together creatively with the minority communities, are the best ways to ensure that the necessary resources will be found.

## **Establishing and sustaining quality MLE programmes in multilingual contexts**

In spite of the many challenges to MLE, solutions are being found and programmes are being established and sustained in countries around the world. A review of these programmes reveals that, in addition to leadership and support for the programme among a critical mass of mother tongue speakers of the minority language,<sup>16</sup> successful MLE programmes in ethnic minority communities usually include the following components:

*Preliminary research* that gathers information about the language situation, the community’s motivation for MLE, and potential resources for the programme (especially people).

*Awareness-raising and mobilization activities* that provide information, generate interest and support for the programme within and outside the community (government, NGOs, universities, donors, businesses).

*Recruitment methods* that bring motivated, knowledgeable and respected ML speakers into the programme (and keep them there).

*Ongoing training and supervision* that help MT speakers – teachers, writers, artists, editors, supervisors and trainers – gain competence, creativity, commitment and credibility within and outside the community.

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<sup>16</sup> A “critical mass” does not necessarily imply a majority of the population, at least in the beginning. In the author’s experience, many (or most) MLE programmes are initiated as pilot projects by a small group of respected individuals from the language community. The programmes are sustained and expand when others in the community observe the positive impact on language and cultural revitalization and/or on increased access to and success in education.

*A process of developing and testing a writing system* that will be acceptable to the majority of mother tongue speakers and to the government (where required), and will encourage members of the language communities to continue reading and writing in their language.

*Government-produced curriculum guidelines* that can be adapted to a variety of ML communities.

*Curriculum development workshops* in which local teachers use the guidelines to develop teaching plans.

*A literature production and procurement process* that

- Equips ML speakers to develop (write, illustrate, edit) graded reading materials in their own languages on a variety of topics that are familiar and interesting to the learners.
- Identifies and utilizes localized production processes for inexpensive production of ML reading materials for testing in the communities. (Once the materials have been tested and approved, funding will be needed for producing additional copies.)
- Provides graded reading materials in the LWC that are interesting and relevant to people in the community and help them bridge into literacy in that language.

*Documentation and evaluation systems* that provide information on a regular basis for strengthening the programme and for reporting to government, donors and other stakeholders.

*Cooperation* among the individuals and entities – government agencies, NGOs and academic institutions – that are committed to supporting appropriate education in ethnic minority communities. In such cooperative efforts, each stakeholder group can contribute to different aspects of the programme:

*Minority Language communities*

- Conduct preliminary research
- Mobilize support within the local community
- Develop community-centred curricula and instructional materials (using centrally developed guidelines)
- Teach classes
- Train and mentor new teachers; supervising classes
- Write, translate, illustrate, edit and distribute graded reading materials in the ML

*Government agencies*

- Establish a positive political climate; mobilize support for MLE nationally and internationally
- Develop policies that support language development and MLE
- Develop curriculum guidelines that can be adapted to different ML communities
- Train supervisors and trainers

- Provide funding or identify and encourage outside donors to support MLE programmes
- Distribute graded reading materials in the LWC

#### *NGOs*

- Train ML speakers to conduct preliminary research
- Provide linguistic expertise to support orthography development
- Train ML speakers as trainers, teachers, supervisors, writers, artists, editors
- Develop curricula, specifically help ML speakers to adapt curriculum guidelines to their local context
- Facilitate the development of ML literature as well as “bridging” literature
- Provide funding or identify and link ethnic minority communities to appropriate donor agencies

#### *Academic institutions*

- Collect and provide information about the language situation
- Train ML speakers to conduct linguistic research
- Provide linguistic expertise to support orthography development

## Conclusion

*Can MLE be done?* As noted by several presenters at this conference, evidence from minority language communities in Asia and around the world indicates that indeed, MLE programmes *can* be and *are* being implemented and sustained.

*Is it difficult?* It is certainly challenging, especially in multi-lingual countries lacking extensive financial resources, to develop writing systems, establish the necessary training programmes and support the production of instructional and graded reading materials in multiple languages, all of which are necessary for linguistically and culturally appropriate MLE programmes in ethnic minority communities.

*Is it really necessary?* It is if “Education for All” is truly to be for *all*. However, perhaps a better question would be: Is it really acceptable to force minority learners into education programmes that are inappropriate to their lives and destructive to their heritage language and culture? John Waiko, himself a member of a minority community in Papua New Guinea, provides his perspective on the second question:

*The failure of formal education for indigenous minorities [is] well understood by indigenous peoples all over the world. The so-called drop-out rates and failures of indigenous people within non-indigenous education systems should be viewed for what they really are – rejection rates.* (John Waiko, PNG Minister of Education, 2001).

*Is it worth the effort?* Perhaps the best people to answer that question are the members of the ethnic minority communities themselves:

*For you, schooling simply serves to open the door to professional employment, but for me it is something else. It is the means of training for life... I would start with what I already possess and add what is given to me, rather than abandoning what I possess to look for what might be given* (From a speech by Chief Djoumessi, translated and abridged from Momo, 1997, in Bird, 2001).

“Education for All” that is truly for *all* must not leave the minority feeling rejected by the majority or force minority learners to abandon what they already possess – their heritage language and culture and their life experiences – in order to achieve their social, political and educational goals. Better that the majority – government agencies, NGOs and academic institutions – support ethnic minority communities in developing education programmes that celebrate who they are and what they have been given and, in so doing, provide them with “training for life.”

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## Annex 1

### Comparison of Achievement on Standardized Tests

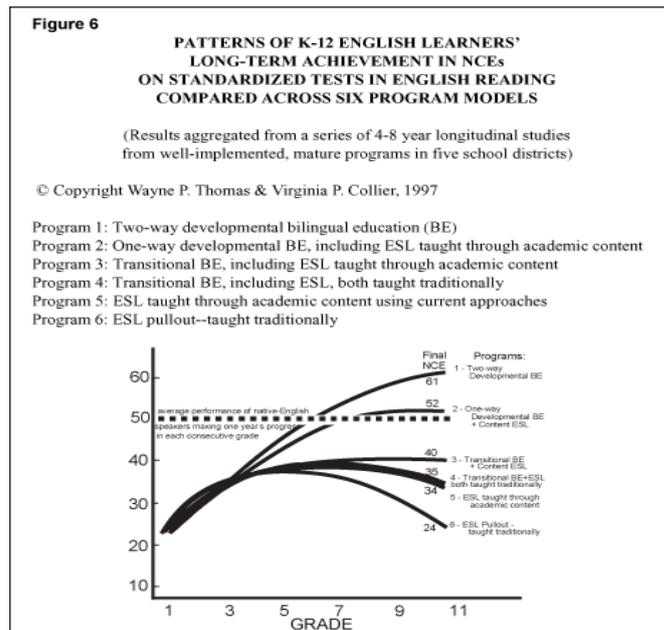
Thomas, W.P. and Collier, V. (1997) School Effectiveness for Language  
Minority Students. NCBE Resource Collection Series

<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/resource/effectiveness/>

National Clearinghouse on Bilingual Education

The George Washington University Center for the Study of Language and Education  
Washington, DC

The graph below is from Wayne Thomas and Virginia Collier's report of their longitudinal study of over 40,000 children in bilingual education programmes in the USA.<sup>17</sup> It compares long-term results on achievement tests of children in several different types of bilingual education programmes<sup>18</sup> and demonstrates that children who built a strong and long-lasting foundation in their first language, while also learning, and learning *in*, the majority language (in this case, English), achieved higher test results than did those who were moved quickly into the majority language. While this study focused on programmes in the USA, other studies in Africa and Latin America (cf., Williams, 2001;



<sup>17</sup> See <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/resource/effectiveness> for the full text of this article. Thanks to Drs. Collier and Thomas for permission to use their graph in this article.

<sup>18</sup> Please note that NCEs are not equivalent to percentiles, but NCEs are equal-interval percentiles. Without going into the technicalities of the statistical processes involved, here are the percentile equivalents for the NCEs (W. Thomas, personal communication, 2004):

NCE            61 52 40 35 34 24

Percentile    70 53 31 24 22 11

Benson, 2003) have come to the same conclusion: A strong foundation in the L1, and an educationally sound and extended process of bridging to additional languages provide the best long-term educational (and social and cultural) results for minority language learners.

Following are descriptions (adapted) of the bilingual programmes that were examined in this study,<sup>19</sup> beginning with the strongest in terms of providing long-lasting educational benefits.

**Programme 1 – Two-way developmental bilingual education.** Minority language-speaking and English-speaking children share the same classrooms, from kindergarten to Grade 12. Both languages are used for instruction according to a specific plan (e.g., one language used one day, the other language used the following day). The most common alternation between the two languages of instruction is a half-day in each language. The objective is that both groups of children – minority and majority language speakers – will become fully proficient in both languages.<sup>20</sup>

**Programme 2 – One-way developmental programmes.** Like Programme 1, this is an enrichment programme that aims at full bilingual competence. The primary difference between these programmes and the two-way programmes is the absence of mother tongue-speakers of the majority language in these classrooms. Minority language children receive at least 9 years of education (K-8) in their mother tongue (MT) from bilingual teachers who are also MT speakers of the minority language and who use the MT as medium of instruction. The MT is also used to introduce the children to reading and writing. In some programmes, English is introduced orally with later introduction to reading and writing in that language. In other programmes, L1 and L2 literacy are learned at the same time and both languages are used for instruction according to a specific plan (as described in Programme 1). The objective is that the minority language children will be fully proficient in both languages by the end of Grade 8. In this model, students may have access to some courses in high school taught through their MT as well as the many courses taught in English.<sup>21</sup>

**Programme 3 – Transitional bilingual education programmes that introduce English by teaching content.** The first two or three years of education provide children with instruction in the MT by teachers who speak the MT as their first language. The minority language is used as medium of instruction and reading and writing are introduced in that language. English (majority language) is introduced orally with some instruction in basic English literacy (typically in a 50:50 time ratio), beginning in the first year of school. Both languages are used for instruction according to a specific plan. The idea is that children *learn* English through learning *in* English – that is, the children learn the new language at the same time that they are learning new content. The expectation is that the children will have learned enough academic content that they will not be behind native speakers of English when they enter full English language classes.

**Programme 4 – Transitional bilingual education with language-based ESL (another type of early-exit programme).** Language minority children receive 2-3 years of education in their MT from MT teachers who use the MT as medium of instruction and to introduce initial literacy. As

<sup>19</sup> In their report, the authors emphasize that these data represent programmes that were in place in the 1980s and 1990s.

<sup>20</sup> According to Collier (personal communication, 2004), “Some U.S. schools actually do continue these programmes into middle school [Grades 6 to 8] and high school [Grades 9-12]. Very few have yet developed courses at the high school level. In our 1997 research report, we were only examining those programmes that provided bilingual schooling through fifth grade (the end of elementary school), but there are many other programmes that continue into the middle school years.”

<sup>21</sup> Thomas and Collier’s 2002 report includes data from a K-12 one-way model from northern Maine.

above, English may be introduced orally with basic English literacy later but it is taught as a subject, not used for learning content. The objectives are basic literacy in both languages and sufficient proficiency in English to enter the mainstream by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade.

**Programme 5 – Content-based ESL.** In these programmes, as in Programme 3 above, minority language children learn English via content instruction by teachers who have been specially trained for this type of ESL teaching. This learning often takes place in self-contained ESL content classrooms, taught by ESL teachers. As the children move along in ESL development, they may spend a part of the day in mainstream classes until they are fully mainstreamed after 2-4 years. The objective is that the children will have acquired enough English so they can function in the mainstream classes without lagging too far behind in the content areas.

**Programme 6 – Language-based (traditional) ESL.** Language minority children receive basic or traditional ESL instruction usually in pull-out classes. The objective is that they will acquire sufficient mastery of English to function in English mainstream classes.

# The Role of Language in Learning: What Does International Research Say?

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## Language and Learning

Language plays an important role in learning. Anyone who has attempted any educational activity in a language other than her/his own knows this from personal experience. Since language is the main way of communicating meaning in most learning activities, without a sufficient understanding of the instructional language, learning is inferior to that of learners who are fully proficient in the language.

This article will discuss the role that language plays in learning. The focus will be on research findings that justify the use of the learner's mother tongue as the most beneficial medium of education. Research on learning a second language by minority students will also be briefly introduced.<sup>1</sup>

Most research on bilingual education that shows the benefits of using the mother tongue comes from developed countries in Europe and North America. A brief summary of these research findings will be presented later in this article.

Among countries in the Asia-Pacific region, a wealth of research on bilingual education has been conducted in China. These studies provide support and justification for the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in order to achieve bilingualism in a minority language and Mandarin. On the basis of their research, Chinese scholars suggest that a major reason for minority children's poor educational performance is that learners' mother tongues have not been used in schools. Further, the mother tongue is considered to be the best medium for early learning, and essential for the development of minority students' intellectual ability (Blachford 1997; Lin 1997). Thus, "*bilingual education is seen as the most feasible policy and effective practice to solve minority language and education problems, and to maintain a balance between the national unity and minority aspirations*" (Blachford 1997, 159).

There are also some credible comparative studies, such as CAL (2001) and Dutcher & Tucker (1996) that discuss these issues on the basis of a number of developing countries. Likewise, UNESCO has provided well-grounded evidence for the use of learners' mother tongues in education in two seminal reports (UNESCO 1953, 2003b). Conclusions from one comprehensive study on language-in-education issues in the Asia-Pacific region are quite straightforward:

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<sup>1</sup> For definitions of the terminology used here, please refer to Appendix 1 at the end of the next article 'Education in Local Languages: Policy and Practice in Southeast Asia.'

*“The most important conclusion from the research and experience reviewed in this paper is that when learning is the goal, including that of learning a second language, the child’s first language (i.e. his or her mother tongue) should be used as the medium of instruction in the early years of schooling. ... The first language is essential for the initial teaching of reading, and for comprehension of subject matter. It is the necessary foundation for the cognitive development upon which acquisition of the second language is based.” (Dutcher & Tucker 1996, p. 36)*

UNICEF’s Annual Report 1999 takes a similar position:

*“There is ample research showing that students are quicker to learn to read and acquire other academic skills when first taught in their mother tongue. They also learn a second language more quickly than those initially taught to read in an unfamiliar language. ... Early mother-tongue instruction is a key strategy to reach the more than 130 million children not in school – and help them succeed.” (UNICEF 1999, 41, 45)*

UNICEF’s comparative study on “high-achieving countries” (Mehrotra 1998) shows some negative results of not using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction. The study discovered benefits of mother tongue education as well.

*“In a situation where the parents are illiterate..., if the medium of instruction in school is a language that is not spoken at home, the problems of learning in an environment characterized by poverty are compounded, and the chances of drop-out increase correspondingly. In this context, the experience of the high-achievers (nations) has been unequivocal: the mother tongue was used as the medium of instruction at the primary level in all cases.” (Mehrotra 1998, 12-13)*

Although the findings of the study just cited are based on the comparison of national cases, the points made may apply to situations within countries, as well. Another study (CAL 2001) attempted to identify successful cases in which a language other than the one spoken by linguistic minorities had been used in their early education.

*“In researching this report, we looked for – programmes where the language of wider communication had been used successfully for initial education. We did not find any such examples in programmes addressing underserved groups of the developing world. This is not surprising. When parents are not literate – and when children and adults never hear [the language of wider communication] except in the classroom, children are unable to learn, repeat their grades, and drop out of school before reaching Grade 3 of the primary cycle.” (CAL 2001, 19-20)*

Williams’ (1998) study in two African countries provides credible evidence for the benefits of using learners’ first language in early literacy and primary education. This study compared students after four years of schooling. The students in Malawi had received education through the medium of their home language, whereas the students in Zambia were taught through the medium of English, a common medium of instruction in many African countries, but not the mother tongue of most children. Both groups of students were mother tongue speakers of basically the same language. The level of English reading proficiency was found to be about the same in both groups, but the

reading skills in the mother tongue were much better among Malawian students who received mother tongue education. The use of the mother tongue also decreased gender and rural-urban disparities.

*“The moral of the Malawian achievement would appear to be that if resources are scarce, there is a greater likelihood of success in attempting to teach pupils a known local language, rather than an unknown one. ... It is difficult to see how the majority of pupils in Zambia and Malawi could learn other subjects successfully through reading in English.”*  
(Williams 1998, 59-60)

The study shows that using English – a language in which students are not proficient – as the medium of instruction in primary education provides weaker learning results than the use of the mother tongue. Furthermore, the study concludes that competence in the mother tongue does not impede the learning of the second language. The study lists some advantages of teaching initial literacy in the child’s mother tongue:

- local language literacy seems to be more successfully taught than English literacy,
- local language literacy may provide support for subsequent English literacy because the children move from the known (oral home language) to the unknown (reading), rather than confronting two unknowns (the English language and reading) simultaneously, and
- local language literacy is in harmony with the “child-centred” policy in education (ibid.).

Some key conclusions of the study are as follows:

*“A more radical suggestion than simply encouraging initial literacy in a local language would be for the local language to be used as the sole medium of instruction throughout primary schooling, with English taught, but only as a subject, from year 3 onwards. This would allow literacy skills to be established in the local language, and would also help more children to understand what is going on in the classroom. ... There might also be some people who would object that children would learn less at primary school, if they did not learn in English: however, the reality for most pupils is that the English language, far from being a bridge to knowledge, is in fact a barrier.”* (Williams 1998, 62)

For the reasons just discussed above, this could mean that it might be best to teach the second language as a subject, instead of using it as a medium of instruction.

## **Meaning-based reading**

The research justifying the use of the mother tongue in early education and initial literacy, usually bases its assumptions on the idea that reading and learning to read are essentially meaning-making activities. Such an approach does not see reading as passive and mechanical, but as a purposeful and rational activity. This approach perceives reading as a matter of making sense of written language, rather than just reciting the sounds of the language without understanding the meaning (see e.g. Krashen 2000; Smith 1994; Verhoeven 1990).

These ideas come from a reading approach called “whole language,” which puts emphasis on comprehension. This theory presumes that learning to read requires basically the same principles for learning that are required for comprehension in other aspects of life. When comprehension of

written language is a goal, it is useful if the content and nature of a text corresponds to something the reader already knows (Smith *ibid.*).

This approach also takes the position that in the process of learning to read, learners make sense of the text. As meaning is essential in reading, it is naturally easier to learn to read in a language that the learner understands (i.e. the first or the home language of the learner). Furthermore, reading theories show that people learn to read only once. Thus, after being able to read in one language, the learner can read, in general, and the reading skill usually transfers to other languages that the person speaks.

## **Benefits of mother tongue and bilingual education for linguistic minorities**

Sufficient international research on bilingual education exists to provide a rational and credible basis for use of the child's home language in bilingual education. Generally, research shows that the mother tongue is an essential foundation for all learning. Therefore, it is important that all children – including ethnolinguistic minorities – can use their mother tongue when they enter school for the first time. Learning through the mother tongue helps children learn about the nature of language, itself, as well as about how to use language to make sense of the world.

At the same time, acquiring proficiency in the national language is also essential for linguistic minorities. Proficiency in the national language broadens the learner's communication outside the immediate community and provides greater opportunities for further education and future employment. The main question is how this can best be done. In an ideal situation, ethnic minority children should have an opportunity to receive bilingual education that is based on literacy in their home language and also provides for second language instruction to develop competence in the national language.

The findings of international research show that bilingual education starting in the learners' mother tongue can provide many pedagogical advantages. Comprehensive reviews on these issues can be found, for example, in Baker (2001), Baker & Hornberger (2001), Cummins (2000), CAL (2001), Dutcher & Tucker (1996) and Skutnabb-Kangas (2000). There are many other good studies discussing various related issues (Cenoz & Genesee 1998; Cummins 1989, 1992; Dolson & Mayer 1992; Greene 1997; Hakuta 1986; Krashen 1996, 2000; Lindholm-Leary 2001; May 1999; Moll 1992; Ramírez, Pasta, Yuen, Ramey & Billings 1991; Slavin & Cheung 2003; Thomas & Collier 1997, 2002; Wong Fillmore 1991). A brief summary of key points from international research findings is provided below.

- ***Learning in L1 does not hinder learning of L2***  
Using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction does not slow down the learning of the second language (e.g. the national language or an international language).
- ***Learning in L1 helps learning of L2***  
When the mother tongue is used to teach the subject matter and beginning literacy, students gain knowledge they comprehend. This knowledge helps students better comprehend and learn the second language, particularly the subject matter with which they are already

familiar, because they have learned related matters in the mother tongue. Using the mother tongue also helps in learning the national language and in developing reading skills in that language.

- ***Learning to read in L1 is easier and faster***

Learning to read is easier and faster when students understand the meaning of what they are reading. It is easier to understand basic processes involved in reading – such as sound-symbol or meaning-symbol correspondence – in the mother tongue. Learners also can write faster in their mother tongue, as soon as they are taught how the respective writing system works.

- ***What is learned in L1 transfers to L2***

When students learn to read and write in their mother tongue, the learned linguistic and cognitive skills transfer to other languages. Once students are literate in their mother tongue and have learned sufficient oral skills in the second language, the literacy skills transfer easily to L2, as well, and there is usually no need for re-learning the same subject matter. Jim Cummins' (1991, 1999, 2000) *interdependence theory* and the concept of *common underlying proficiency* explain these processes, as well as the principles behind them.

- ***L1 allows students to learn curriculum content from the beginning of formal education***

When the mother tongue is used as the medium of instruction, students can learn the concepts and subject matter of the curriculum from their first day in school. Using the mother tongue also helps students acquire academic learning skills more quickly than if a language they do not understand is used. Using the mother tongue helps students to be more active in their own learning and to communicate naturally with their teachers, thus reinforcing learning.

- ***Strong L1 helps students perform better in L2 academic work***

Using the mother tongue as long as possible for teaching the curriculum content, and allowing students to do their academic work in that medium, will provide better success in academic work done in the second language, as well. Several studies show that children in well-designed bilingual education programmes acquire academic second language as well, and often even better, than children in programmes that use the second language only.

- ***L1 allows parents to participate more in their children's education***

When students' home language is used as the medium of instruction, parents can be, and often are, more active participants in their children's educational activities than if a second language is used.

- ***Bilingual education (both L1 and L2) improves cognitive development***

Sustained use of both the mother tongue and the second language in education enhances the learners' educational and cognitive development. This happens because what is learned in one language transfers to the other language.

- ***L1 helps teachers in assessing learning achievement***  
When students and teachers have a common medium of communication, teachers can better assess whether students have actually learned the content areas. This is due to the fact that students can better express themselves in their mother tongue.
- ***Special support in learning L2 helps students become bilingual***  
To help minority children gain full competence in the second language and become functionally bilingual, direct support is required for the development of the second language. Such support includes teaching L2 as a second language – starting with oral skills acquired through communicative methods – as well as teaching subject matter in L2 in a systematic and comprehensible manner.
- ***Relevant strategies support students to become bilingual and biliterate***  
Using appropriate methods in bilingual education can encourage minority learners to become bilingual and biliterate, i.e. to understand and speak, and to be able to read and write in more than one language.

## **Implications of submersion education**

Many of the studies cited above also describe the characteristics of submersion education. In brief, submersion means that minority students are taught through a language they do not fully comprehend. Many students around the world have to experience submersion education, because their first language is not used in school. Key implications of submersion education are listed below:

- It can take many years before minority students understand the meaning of what they are “reading,” although they may be able to pronounce the words in the second language. In other words, the learners’ ability to read (decode) a literacy text does not ensure that the learners can read (comprehend) the text.
- The students learn few, if any, new concepts until they become competent in the second language. Likewise, as natural communication is not always possible between the teacher and her/his students, lecture and rote response are commonly used learning methods in submersion classrooms.
- Teachers are often forced to translate (if they share a language with their students) to convey the meaning of the subject matter. This impedes language and concept learning, and makes learning generally inefficient because much time is used for helping students just to understand the meaning of classroom activities and curriculum content.
- It is difficult for teachers to determine whether students’ learning difficulties or low learning achievements are due to the teaching-learning-testing strategies used, the learning content itself, or the language of instruction.
- Using only a language that students do not understand and removing them from their familiar language environment may limit students’ competence in their mother tongue, as well as the second language.

## Conclusions

The findings of the studies summarized above provide a convincing rationale for policy planners to introduce and/or strengthen the use of minority children's home languages as the medium of instruction, particularly in the early grades. Yet, using the mother tongue in education alone cannot be the panacea for solving problems of otherwise dysfunctional education systems, as Benson (2003) notes:

*“Simply changing the language of instruction without resolving other pressing social and political issues is not likely to result in significant improvement in educational services. However, because language cross-cuts other marginalizing factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and poverty, even minimally implemented bilingual programmes have the potential to reach those who have traditionally been left behind by L2 submersion schooling.” (Benson 2003)*

Finally, an attempt is made to apply some of these research findings into the current Asian context. To do so, Krashen's (2000) conclusion of Spanish speaking students' learning of English in bilingual programmes is paraphrased. The following citation is offered as a suggestion of what relevant bilingual education of good quality for ethnic minorities might look like in an imaginary Asian nation of Happyland, whose national language is Happish. The reader can replace Happish with the national language of her/his own country to apply this idea to her/his own context.

*“Good bilingual education programmes aid in the development of academic Happish by providing 1) literacy in the first language, which transfers to Happish, 2) subject matter teaching in the first language, which provides background knowledge that makes Happish input more comprehensible, as well as 3) comprehensible subject matter teaching in Happish.” (Adapted from Krashen 2000)*

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# Education in Local Languages: Policy and Practice in South-East Asia

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## Abstract

*A proportion of the population in all South-East Asian nations speaks local languages as their mother tongue. There are hundreds of such languages in the region spoken by various ethnolinguistic minorities. However, not all speakers of these languages have sufficient knowledge of the languages used in education. Therefore, they are underprivileged in terms of educational access, retention and achievement. In some cases, speakers of local languages are marginalized and threatened by being completely excluded from education due to prevailing language policies. Yet, decision-makers do not always see the use of local languages in education as a viable option to improve the quality of education for ethnic minorities.*

*This article will discuss and compare the use of various languages in education in South-East Asian nations. The focus will be on local minority languages and their use in basic education, in both formal and non-formal systems. Language policy, as well as educational practices, in each nation will be explored. The article will discuss encouraging developments in using local languages in education, and outline regional trends. The article will conclude by proposing some general prerequisites for successful provision of basic education using local languages.*

## 1. Introduction

South-East Asia is a culturally and linguistically diverse region. Exact figures of languages spoken in South-East Asia are difficult to determine, but available estimates indicate that this diversity exists. The following are the estimated numbers of languages spoken in South-East Asian nations: Brunei Darussalam 17, Cambodia 19, Indonesia 726, Lao PDR 82, Malaysia 139, Myanmar 107, the Philippines 169, Singapore 21, Thailand 75, and Viet Nam 93 (Grimes 2000). Many speakers of minority languages in these countries do not have sufficient knowledge of the languages used as the media of instruction in the national systems of education. Consequently, linguistic minorities are underprivileged in terms of educational access, retention and achievement. Yet, on the basis of several international declarations and agreements, as well as academic research, UNESCO (2003a) and UNICEF (2004) promote education in the mother tongue as a linguistic right. In many cases, however, the speakers of minority languages are not able to exercise this right (see more in May 2001; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, 479-566).

It is often argued that providing education in small minority languages is not feasible (see Malone in this volume). Reasons for such claims include a lack of written form for such languages, and the shortage of learning-teaching materials, literature, and teachers who speak these languages. Furthermore, the production of local language materials and training of mother-tongue teachers is considered too costly. In many nations, top-down approaches to educational planning and management are preferred, and subsequently, the apparent – particularly human – resources existing in all communities may not be fully utilized for educational and socio-economic development. There are many examples around the world that indicate that local communities can play an essential role in providing local language education for their own people. In many of these cases, government agencies are working in collaboration with ethnic minority communities.

### **Purpose of the article**

A comparison of national situations of eleven countries is not easy. There is no uniform data on the language of instruction from all countries covered, and even though the best available data are used, the comparisons attempted may sometimes lack sufficient validity. However, to be able to provide a regional overview, such comparison is still attempted. Thus, the purpose of this article is:

- 1) to describe, compare and discuss the use of various languages as the media of instruction in South-East Asian and Chinese systems of basic education;
- 2) to pay particular attention to the use of minority languages (i.e. local languages, languages of wider communication, or other languages not considered national/official) in education;
- 3) to draw general conclusions about regional trends on the use of local languages in basic education; and
- 4) to propose some general prerequisites for the provision of basic education using local languages.

The issue of using local languages in education is not a marginal one. Walter (2004) demonstrates that about 20 percent of the world's population – i.e. approximately 1.3 billion people – speak a local language as their mother tongue (see also CAL 2001, 16; Vawda & Patrinos 1999, 287). This and related issues are elaborated on in several recent books and articles (e.g. Crystal 2002; Dalby 2002; Grenoble & Whaley 1998; Hagège 2001; Hinton & Hale 2001; Nettle & Romaine 2000; Robinson 1999; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000; Spolsky 2004; UNESCO 2003b, 2004b; Watson 1999; Wright 2004).

The People's Republic of China is usually not regarded as part of South-East Asia. However, as China's southern provinces have close cultural and linguistic links with South-East Asia, it is deemed valid to include China in this discussion. The mainland South-East Asian countries are discussed more thoroughly than other countries of the region. This is due to the author's personal work experience and research in those countries.

The reference to mother tongue and local language use in this article implicitly refers also to bilingualism, bilingual education and biliteracy in at least two languages, including the first language of the learner. The author acknowledges that education and literacy in a small minority language alone is inadequate in the world today. People speaking minority languages should also be provided

opportunities to learn at least the national language of a given country. The use of international languages, such as English, Chinese or French, as the media of instruction or in bilingual education along with a national language, will not be discussed any further than to acknowledge the cases when data is available.

## 2. Policies and Practices in Different Countries

This section looks at the language use in education for each South-East Asian nation and China. The discussion is limited to **basic education**, meaning *pre-primary, primary and lower level secondary education*, such as middle school or junior high school. As the compulsory basic education in the region is *generally 6-9 years of schooling* after pre-primary education, the discussion is limited to this timeframe. Therefore, languages used at high school and tertiary-level education, such as universities and colleges, are not discussed. In many Asian nations, a proportion of the adult population has not received basic education as children. In the case of ethnic minorities, the language of instruction has been a significant reason for this. Most countries provide non-formal education and adult literacy for minority groups. The reason for this is that such education is also basic education, focused at learners who have usually not been reached by the existing formal education systems.

### Mainland South-East Asia

#### Cambodia

About 20 languages are spoken in Cambodia. The largest ethnic group, the *Khmer*, make up approximately 90 percent of the population, making Cambodia one of the linguistically least diverse nations in the region. The populations of most ethnolinguistic minorities are small, apart from the speakers of *Cham, Vietnamese* and *Chinese* languages, whose populations are in the hundreds of thousands (Chey Chap, In The & Thomas 2003; Grimes 2000; Jernudd 1999; Leclerc 2004c; Thomas 2002, 2003).

In Cambodia, the medium of instruction at all levels of education is the national language, *Khmer*. Some schools also teach Chinese and Vietnamese as subjects of study (Leclerc 2004c). Recently, several minority languages, *Brao, Bunong, Kavet, Krung*, and *Tampuan*, have been introduced as the media of instruction in the Eastern Highlands. These pilot projects have been initiated by various NGOs in close cooperation with education authorities, particularly the non-formal education department. The ICC (International Cooperation for Cambodia) and NTFP (Non-timber Forest Products) have projects on bilingual NFE (Thomas 2002, 2003). CARE International is running a pilot project called 'Highland Children's Education Project' (HCEP) on primary-level bilingual education (CARE International Cambodia 2004; Noorlander, Sohout & Samal 2003). To date, experiences have been good, and students are learning to read in local languages as well as Khmer, and use these media for further learning. Before these endeavours, most indigenous minorities in the highlands had never had access to education services.

An important reason for the apparent success of the NFE projects using local languages has been the major role played by the indigenous minority communities. Language committees have been

crucial in language development, curriculum development, and the production of learning materials in local languages, as well as providing volunteer teachers. Important factors of success in the HCEP project include the community governance of the project schools, indigenous staff speaking local languages, teacher salaries being equivalent to government contract teachers, and active participation of the local communities in curriculum development that helps make the National Curriculum more relevant to the local circumstances. (APPEAL 2001; CARE International Cambodia 2004; Chey Chap et al. *ibid.*; Escott 2000; Jernudd 1999; Jordi 2003; J. Noorlander, pers. comm. 2004; Noorlander et al. *ibid.*; Thomas 2002, 2003; UNICEF 2004, 16).

Also important is the fact that high-level officials of the *Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports* (MoEYS) give support to bilingual education and provide justification for the use of local languages in education. The following quote provides an example of such discourse:

*“Using local languages – which the people understand – for basic education brings ethnic minorities closer to engaging in the national society and facilitates nation-building and decentralization. In addition, the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the minority peoples, which the government views as a valuable part of the national heritage, is maintained. An important foundation for nation-building is for all citizens to be engaged in development, to readily access and understand messages from the government, and to have the tools to communicate their own needs and goals. – All citizens of the country have the right to read and write the national language as well as their local language. These basic skills make them stronger citizens and facilitate their engagement in civil society”* (Chey Chap et al. 2003, 3).

Models tested in the Cambodian pilot projects could be adapted to education for ethnic minorities elsewhere in the country. These experiences may facilitate the MoEYS to formulate its future language and education policies for minority populations. In early 2003, the MoEYS approved Khmer-based writing systems of five minority languages spoken in the Eastern Highlands. This is an important step in making use of local languages and mother tongue-based bilingual education a part of the government education system (Chey Chap et al. 2003; Jordi 2003; Noorlander et al. *ibid.*; Thomas 2002, 2003). Furthermore, Cambodia is drafting a new education law that gives ethnic minorities *“the right to instruction at public schools in their native language”* (Article 44). Time will tell whether this law will be put into practice.

## **Lao PDR**

The Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR or Laos) is a truly multiethnic nation. The estimated number of languages spoken in Laos is 82 (Grimes 2000; Leclerc 2004f). Yet, the number of different ethnolinguistic groups is actually higher. Chazée (1999), for example, lists 132 ethnic groups, but even higher numbers have been given (see e.g. Kingsada 2003, National Statistical Centre 1997, Schliesinger 2003). The Lao case differs from its neighbours because, according to even the official figures (National Statistical Centre 1997; UNFPA 2001), the minority population is at least half of the total population of 5.4 million (2001). In fact, the population of all minority groups may actually comprise up to 65 percent of the total population (Chazée *ibid.*, 14), depending on the definition of ethnic minority, and on the interpretation of statistical data, e.g. the inclusion of Lao-related minorities in the category of the Lao ethnic group.

In Lao PDR, the language of instruction at all levels of education is *Lao*, the official language (Leclerc 2004f). At present, local languages are officially not used in education. Nevertheless, local languages are used orally in many classrooms if teachers speak the students' languages (Phommabouth 2004). In some cases, invented spelling is used to write local languages (A. Cincotta, pers. comm. 2003) and foreign NGOs have produced, for example, picture cards in some local languages. One of the largest ethnolinguistic groups, the *Hmong*, teach their children informally. There may be more Hmong literate in their mother tongue than in Lao (J. Chamberlain, pers. comm. 2003) and written Hmong is widely used in letters and emails to relatives living in the West. In addition, some minority children have recently been provided Lao as a second language, using an approach called "Concentrated Language Encounter," (CLE) (Souvanvixay, Nouannavong, Keovongsa & Ovington 2002). Previously, the same curriculum and materials were used nationwide irrespective of the students' linguistic and cultural differences. CLE is a small step forward in providing relevant education to various ethnolinguistic groups. Yet, in many remote minority areas, Lao is used only in the school context, and thus despite the use of CLE, many minority children are not learning Lao sufficiently to perform to their potential in Lao-medium schools.

The current status of basic education and literacy for the members of various ethnolinguistic minorities is different from that of the Lao-speaking population. A recent UNESCO (2003a, 23) document reports that "*a much higher percentage of ethnic minority children have never enrolled in, or attended, school than children who have Lao as their first language.*" Komorowski (2001) complements this view with an appropriate first-hand account:

*"Minority students will be expected to acquire literacy in Lao, but ... an unproductive classroom scenario is set up. The existing situation is a vicious cycle: the most effective and reasonably resourced education is taking place in urban areas, so most teachers that are being trained are coming through this system. These teachers, if posted to rural areas, will likely not share a common language with their students. In turn, these students will become demotivated by an inability to relate to their teacher and the language used, maintaining high levels of non-completion and low enrolment"* (Komorowski 2001, 65).

Available educational statistics confirm the situation. The enrolment, retention, survival and achievement rates of children, and adult literacy rates among all ethnic minorities, are much lower than the national average (ADB 2000a; Lao People's Democratic Republic 2004; MOE 1999; National Statistical Centre 1997; Sisouphanthong and Taillard 2000). Although the dim situation of minority education is evident, few explanations for the causes are given, or remedies suggested. There are exceptions, however, such as Kanstrup-Jensen (2001), Komorowski (2001), Souvanvixay et al. (2002), UNESCO (2004a), and a Lao government report (MOE 1999, 78) that reads: "*In an ethnically diverse country like the Lao PDR, language can be an important constraint for students to learn, especially at an early age.*" Despite references such as this, the language issue often seems to be ignored. The disparity in education along ethnic lines is widely acknowledged, but the issue of language as it relates to education of ethnic minorities is rarely discussed in any depth.

## Myanmar

More than 100 languages are reportedly spoken in the Union of Myanmar (Grimes 2000), although other estimates indicate that the actual number may be closer to 200. Populations of several ethnolinguistic minority groups are in the hundreds of thousands, or even millions. The language of instruction in the government system of education is *Myanma*, the official language. Local languages are not used in the government system of education. The standard variety of *Myanma* differs considerably from some regional varieties. *English* is used widely at the tertiary level, as well as for the study of Math, Science and Economics in senior high schools after 9 years of schooling (Grimes 2000; Education for All – Myanmar 1999; Jernudd 1999; Leclerc 2004a).

The use of local languages is restricted to non-formal education and literacy by civil society organizations and language communities, themselves, particularly in northern states inhabited predominantly by ethnolinguistic minorities (Cheesman 2003; P. Hopple, pers. comm. 2004). In many areas, larger regional languages other than *Myanma* are used as LWCs. Local languages are mainly used in NFE by local Buddhist and Christian communities. In addition to *Myanma*, for example, *Karen/Kayin*, *Karenni*, *Mon*, *Palaung*, *Pa'o*, *Shan* and *Tai Khuen* communities use their respective languages in monastery education. *Sgaw Karen* is used more widely, for example, in non-formal community schools in border areas, as well as NFE organized by churches and neighbourhoods (P. Hopple, *ibid.*). In addition, the Myanmar Council of Churches, for example, sponsors non-formal and functional literacy programmes in more than 10 local languages: *Wa*, *Naga*, *Karen* and several *Chin* languages, for instance, though most of these activities are adult education (Thang 2002). Such activities are likely organized by other non-governmental, mainly local religious organizations, as well. At least the Myanmar Baptist Convention and International NGO World Concern have education programmes in local languages. The description of the Myanmar situation is hindered, however, by a lack of published research and reliable data on language education issues.

## Thailand

*Standard Thai* is the de facto official and national language of Thailand, with undeniable status and prestige. Yet, with more than 70 languages spoken within its borders, Thailand is linguistically more diverse than the wide use of *Standard Thai* would indicate. Many Thais living in the central region, including government officials, see all *Tai* languages as dialects of *Standard Thai*. The population of some language groups are in the millions. *Isan*, *Kammeuang*, *Pak Tai*, *Pattani Malay*, *Northern Khmer*, and *Minnan Chinese* provide apt examples. In addition, there are at least one hundred thousand speakers of *Sgaw Karen*, *Kui*, *Phuthai*, and possibly some Chinese languages, as well (Grimes 2000; Jernudd 1999; Leclerc 2004k; Schliesinger 2000). Many ethnolinguistic minorities are active participants in Thai society, and the situation has been described as unity in diversity (Smalley 1994).

*Standard Thai* is the medium of instruction at all levels of education. Until recently, the use of languages other than Thai was prohibited in Thai schools, although teachers have widely used local languages orally in early grades to help minority children understand the curriculum (Jernudd 1999; Leclerc 2004k; Smalley 1994). However, the Thai Constitution of 1997, and generally more open

Thai society in the 1990s, have provided new opportunities for ethnolinguistic minorities to use their languages. Most minority languages in Thailand already have writing systems and at least some literature (e.g. Kosonen 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Malone 2001; Morse & Tehan 2000; Person 1999; Premsrirat 1998, 2000, 2002; Siltragool 2003; Siltragool, Petcharugsa & Chouenon 2003; Smalley 1976, 1994; TU-SIL 2002).

The majority of the Thai population does not speak Standard Thai as their mother tongue (Leclerc 2004k), but millions of children in central Thailand have a working knowledge of the language when they enter school. This is because Standard Thai is based on *Thaiklang* (Central Thai). Yet, for at least half of the population, possibly more, the medium of instruction is not their first language, and many children have comprehension problems in early grades (Smalley 1994). However, for many – but not all – people speaking other Tai languages, for example Isan and Kammeuang, the use of standard Thai is possible, if not optimal.

For ethnolinguistic minorities speaking languages not related to Thai, the use of Standard Thai as the medium of instruction is a major obstacle in educational achievement, as Smalley (1994) observes:

*“The [Thai educational system] is a sink-or-swim system, however, for those children who do not speak some dialect of Thaiklang when they start school. It is inefficient and frustrating because it assumes the life, culture and language of central Thailand, no matter where the children live or what they speak. It requires many children to lose two years in school before they follow well what is going on in class”* (Smalley 1994, 293).

Nevertheless, the situation seems to be improving. The new Thai school curriculum allows teaching of ethnic minority languages in minority areas by allocating up to 30 percent of the curriculum for minority language study or other local content (IMNA 2003; Office of the National Education Commission 2001). In some areas, local language classes are taught in the slot of “local curriculum.” Available data shows that at least *Bisu*, *Mon*, *Lahu Shi* and *Chong* are being taught as subjects in Thai government schools (A. Cooper pers. comm., 2003; Kosonen 2002a, 2002b, 2003). *Kui* and *Northern Khmer* have been taught as subjects in some Northeastern secondary schools (Smalley 1994, 281). Other minority groups are planning to have their languages in schools, as well. *Pwo Karen* is being used in non-formal education as part of a UNESCO-sponsored pilot project on bilingual education utilising minority languages (APPEAL 2003; Siltragool 2003; Siltragool, Petcharugsa & Chouenon 2003). Yet, none of these activities can be considered true bilingual education.

NGOs and civil society organizations have used minority languages in non-formal education for a long time. Examples are *Malay* and *Arabic* study in Islamic Ponoh schools of the south, Thai-Chinese learning written Chinese, as well as literacy classes run by ethnic minority churches. The extent of these activities is not yet great, but more minority groups are becoming active in the development of their languages for educational use. There are small-scale non-formal education programmes, particularly in Northern Thailand, in a dozen or more languages. ALTP programme of Payap University, for example, has facilitated curriculum development and the production of literacy materials in many minority languages. Some groups, such as the *Iu Mien*, *Kayah*, *Sgaw Karen*, and *Pwo Karen*, have fairly comprehensive curricula of non-formal education and literacy, mainly for adult learners (Jennings 1998; Karenni Literature Committee 1994; Khrongkaan nangsue Karien Pwo 1999). The use of local languages as the media of instruction is limited to these NFE

efforts by non-governmental organizations. Few, if any, of these projects are actual bilingual education.

## Viet Nam

The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam is a multiethnic and multilingual nation with a population of about 80 million. Approximately 100 languages are spoken in the country, although the government officially recognises 54 ethnic groups. Reasons for this apparent discrepancy are similar to those elaborated on in the case of China. *Kinh*, or Vietnamese, is the largest ethnic group, accounting for about 86 percent of the population; ethnolinguistic minorities comprise about 14 percent. According to the Census of 1999, the combined population of the 53 ethnic minority groups was slightly more than 11 million. Several minority groups have large populations. The *Tay*, *Thai*, *Muong*, *Hoa* (i.e. *Chinese*) and *Khmer* have populations of more than one million. Five more groups, the *Nung*, *Hmong*, *Dao*, *Gia Rai* and *Ede*, have populations in the hundreds of thousands. Most minority groups, however, are smaller. Some 20-30 minority languages already have writing systems and language development is ongoing in others. (Baulch, Truong, Haughton & Haughton 2002; Bui 2003; Chazée 1999; Grimes 2000; Kosonen 2004; Leclerc 2004; Lo Bianco 2002; MOET 2004; Nguyen 1997; Nguyen 2001; Save the Children-UK 2002; Schliesinger 1997, 1998, 2003; Wright 2002.)

The national language is *Vietnamese*, and it is used as the LWC in most of the country. Vietnamese is spoken as the first language (or one first language of bilingual people) by around 90 percent of the population. The use of ethnic minority languages in education is strongly supported by the constitution, education laws and many educational policy documents. These documents give equal support to the learning of Vietnamese by ethnic minority people, thus emphasising bilingual education (Kosonen 2004; Leclerc 2004; Save the Children-UK 2002). A goal of the policies is the expanded and improved quality of multilingualism (Bui 2003; Tran 2003).

Despite supportive policies, Vietnamese remains the main medium of instruction at all levels of education, in predominantly non-Vietnamese areas, as well. Local languages are used in education in some areas for programmes referred to as bilingual education (MOET 2004; Nguyen 2003; Tran 2003). In practice, however, most of these programmes teach local languages as subjects or are transitional with few students actually becoming fully bilingual. In addition, most activities are top-down in approach, and local communities contribute little, if anything, to the efforts. At least *Hoa*, *Tay-Nung*, *Thai*, *Hmong*, *Khmer*, *Cham*, *Gia Rai*, *Ede*, and *Bahnar* languages have been used in pilot projects of mother-tongue education, in pre-primary and primary schools, as well as non-formal education (APPEAL 2001; Archibald 2003; Jernudd 1999; Kosonen 2004; Malone 2002; MOET 2004; Save the Children-UK 2002; UNICEF Viet Nam 1998). Government sources (e.g. MOET 2004) state that more than 10 other languages have been, or are being, used in schools as “bilingual languages.” Although up to 20 percent of the curriculum could be used for teaching minority languages, not all schools in minority areas fully use this opportunity. Likewise, according to the education policy, ethnic minority languages could be the main languages of instruction in minority area kindergartens, but few early childhood educational institutions implement this policy (Kosonen 2004; Save the Children-UK 2002).

The greatest challenge in providing education to ethnic minority children in Viet Nam seems to be the “language barrier.” This means that many ethnic minority children do not sufficiently understand and speak Vietnamese when they enter primary school Grade 1. Available statistics show a drastic disparity based on students’ ethnolinguistic background (Baulch, Truong, Haughton & Haughton 2002; UNICEF Viet Nam 2004). There is evidence that in many minority areas, teachers and students have difficulties in understanding each other. In addition, many minority children do not sufficiently master academic Vietnamese, and thus, their educational achievement is negatively impacted. This is especially true in comparison to the majority, who are native speakers of the medium of instruction. Other major challenges are a lack of qualified teachers to work in remote ethnic minority regions, and a lack of writing systems for many local languages. To alleviate the educational constraints of ethnic minorities, the Government of Viet Nam regards the teaching of Vietnamese to ethnic minority children as early as possible as the best strategy (ADB 2000b; Aikman & Pridmore 2001; Kosonen 2004; Leclerc 2004; Lo Bianco 2002; MOET 2004; Nguyen 2003; Save the Children-UK 2002; Tran 2003).

## Insular South-East Asia

### Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam is a small nation with a predominantly Malay population. There are also several indigenous minorities, Chinese, and more recent migrant workers. It is estimated that 17 languages are spoken in Brunei, not including the languages of temporary migrant labourers. *Malay (Bahasa Melayu)*, as used in Malaysia, is the official language, although its use is restricted to formal situations like government business and education. However, it is not widely used in daily communication. The most widely used language in the country is *Brunei Malay*, which is used as the LWC, and spoken as the mother tongue by a vast majority of the population (Grimes 2000; Jernudd 1999; Kaplan & Baldauf 2003; Leclerc 2004b; Martin 1999; Tucker 1998).

Languages used as the media of instruction are Standard Malay and English, according to the language policy emphasising bilingualism in those languages. Malay is used at pre-primary level and in the first three grades of the primary school, apart from teaching English language. From Grade 4 onwards, the medium for teaching Science, Mathematics and Geography changes to English (Kaplan & Baldauf 2003; Leclerc 2004b; Leong & Sim 2004). Although well resourced, this system of using basically two foreign languages in education is not without problems (Martin 1999). In addition, the policy and subsequent practice ignore the use of all local languages, including the de facto national language, Brunei Malay. Therefore, only about two percent of the population are estimated to receive education in their mother tongue, the lowest rate in all Asia. Religious schools provide non-formal education in Islam, teaching Arabic-based *Jawi* script of Malay and some *Arabic*, as well (Grimes 2000; Jernudd 1999; Leclerc 2004b; Martin 1999; Tucker 1998).

### Indonesia

Indonesia, with more than 700 languages, is linguistically the most diverse country in all of Asia. The official language, *Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia)* is also the language of instruction at all levels of education. However, only about ten percent of the population speaks Indonesian as their mother

tongue. Regional LWCs, as well as local vernaculars, are widely used around the country. A large proportion of Indonesians speak Indonesian as a second language with varying levels of proficiency. Languages such as *Javanese*, *Madurese* and *Sundanese*, for example, are spoken by tens of millions of people, and several other languages have millions of native speakers (Grimes 2000; Dardjowidjojo 1998; Jernudd 1999; Leclerc 2004e; Kaplan & Baldauf 2003; Walter & Ringenberg 1994).

The Indonesian Constitution guarantees the use and development of local languages. An education act supports the use of students' mother tongue as the media of instruction in the first three years of elementary school while Indonesian is being taught as a subject. In practice, however, local languages are rarely used in government schools, and in most cases, instruction begins and continues in Indonesian. Major regional languages were used prior to 1965 as the media of instruction, but currently, these and other local languages are mainly taught as second languages. Sometimes even the old learning materials are used (Dardjowidjojo 1998; Jernudd 1999; Kaplan & Baldauf 2003; Leclerc 2004e; K. Ringenberg, pers. comm. 2003).

The use of local languages in the formal school system is, thus, restricted to an elective course in elementary grades below Grade 9 (Kaplan & Baldauf 2003; Leclerc 2004e). Local communities can contribute to this specific "locally generated curriculum," and local languages can be used in this curriculum if communities so choose. In some areas, local language materials with Indonesian translations are produced for this curriculum. Local languages are more widely used in non-formal education, particularly in adult literacy. Local language committees and NGOs are, indeed, playing important roles in the development of local languages and in the production of literacy materials for such languages (Dardjowidjojo 1998; Ringenberg 2001; Riupassa & Ringenberg 2000, 2003).

## Malaysia

About 140 languages are spoken in Malaysia, making it a truly multilingual and multicultural society. The population of some minority communities are in the millions (Grimes 2000). The National Language Policy states that *Malay (Bahasa Malaysia)* is the official national language. In the government system of education, there are two kinds of schools: 1) national primary schools that use Malay as the medium of instruction, and 2) national-type primary schools that use other languages, such as *Mandarin*, *Tamil* or various Indian languages, as the media of instruction. In national primary schools, i.e. Malay-medium schools, Tamil and Mandarin, as well as some indigenous languages, can be studied as subjects called 'Pupil's Own Language' (POL). This is offered on two conditions: 1) learners' parents request it, and 2) there are at least fifteen students for a mother-tongue class (Jernudd 1999; Kaplan & Baldauf 2003; Kua 1998; Leclerc 2004g; Smith 2003). Since 2003, Math and Science have been taught in *English* from primary Grade 1 onwards (Spolsky 2004, 3; Yaakub 2003).

Earlier, only larger, non-indigenous minority languages such as Mandarin and Tamil were used in education, but recently, several indigenous peoples have begun education programmes using local languages, as well (Kua 1998; Smith 2003). The use of local languages is mainly limited to teaching them as school subjects in primary Grades 3 to 6, and therefore, cannot yet be considered true bilingual education. Yet, the use of indigenous minority languages in education is increasing.

In the East Malaysian state of Sarawak, *Iban* has been in the school system for several years, and another larger language group, the *Bidayuh*, hope soon to introduce their language in local schools. In the state of Sabah, also in East Malaysia, *Kadazandusun* has been taught in government schools for some time, and the use of *Murut* has just started. In Peninsular Malaysia, an Orang Asli (the indigenous people of West Malaysia) language called *Semai* is being used in some government schools. Local communities working through language foundations and non-governmental organizations have played important roles in language development and inclusion of minority languages in the school system (Kua 1998; Lasimbang & Kinajil 2000; Smith 2001, 2003, pers. comm. 2003).

## The Philippines

In terms of language diversity, the Philippines is second to Indonesia in South-East Asia. Some 170 languages are spoken in the country. Languages such as *Bicol*, *Cebuano*, *Illongo*, *Ilocano* and *Tagalog* are spoken by millions of people, and widely used as the LWCs in their respective areas. Most ethnolinguistic minorities are much smaller. Writing systems have been developed for most of the languages, and more than 100 languages have some written materials in them. (APPEAL 2001; Grimes 2000; Gonzales 1999; Kaplan & Baldauf 2003; Leclerc 2004i; C. Young pers. comm. 2004.)

The Bilingual Education Policy (1974, revised in 1987) states that *English* and *Filipino* (based on *Tagalog*) are the languages of education and the official languages of literacy for the nation. The goal of this policy is that the population will be bilingual in these languages. Yet, the majority of Filipinos are not mother-tongue speakers of either. In fact, only about a quarter of the population is estimated to receive education in their first language. (Grimes 2000; Gonzales 1999; Jernudd 1999; Kaplan & Baldauf 2003; Leclerc 2004i; Nical, Smolicz & Secombe 2004; Young 2002.)

Local languages have been used in government schools as “transitional languages” for initial instruction and early literacy up to primary Grade 3, although these activities have not been carried out on a large scale. In the revised policy, local languages, in most cases LWCs, were elevated to the role of “auxiliary languages.” In practices, this often means that local languages are used to explain the curriculum to students rather than using them seriously as the media of instruction. In some cases, *Lubuagan* for example, local language or multilingual learning materials are also used with good results (Dumatog & Dekker 2003). Situations vary depending on teachers and the availability of learning materials in local languages. Nevertheless, as writing systems for most languages are fairly similar, many people literate in Filipino can often quite easily transfer their literacy skills into their mother tongue (Dumatog & Dekker 2003; Gonzales 1999; Jernudd 1999; Nical et al. 2004; Young 2002).

Local languages are used more widely in the non-formal sector. Much of language development has been done by NGOs for non-formal education. NFE programmes using local languages are usually run by community organizations, NGOs, and churches, and are rather small-scale. Some NFE endeavours have close links with the formal system, although most non-formal education focuses on adult literacy. *Arabic* is also used in Koranic schools, particularly in the South of the country (Gonzales 1999; Hohulin 1995; Jernudd 1999; Nical et al. 2004; Young 2002).

## Singapore

More than 20 languages are spoken in Singapore, a nation aiming at societal multilingualism and bilingualism among its population. Three quarters of the population are ethnic Chinese speaking many different varieties of Chinese. *English* is the sole medium of instruction at all levels of education, and three other official languages, i.e. *Malay*, *Mandarin Chinese* and *Tamil*, are taught as second languages called mother tongues (Grimes 2000; Jernudd 1999; Kaplan & Baldauf 2003; Leclerc 2004j; B. Lin pers. comm. 2004; Pakir 2004).

Students speaking Indian languages other than Tamil can also study those languages as subjects. Speakers of other languages can freely choose from those offered in the school curriculum, but there is no provision for education in local languages as such, unlike in most nations in South-East Asia. Most Singaporean Chinese have not traditionally spoken Mandarin as their first language, and this is a reason why only about a third of the population is estimated to receive education in their mother tongue. The situation is rapidly changing, however, as younger generations are becoming bilingual in English and Mandarin. Thus, these languages are becoming the mother tongues of such students because they are increasingly being used at home (ibid.)

## China

Officially, China is a country of 56 nationalities but, in fact, more than 200 languages are spoken in the country. Thus, many nationalities consist of several quite diverse language groups that are sometimes as different as English and German, for example. (Bradley, Bradley & Li 1999; Stites 1999). The Han majority comprises more than 90 percent of the total population, and speaks many mutually unintelligible varieties of Chinese. *Mandarin Chinese (Putonghua)* is the official language. Ethnic minorities, though only eight percent of the Chinese population, still number close to a 100 million people (Grimes 2000, Huang 2003; Leclerc 2004d; Lin 1997; Liu 2000; Zhou 2000).

The Chinese Constitution provides all nationalities of China the freedom to use and develop their languages. A law relating to ethnic minorities adds that conditions permitting, ethnic minority languages should be the media of instruction in schools where the majority of students belong to minority groups. However, in many places these laws are not implemented, and there are no regulations to guarantee that implementation actually takes place (Blachford 1997, 163; Jernudd, 1999, 119; Leclerc 2004d).

Nonetheless, government support to mother-tongue education applies only to the 55 designated national minorities, leaving some 150 language communities without validation of their need for language development and mother-tongue education. In addition, in Han areas, especially the less developed rural areas where varieties of Chinese other than Mandarin are spoken, many students have difficulty understanding teaching unless teachers use a dialect of Chinese spoken in the region (Postiglione 1999). Many official minority languages already have writing systems, yet more than 20 still lack them (Blachford 1997, 157; Huang 2003; Stites 1999, 99-101). However, a major problem in language development is that many more than 55 writing systems are needed in China to provide mother-tongue education to all speakers of minority languages.

There is a lot of variation in the use of local languages in education, depending on the geographical area and ethnolinguistic group. There are strong and weak forms of bilingual education, and various shades in between. In the strong forms, an ethnic language, usually a regional LWC with a long literate history, is used as the medium of instruction from primary school through high school. In such programmes, Mandarin is taught as a second language starting from Grade 2 or 3. The balance between the use of the local and national language differs. Minorities benefiting from strong forms of bilingual education include *Kazakhs, Koreans, Mongolians, Uygurs* and *Tibetans* (Blachford 1997; Huang 2003; Leclerc 2004d; Stites 1999; Zhou 1992).

The weak forms of bilingual education offer local language instruction in pre-primary education for a fairly short period of time (6-12 months). After this, the minority children are mainstreamed with Chinese speaking students. Blachford (1997, 161) calls this type “in name only” bilingual education. Other examples of the weak forms are cases in which ethnic languages are taught as a subject at different levels of the educational system (Blachford 1997; Stites 1999; Xiao 1998; Zhou 1992). The most common local language use in Chinese bilingual education is found in *transitional* programmes. Such programmes start with the students’ mother tongue, but as soon as the students understand Mandarin to some extent, it becomes the main medium of instruction. The transitional programmes aim to help children learn the national language, but maintenance of the mother tongue is not seen as important (Blachford 1997; Stites 1999; Xiao 1998; Zhou 1992). Chinese experience shows, however, that learning achievements of students in bilingual programmes – even some transitional ones – are better than in Chinese-only education for ethnic minorities (Blachford 1997, 161; Huang 2003; Xiao 1998, 230).

Common difficulties faced in the use of local languages in China include: a lack of writing systems; a lack of qualified minority language teachers; a lack of texts and materials in minority languages; translation of textbooks from Chinese into minority languages without any adaptation; rapid transition from local languages to Mandarin; and negative attitudes towards the importance and usefulness of minority language education (Blachford 1997, 161; Cobbey 2003; Huang 2003; Lin 1997; Stites 1999, 95; Zhou 1992, 43). Reasons for good progress in bilingual education endeavours in China include: positive and progressive approaches to bilingual education by local authorities, strong support of academics, and the major role of minority communities in curriculum development and materials production.

Many minority languages of Southwest China or related varieties are spoken in South-East Asia, as well. In this region, there are documented examples of well-established programmes of bilingual education and mother-tongue literacy. Some of them are allegedly strong forms of bilingual education, as with *Bai, Dai, Jingpo, Naxi, Zhuang* and *Yi* languages (APPEAL 2001; Huang 2003; Jernudd 1999; Liu 2000). In practice, however, few such efforts continue today, and in many “bilingual programmes,” the local language component is weak (Blachford 1997, 162-163). For example, the bilingual education for the Bai cited in the literature has not been continued, except in a very limited way to help older elementary school students improve their essay writing (L. Billard, pers. comm. 2004). However, plans to implement a new bilingual project amongst the Bai are underway.

Very promising are recent experiences among the *Dong* (or *Kam*) of Guizhou Province. A nine-year pilot programme of bilingual education launched in 2000 uses Dong and Mandarin, starting with two years of preschool in which only Dong is used. Mandarin is introduced in primary school,

and Dong instruction continues throughout primary school, with a hope that this would help children stay in school through the primary cycle. The preschool programme expanded in 2002 to several schools. Each year, new Dong curricula is added for the next higher primary school grade in the pilot project (Cobbey 2003; Geary & Pan 2003; Malone 2003).

## UNESCO's Increasing Role in Asia

Being the main organization in the UN system responsible for education, UNESCO's stance and activities in the field of mother-tongue education are important in a regional overview such as this. Worldwide, UNESCO has been a strong supporter of using mother tongues as the medium of instruction (e.g. UIE 2003, UNESCO 1953, 2003b).

In the Asia-Pacific region, UNESCO's role in promoting the use of minority languages in education has increased dramatically in the past few years. For example, a manual produced to help education officials implement functional literacy programmes for ethnic minorities (APPEAL 1999) hardly mentions language. Regional workshops (APPEAL 2001, 2002) were organized after the publication of the manual. Through these workshops, the acknowledgement of language as a significant factor in functional literacy seems to have increased, as is evident in the workshop reports. In the first report, the language issue is raised mainly through the inclusion of a couple of national case studies, but the second report is already recommending the use of the mother tongue (as part of bilingual education) as a viable means to achieving functional literacy. Further, a team of invited international experts has rewritten the 1999 manual. The new manual (UNESCO 2004b) has been published with the purpose of providing *"useful information on best practices and practical strategies for developing relevant learning materials and effectively organizing literacy classes for minority communities – using the mother tongue/bilingual approach at the initial stage of teaching literacy classes and gradually introducing the national language as learning progresses"* (APPEAL 2003, 6).

In addition, UNESCO's APPEAL programme is supporting five Asian countries in their action research projects on the use of local languages in literacy programmes for ethnic minorities. The countries involved are Bangladesh, China, India, the Philippines and Thailand. The approach taken by these pilot projects is fairly similar to other regional initiatives deemed successful. For example, linguists are employed in the development of appropriate materials in local languages, and local communities play an active role in curriculum development and materials production. Pilots on NFE are planned in another four countries, and UNESCO Bangkok is planning to expand its action-research on mother tongue-based bilingual education also to formal primary level education (APPEAL 2003, 7; 2004, 6-7; D. Riewpituk 2004, pers. comm.). Furthermore, UNESCO has established an advisory group that will facilitate UNESCO Bangkok's efforts to develop the UNESCO (2003b) Position Paper on Multilingual Education into a more practical toolkit relevant to the Asian context. The toolkit would respond to Asian policy makers' and education planners' concerns about mother-tongue and multi-lingual education, and helping them turn vision into concrete action at the policy level (APPEAL 2004, 7; V. Jensen, pers. comm. 2004; UNESCO Bangkok 2004).

## Papua New Guinea

The case of Papua New Guinea (PNG) is important in any discussion on the use of local languages in education. No other country in the Asia-Pacific region uses local languages as widely as PNG, and thus, this case is briefly discussed here, as well. About 850 languages are spoken in PNG, more than in any other nation. Yet, Papua New Guinea is providing pre-school and Grade 1 and 2 education in some 350-435 languages (Guy 2003; Kaplan & Baldauf 2003; Klaus 2003a, 2003b; Leclerc 2004h; Litteral 1999; Malone 2003; Nagai 1998, 1999a, 1999b; 2001; Siegel 1997).

A nationwide non-formal education movement in the 1980s initiated the use of local languages in education. The massive endeavour of developing these previously unwritten languages had to take place. Various NFE programmes, mainly in pre-primary and adult education, introduced hundreds of local languages as the media of instruction all over the country. These NFE endeavours are considered very successful. Based on positive experiences from the NFE sector, a reform of the English-only formal education system has been undertaken since the early 1990s. In the new system, the first three years of formal education is taught in the learners' mother tongue. English becomes the medium at later grades, making it possible to use centrally produced materials throughout the country. Mother-tongue education is provided in elementary schools run by local communities (Kaplan & Baldauf 2003; Klaus 2003a, 2003b; Leclerc 2004h; Litteral 1999; Nagai 2001; Siegel 1997).

Some reasons for the success of the PNG experience include: strong support and contribution of local communities, decentralised planning and implementation of education programmes, local relevance and cost-effectiveness in curriculum development and materials production, and the active role of NGOs in the delivery of mother-tongue education. In addition, the role of non-formal education has been crucial in reforming the formal system (Klaus 2003a, 2003b; Siegel 1997, 220-221).

Klaus (2003a, 110) concludes his discussion of the PNG situation with the following words:

*“The case of Papua New Guinea is compelling: a small, poor country with more languages than any other country of the world appears to be successfully implementing a reform which (1) uses a multiplicity of languages, (2) conserves local cultures, (3) results in superior pedagogical outcomes, including better acquisition of a language of wider communication, and (4) is financially sustainable. Other countries may wish to consider how they might adapt Papua New Guinea’s solutions to their own unique problems and opportunities.”*

### 3. Comparison of the National Situations

This section attempts to provide a regional synthesis of the national situations in terms of language use in basic education. Various South-East Asian situations are compared regarding different issues of language and education.

#### Language of Instruction Practice

Table 1 provides a regional overview on the use of local languages in basic education. The first column of the table shows that in most countries, local languages are used, at least to some extent.

**Table 1. Local Language Use in Basic Education for China and South-East Asia**

| Country     | Local languages used in education <sup>1</sup> | Local languages used as media of instruction <sup>2</sup> | Multiple languages in government system of education <sup>3</sup> | Languages used in the government system of education <sup>4</sup> | Access to education in L1 (percent) <sup>5</sup> | Total number of languages spoken <sup>6</sup> |
|-------------|--|---|---|---|--|---|
| China       | Yes  | Yes   | Yes   | Mandarin, LWCs, local languages                                   | 69   | 201   |
| Brunei      | No   | No  | <b>Yes</b>  | Malay, English  | 2  | 17  |
| Cambodia    | Yes  | Yes   | Yes   | Khmer, local languages  | 90   | 19  |
| Indonesia   | Yes  | No  | Yes   | Indonesian, LWCs  | 10   | 726   |
| Lao PDR     | No   | No  | No  | Lao   | < 50 <sup>7</sup>                                | 82  |
| Malaysia    | Yes  | No  | Yes   | Malay, English, Mandarin, Tamil, Telugu, Punjabi, local languages | 45   | 139   |
| Myanmar     | Yes  | <b>Yes</b>  | No  | Myanma  | 61   | 107   |
| Philippines | Yes  | Yes   | Yes   | Filipino, English, LWCs   | 26   | 169   |
| Singapore   | No   | No  | <b>Yes</b>  | English, Mandarin, Malay, Tamil                                   | 33   | 21  |
| Thailand    | Yes  | <b>Yes</b>  | Yes   | Thai, local languages   | < 50   | 75  |
| Viet Nam    | Yes  | Yes   | Yes   | Vietnamese, local languages                                       | 91   | 93  |

Notes to Table 1:

<sup>1</sup> 'Local languages used in education' states whether local languages or languages of wider communication (LWC) (i.e. other than national or official language) are used in education practice at any level or in any system of basic education (such as pre-primary, primary or lower secondary education, formal or non-formal system, run by the government or other stakeholders, such as local communities, NGOs etc.). Yes means that both instruction and some learning materials are in local languages. Therefore, situations in which teachers use a local language or a LWC orally in addition to the official language of instruction are not included here.

<sup>2</sup> 'Local languages used as media of instruction' refers to a situation in which local languages are used as the actual media of instruction at any level or system of basic education. Yes in bold means that local languages are used only in non-formal education by NGOs.

<sup>3</sup> 'Multiple languages in government system of education' refers to a situation in which more than one language is used in the government system of education (either formal or non-formal at any level of basic education as stated above). Thus, private formal schools or education projects by non-governmental organizations are not included in this column. Yes in bold means that despite more than one language being used, local languages as such are not.

<sup>4</sup> 'Languages used in the government system of education' lists the names of the languages used in the government system. Details of other languages are given in each country case. LWC = language of wider communication, local language, see definitions in Appendix 1.

<sup>5</sup> 'Access to education in L1 (percent)' refers to the estimated percentage of a nation's total population having access to education in learners' first language (L1). The criterion is linguistic, i.e. the proportion of population speaking as the mother tongue one of the languages used in education. Source: Walter (2004). Cambodian, Lao and Thai situations estimated by the author on the basis of data from Chazée (1999), Grimes (2000), Kingsada (2003), National Statistical Centre (1997), Schliesinger (2000, 2003), and Smalley (1994).

<sup>6</sup> 'Total number of languages' spoken in a given country. Source: Grimes (2000).

<sup>7</sup> Chazée (1999, 7, 14) claims that only about 35% of the population of Lao PDR are Tai Lao (also called *Lao Loum* or *Lowland Lao*). He maintains that other ethnic groups related to the Lao are included in higher figures of Lao population. However, there are no data on whether other Tai groups speak Lao as their mother tongue or not.

According to available data and the definition given in Note 1, only three nations, i.e. Brunei, Laos, and Singapore, do not use local language in any system of basic education.

The second column indicates whether local languages are used as the media of instruction at some level of basic education. The third column shows whether several languages are used in the government systems of formal and non-formal basic education. The fourth column lists the languages used in the government system. According to available data, in two countries – Laos and Myanmar – only the national language is used. However, in Cambodia, Thailand and Viet Nam, the use of local languages in education is a fairly recent phenomenon, and mainly confined to experimental pilot projects with strong support from agencies and organizations outside the government system. Further, in Brunei and Singapore, only major languages are used in the government system. Data in Columns 5 and 6 are elaborated on later.

The regional situation is more diverse and complex than the first three columns of Table 1 would indicate. Therefore, Tables 2 and 3 sum up the use of local languages in education in a slightly different way to provide more details.

Table 2 highlights the use of local languages in various systems of education, thus supplementing the data given in the first two columns of Table 1. Columns 1, 2 and 3 of Table 2 indicate the use of local languages in different systems: primary, non-formal (at any level) and adult education, respectively. Column 4 indicates whether local languages are used orally in classes. This data is not available on all countries, but this does not necessarily mean that local languages are not used orally in classrooms. Finally, the last two columns indicate whether mother tongue-based bilingual education is provided (Column 5), and which, if any, languages are used as the mother tongue in bilingual education (Column 6).

**Table 2. Use of Local Languages in Various Systems of Education in China and South-East Asia**

| Country            | Local languages used in primary education | Local languages used in non-formal education | Local languages used in adult education | Local languages used orally in classes | Mother-tongue based bilingual education | Languages used as mother tongues in bilingual education |
|--------------------|---|--|---|--|---|---|
| <b>China</b>       | Yes                                       | Yes  | Yes                                     | Yes                                    | Yes                                     | LLs, LWCs   |
| <b>Brunei</b>      | No  | No   | No                                      | –                                      | No                                      |   |
| <b>Cambodia</b>    | Yes                                       | Yes  | Yes                                     | Yes                                    | Yes                                     | LLs   |
| <b>Indonesia</b>   | Yes                                       | Yes  | –                                       | Yes                                    | No                                      |   |
| <b>Lao PDR</b>     | No  | No   | No                                      | Yes                                    | No                                      |   |
| <b>Malaysia</b>    | Yes                                       | Yes  | –                                       | –                                      | Yes                                     | Man., Tam.,   |
| <b>Myanmar</b>     | Yes                                       | Yes  | Yes                                     | Yes                                    | No                                      |   |
| <b>Philippines</b> | Yes                                       | Yes  | Yes                                     | Yes                                    | Yes                                     | LLs   |
| <b>Singapore</b>   | No  | No   | No                                      | –                                      | No                                      |   |
| <b>Thailand</b>    | Yes                                       | Yes  | Yes                                     | Yes                                    | No                                      |   |
| <b>Viet Nam</b>    | Yes                                       | Yes  | Yes                                     | Yes                                    | Yes                                     | Gia Rai, Hoa  |

Note 'LLs' = local languages, 'Man' = Mandarin Chinese, 'Tam' = Tamil.

Table 3 uses the same data as the first column of Table 1, this time indicating also the provider of education. Various basic education activities are divided on the basis of whether they are organized by government agencies or by non-governmental organizations.

According to Table 3, four distinct situations can be identified. Firstly, China represents a situation in which local languages are used in education to a great extent, and all activities are provided by government agencies. Viet Nam, on the other hand, is an example of a situation in which the government is the only provider of education in local languages, but local languages are not used much. Thirdly, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines can be grouped together to represent a situation in which both government agencies and the non-governmental sector provide education using local languages, but the extent of activities and the role of stakeholders vary in different countries. Finally, Thailand, Cambodia, and Myanmar could be grouped together to represent a situation in which education in local languages is mostly provided by the non-governmental sector, and the extent of activities varies.

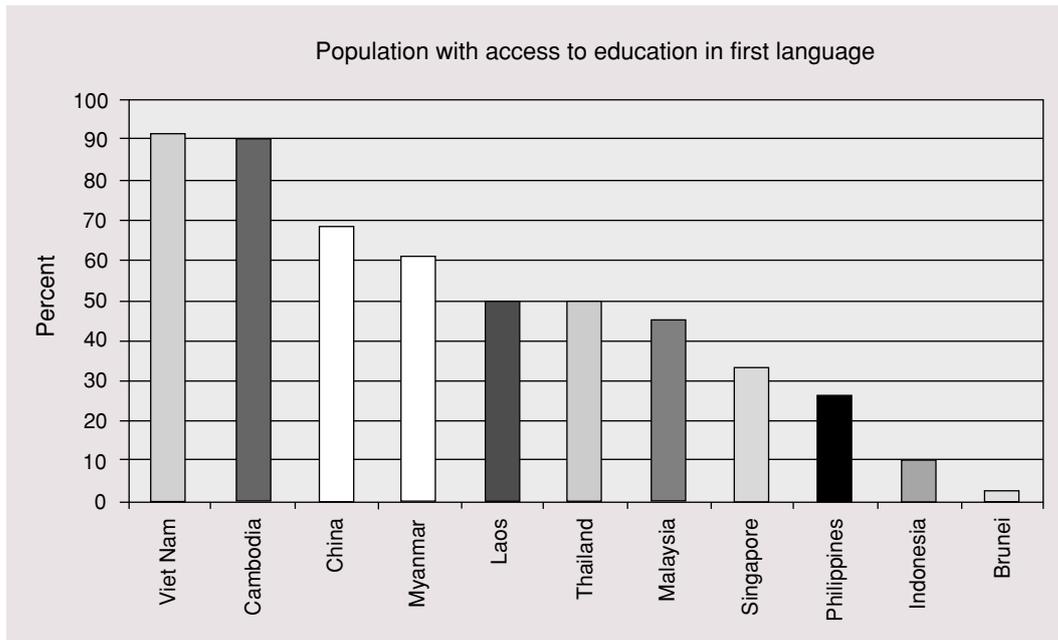
**Table 3. Local Language Use and the Provider of Services in Basic Education**

| <i>Provider</i>                | <i>Local language use in education</i> |             |
|--------------------------------|--|-------------|
|                                | <i>Little</i>                          | <i>Much</i> |
| <i>Government agencies</i>     | Viet                                   | China       |
| <i>Non-governmental sector</i> |  |             |

Note that Brunei, Laos and Singapore do not have educational activities in local languages, thus, these cases are not included.

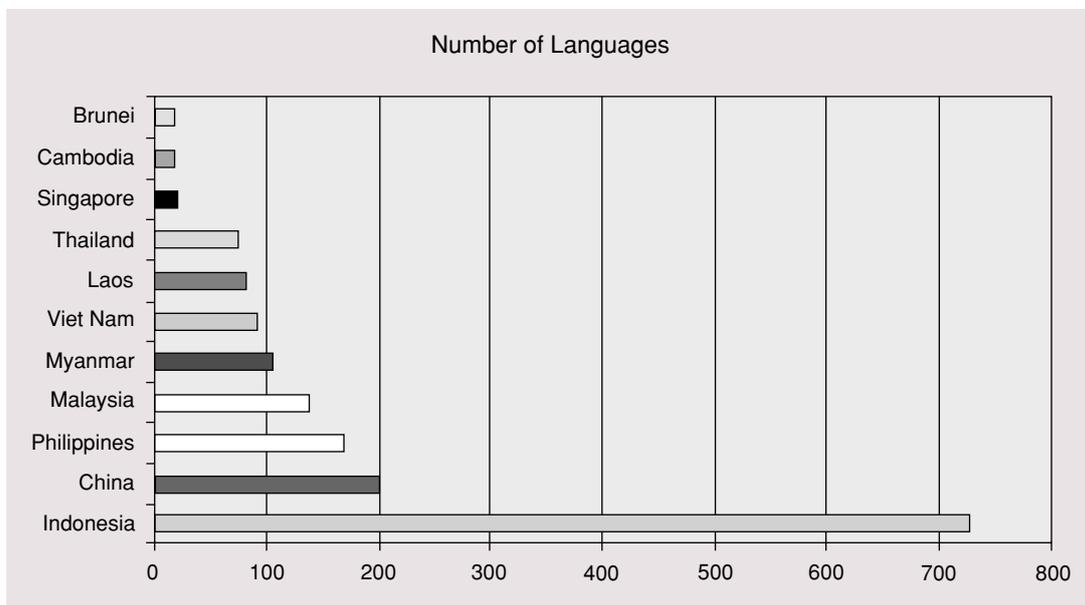
### Access to Basic Education in First Language

The fifth column of Table 1 provides an estimated percentage of national populations speaking languages of instruction as their first language (L1), or mother tongue. This means that if several languages of instruction are used in a given country, the total population speaking those languages as their mother tongue is counted. The data is from Walter (2004). He has modified and supplemented Grimes' (2000) data, and has, thus, been able to identify the situation in all countries of the world. Figure 1 displays the data on China and South-East Asia as a chart. The data shows that only in four nations do more than half of the population have access to education in L1. In Indonesia and Brunei, less than 10 percent of the citizens are able to receive education in their first language. On the other hand, in countries with a relatively small proportion of population being ethnolinguistic minorities, such as Cambodia and Viet Nam, only some 10 percent of the citizens do not have access to mother-tongue education.



Source: Walter (2004) [Cambodian, Lao and Thai situations estimated by the author on the basis of data from Chazée (1999), Grimes (2000), Kingsada (2003), National Statistical Centre (1997), Schliesinger (2000, 2003), and Smalley (1994).

**Figure 1. Estimated Proportion of National Populations with Access to Education in their First Language in China and South-East Asia**



Source: Grimes (2000).

**Figure 2. Estimated Number of Languages Spoken in China and South-East Asia**

## Linguistic Diversity in South-East Asia

The sixth column of Table 1 provides figures for the total number of languages spoken in each South-East Asian country. Figure 2 displays the same data in a graphic format. The data shows that there are no monolingual nations in the region. In every country, at least 17 languages are spoken, as in Brunei. On the other hand, more than 700 languages are spoken in Indonesia, about 200 in China, and 100-200 languages in Myanmar, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

## 4. Regional Trends in the Use of Local Languages in Education

### General Situation in the Region

This section sums up the trends regarding the use of local languages in basic education in South-East Asia and China. Earlier discussion explored the language issue in eleven countries. In most of these countries, local languages are used in education, but the extent varies significantly. China provides the most elaborate forms and widest range of models of education in local languages. Larger LWCs, as well as smaller local languages, are used at various levels of education – in some cases, up to the university level. However, not all minorities in China receive equal support, and many ethnolinguistic minorities in China are not any better off than most minority groups in South-East Asia.

No country in South-East Asia has such elaborate systems as China for including local languages in education. Of all eleven nations discussed in this article, mother tongue-based bilingual education can actually be found only in China, although there are promising pilot projects in other countries, such as those in Cambodia. In Malaysia, mother tongue-based bilingual education is provided only in major languages such as Mandarin Chinese and Tamil. Generally, “bilingual education” in South-East Asia means education in the national language and English. Cases of this can be found in Brunei, the Philippines, Singapore, and to some extent, Malaysia. Oral use of local languages is fairly common in all countries. There is no documented evidence from all countries, but it can be assumed that if minority students do not understand the medium of instruction, and if the teacher and her/his students have another common language, that language is used for classroom interaction and explaining the subject matter. A recent study from Tanzania and South Africa found that, despite the official language policy, teachers and students use languages with which they are most comfortable (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir 2004).

Benson (2003, 22) uses the concept of “foot-in-the-door” strategies, meaning “*measures that can be taken to facilitate a gradual process of change in classroom languages and interaction.*” Such strategies include the authorized use of oral mother tongue in classrooms, the use of the mother tongue in preschools, short-cut transitional bilingual education, the mother tongue as a school subject, and NFE and literacy programmes in the mother tongue. Further language development in minority languages and continuing participatory development of reading materials in local languages could be added to this list, as well. In most South-East Asian countries, some foot-in-the-door strategies are apparent. For instance, in Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand, a gradual process towards potential mother tongue-based bilingual education is taking place. In these countries, as well as in other parts of the world, such a process has usually started with community and NGO efforts in adult

and pre-primary education, and has been non-formal in structure. As a result of this, the government's formal system may have included local language components in the curricula, mainly using these languages orally in classrooms or teaching them as subjects. Yet, this has paved the way towards true bilingual education, or even to a change in the national language policy, as in Papua New Guinea (Klaus 2003a; Litteral 1999; Nagai 2001; Siegel 1997).

In most South-East Asian countries, the government supports in principle the use of local languages in education by means of legislation, such as constitutional or education laws and policies. However, these principles are not always implemented. In many countries, an evident mismatch in policy and practice exists, most notably in Indonesia, Myanmar and Viet Nam. In Viet Nam, for example, government officials often talk about bilingual education that includes minority languages. Yet, in fact, the practice is more like using local language orally in classrooms or teaching local languages as subjects with a fairly obvious goal of assimilating minority students into the majority population (Kosonen 2004; Save the Children-UK 2002).

Regionally, there is an increased interest in the use of local languages in education. Minority communities themselves are active in contributing to the use of their mother tongues in some form of education. This can be seen in an increasing number of countries with educational pilot projects using local languages. International organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF, as well as various donor agencies, are also focusing more than before on the use of the mother tongue in education.

The non-formal sector uses local languages more widely than the formal sector does. Civil society and non-governmental organizations implement most educational activities using local languages, usually a form of non-formal education. In some cases, such endeavours have become a part of the national system of education, either formal or non-formal. Cambodia seems to be heading this way.

### **Preconditions for the Successful Use of Local Languages**

A wealth of research is available on the use of minority languages in education. These are mainly case studies from around the world, but an analysis of these cases indicates some general prerequisites for basic education in local languages. Benson (2002, 2003), CAL (2001), Cenoz & Genesee (1998), Dutcher & Tucker (1996), Malone (2003), Malone & Arnove (1998), Robinson (1999), Stroud (2002), Tucker (1998), UNESCO (2003b, 2004b) and Watson (1999), for example, discuss these factors generally, and on the basis of a variety of situations, Asian countries included. Studies conducted in Asia and the Pacific point out similar factors. The following provide examples: CARE International Cambodia (2004), Escott (2000), Noorlander et al. (2003) and Thomas (2002, 2003) in Cambodia; Geary & Pan (2003) and Postiglione (1999) in China; Gustafsson (1991) in India; Dumatog & Dekker (2003), Hohulin (1995) and Young (2002) in the Philippines; Kosonen (2002a, 2002b, 2003) in Thailand; Kua (1998) and Smith (2001, 2003) in Malaysia; and Klaus (2003a, 2003b), Nagai (1998, 1999, 2001) and Siegel (1997) in Papua New Guinea. Aikman (1995), Hornberger (1997), Hornberger & King (2001), Hornberger & López (1998), King & Benson (2004), and Trudell (1993), for example, provide evidence from Latin America, and Benson (2001), Gfeller (2000), Herbert (1996), Hill (2002), Mbuagbaw (1999), Obanya (1999), Omolewa (2000), Robinson & Gfeller (1997) and Webb (1999) from various African situations. The prerequisites discussed here are also fairly similar to the factors

determined in successful programmes of non-formal education (Kosonen 1998) or learner-centred adult literacy (Malone & Arnove 1998).

Particularly important are supportive external conditions. Political conditions prevailing in the area must support, or at least permit, independent activities of minority peoples, particularly in education. Sufficient funding for activities is critical. Yet, it is also important that local language communities contribute to the effort in various ways – not necessarily financially – as this often strengthens the community ownership. The goals of local language education have rarely been achieved without supportive economic and political conditions. However, the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Hill 2002; Robinson & Gfeller 1997) shows that if a supportive environment exists for education in local languages, it can be successfully provided even under difficult economic circumstances.

Local initiatives seem more likely to be sustained than activities based on outsiders' initiatives. Local communities can be responsible for many activities in local language development and the provision of education in local languages. Outside contribution is needed if community members do not have the required linguistic and educational expertise. In some cases, the role of outsiders as consultants and trainers may be sufficient, but in most cases, there is a need for cooperation of local communities and outside stakeholders. Relevant outside stakeholders include local or foreign linguists, educators and other academics, as well as national or international NGOs, or various funding and donor agencies.

The community-based approach seems to be an inexpensive, efficient and sustainable way of providing literacy and basic education in local languages. However, this approach requires continuous and regular internal assessment, and the modification of existing practices. In most cases, this approach depends on multiple partnerships. Multipartite cooperation and coordination of various stakeholders' responsibilities must be unambiguous and straightforward, or otherwise cooperation may decelerate, or even paralyse, the endeavour. Clear delegation of roles, responsibilities and power is critical, and calls for transparency in all action. The key issue throughout the process is that the community itself is equipped to be responsible for most activities. This requires continuous awareness raising, community mobilization and various training activities.

The factors discussed above include some general preconditions for successful provision of education in local languages. Yet, the current knowledge about what supports and what hinders the provision of education in local languages is quite limited. More research is needed, especially in determining (a) which factors can be anticipated as critical before an education programme commences, (b) which factors are not critical, but rather facilitate the efforts, and (c) which factors can be identified only *ex post facto*. Furthermore, practitioners and researchers would benefit from knowing which factors are culture-specific and which are more universal. Thus, there is an apparent need for research that would thoroughly analyse different well-documented cases in different contexts, and would build also on the experience of personnel who have undertaken such endeavours. Further studies might shed light on factors thus far not determined.

## 5. Conclusions

In all South-East Asian countries except Brunei Darussalam, Lao PDR and Singapore, local languages are used in education at least to some extent. Brunei and Singapore use several languages as the media of instruction in the government education system, whereas Lao PDR uses only the national language. However, it can be assumed that local languages are used orally also in these countries. In Myanmar, only the non-governmental sector provides local language education, and only in non-formal education. The use of local languages in Cambodia and Thailand is still at the beginning stages in some pilot projects. In Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Viet Nam, local languages are being used in various ways, but only in a few cases as the medium of instruction.

Research and practical experiences from around the world demonstrate that the use of local languages in education is feasible. Curriculum development and materials production in local languages can be cost-effective. Innovative teaching and learning practises, and the use of native speakers of local languages as teachers, can help alleviate challenges that may seem to hinder the provision of education in the mother tongue. Local language education can be provided in ways that are not necessarily much more expensive than other basic education, particularly if education provided also reduces minority student retention and attrition rates (CAL 2001; Dutcher & Tucker 1996; Klaus 2003a, 2003b; Litteral 1999; Obanya 1999; Patrinos & Velez 1996; Tucker 1998). This is an extremely important point, as a common argument against bilingual and multilingual education is its assumed costliness.

Furthermore, there is sufficient evidence to prove that all languages can be written, and consequently used, in education. Numerous cases from South-East Asia and around the world demonstrate that collaboration of local communities and linguists can produce viable writing systems for previously unwritten languages, or further develop languages that already have tentative writing systems. The use of newly written languages in education, however, usually requires also the contribution of education specialists. The initial language development of a previously unwritten language can be expensive, but cooperation between local communities, academics, NGOs, civil society organizations, various donor agencies, as well as national governments, enable this to happen even in small language communities. Language development can be economically viable through cooperation (e.g. Klaus 2003a, 2003b; Litteral 1999; Robinson 1999; UNESCO 2003b). The principle of collaboration applies to all parts of local language education.

Most members of ethnolinguistic minority communities in South-East Asia have to start their education in a language they neither understand nor speak. Lessons learned elsewhere in the use of local languages could certainly be adapted to these contexts. Bilingual and mother tongue-based bilingual education benefit particularly those who are monolingual in a local language or who have an insufficient knowledge of the currently used medium of instruction. Consequently, it is imperative to search for different options that could be considered viable for alleviating the constraints of ethnolinguistic minority education in South-East Asia. This would benefit hundreds of minority communities and tens of millions of people.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Essential Concepts Used in the Article

The distinction of *language and dialect* is seen from the linguistic point of view emphasizing intelligibility. Thus, only if people speaking different speech varieties sufficiently understand each other and can communicate without difficulties, they speak dialects of a same language. If the intelligibility between speakers of different speech varieties is insufficient, they speak different languages.

**Mother tongue** may refer to different situations depending on the definition criteria used (Baker & Prys Jones 1998; Skutnabb-Kangas 1988, 16-18; 2000, 105-108; UNESCO 2003b, 15). Other terms such as or *first language* (L1), *vernacular (language)*, *native language* or *home language* are also used to refer to the mother tongue. Bilingual or multilingual people may have several mother tongues. The mother tongue may refer to at least the following situations: The mother tongue is a language: (a) that one has learnt first; (b) one identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others; (c) one knows best; and (d) one uses most.

**Second language** (L2) is a language that is not the mother tongue of a person, but she/he speaks or has to study it. It may be a foreign language or another non-native language of the learner. Second language may also be a language that is not spoken in the immediate environment of the learner, or it may be a language widely spoken outside the home. For ethnolinguistic minorities, the second language usually is the national or the official language that is used in contexts such as schools and interaction with government agencies or in communication with other language groups.

**Local language** is a language (a) without a written form; (b) for which language development is not yet complete; or (c) that is otherwise not considered suitable for education, for example, due to its low status or small number of speakers (CAL 2001; Robinson 1999; Vawda & Patrinos 1999; Walter 2004). In minority settings, the local language is usually the first language of the given ethnolinguistic minority group.

**Language of Wider Communication (LWC)** is a language that speakers of different mother tongues use to communicate with each other. LWC is also called *lingua franca* or *trade language*. At the national level, LWC is usually the national or official language. In multilingual situations of South-East Asia, LWCs are usually major regional languages that various ethnolinguistic groups use in communication with each other.

**Language (or medium) of instruction** is a language that is used for teaching and learning the subject matter of the curriculum in a given educational system or a part of it. **Bilingual education** refers to the use of more than one language in education. In an ideal situation education begins with the learner's first language (L1) and a second language (L2) is gradually introduced later. **Biliteracy** refers to the use of two (or more) languages for reading and writing (Hornberger 2003). Benson (2003) provides a useful concept of **mother tongue-based bilingual education** referring to "*a form of schooling that uses the L1 for teaching beginning literacy (reading and writing) and basic concepts such as mathematics, while teaching the L2 as a second or foreign language, ideally using appropriate*

*language teaching methods.*” *True bilingual education* is also used in this article to refer to mother tongue-based bilingual education in order to differentiate it from bilingual education “*in name only.*”

**Submersion education** is the opposite of using the learner’s mother tongue in education, and it refers to the use of a medium of instruction that the learner does not speak or understand. Usually submersion education takes place when minority children with limited proficiency in the majority language are put into majority language classrooms without any provision for accommodating or alleviating the learners’ disadvantages that result from not knowing the language (Baker 2001, 195-198; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, 582-587).

**Language development** is a part of *language planning* or what Spolsky (2004) calls *language management*. Language planning – in its simplest form – can be divided into three parts: status planning, corpus planning, and acquisition planning (CAL 2001; Cooper 1989; Deumert 2001; Kaplan & Baldauf 1997; Robinson 1999; Wright 2004). *Status planning* refers to language policy, for example, decisions about which languages are used for official and educational purposes. While *corpus planning* refers to the development of orthographies, i.e. writing systems and the standardisation of language use. In this article, language development of local languages refers mainly to corpus planning. *Acquisition planning* refers to approaches used to help people learn languages.

**Ethnolinguistic minorities** can be defined as nations, nationalities, or people. For the purposes of this discussion, ethnolinguistic minority refers to a group of people who: (a) share a culture (or ethnicity) and/or language of their own that distinguishes them from other groups of people; and (b) in terms of numbers, are fewer than the predominant group(s) of people in the given state. May (2001) provides an excellent and thorough discussion of these issues. For the purposes of this article, language rather than ethnicity is the determining factor. If someone does not speak the national or official language or the language of the dominant group of the state as one’s mother tongue, one can be considered a member of an ethnolinguistic minority. Ethnolinguistic minorities may either be indigenous or they may be more recent migrants to the given nation. Furthermore, it is assumed that language – the first language of the learner, in particular – is a far more critical factor in educational achievement than ethnicity, as such (e.g. Baker 2001; CAL 2001; Cummins 2000; Dutcher & Tucker 1996; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000; Thomas & Collier 1997, 2002).

# COUNTRY REPORTS

## Synthesis of Reports

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Participants at the regional workshop prepared country reports describing the process of implementing the minority language programme, and the ways in which the implementation of the programme has impacted the community for which it was planned.

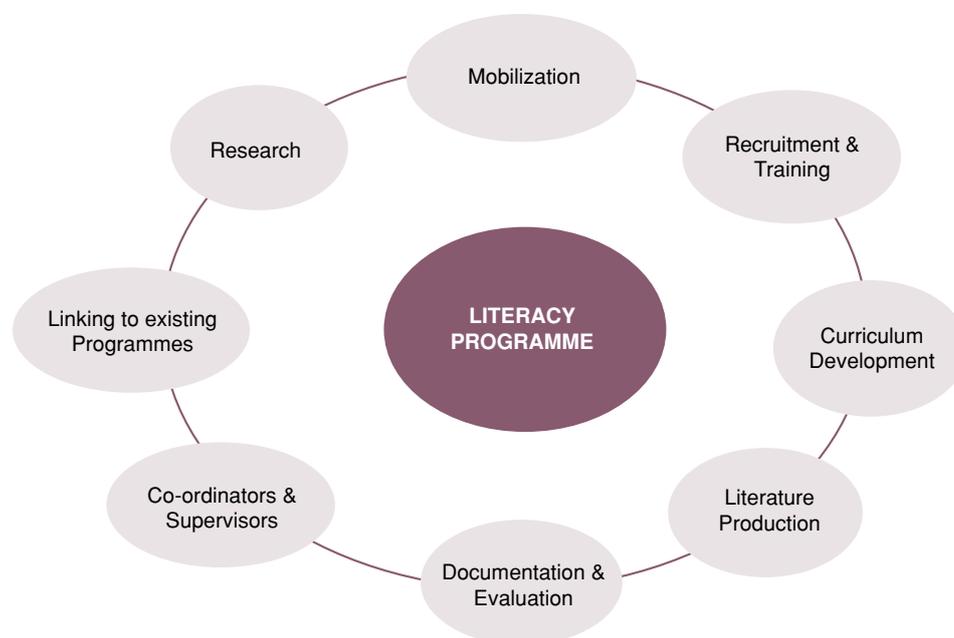
The reports cover the following topics:

1. Brief background information on socio-economic situation in the country
2. EFA plan focusing on NFE and literacy in the country
3. Policy on mother tongue/bilingual education in the country
4. Project on mother tongue/bilingual literacy programmes for minority communities:
  - List of names and roles of organizations that are involved in the project
  - Background information on the project site including minority groups
  - Needs assessment/community mobilization
  - Identification of learning needs
  - Development of writing systems (orthography development)
  - Process of developing teaching-learning materials and contents of the materials
5. Outcomes of the project – How the project helps to improve literacy programmes for minorities, e.g. relevance to community's needs and quality of life improvement. Could the project bring about any positive or negative change in terms of motivation of learning? Empowerment? Capacity-building?
6. Project challenges and possible solutions
7. Future plans for
  - Facilitators/teacher training
  - Literacy classes
  - Action research on the project
  - Policy and expansion of the project

### Themes

There are a number of common themes that appear throughout literacy programme country reports, which identify certain considerations and activities that are crucial for the successful development of a bilingual literacy programme. The graphic below (Malone 2003) depicts the components of

a sustainable literacy programme. The country reports indicate that the implementers of the multilingual programmes have, indeed, taken these factors into account during their programme planning phases.



### Community involvement

The need for community members to be involved from the beginning is highlighted in all reports. A key to successful community management of literacy approaches for minority language is the involvement in decision-making of influential community members from the beginning. It is respectful to target communities for programme initiators to view the community members as the leaders/owners of the programme intervention, and also practical, since sustainability of a localized literacy programme depends upon its support from the targeted community.

Within the country reports, issues of responsiveness to felt needs within the community are discussed. Participatory needs assessments will help the community, GO's or NGO's involved in the implementation of a multilingual education programme assess ways in which the literacy programme can help minority people. Planners cannot begin to generate programme content or methodology until they get such information from the community. This community input is, in fact, the foundation on which the entire programme is built. The research and community involvement that is evident in each of the country reports is vital for the establishment of a firm foundation for any community-based, community-managed literacy and education programme.

In the report from India, we read that other communities are motivated by what they see happening within the pilot programme. This is excellent – community motivation and mobilization for the expansion of multilingual education approaches is happening here through neighbouring communities observing the impact of literacy.

Community consultation and decision-making during the process of orthography development is also crucial. The written language is just as much a part of a community's cultural identity as is its oral form. In the reports from Bangladesh, Thailand and India, we see that community involvement in the development of an appropriate writing system was significant. Though time-consuming, this investment in time inevitably reaps rewards in terms of the community choosing to own and accept the written form of their language.

The reports reflect that mobilization, recruitment, identification of co-ordinators/supervisors and training occur most effectively when respected community leaders identify those who will take significant programme roles.

### **Literature production approaches**

The country report from Thailand outlines in detail the processes involved in the participative production of teaching and learning materials. Building on a solid foundation of rigorous linguistic research, the project planners worked carefully together with the community to make appropriate choices regarding the writing system to be used, and options for representing sounds that had no parallel in the Thai language. Then, with community participation, stories and texts were written to both test the writing system and provide reading material for pilot classes. Locally produced materials or teaching/learning materials that are student generated are more likely to reflect the context and needs of the learners. Materials that are translated from the national language or materials that are adapted from other cultural contexts and modified for use in a bilingual literacy programme should be assessed carefully for their suitability. A review of the country reports shows that both approaches have been tried within the UNESCO-APPEAL project. As the literacy programmes continue, it will be helpful for participating countries to evaluate the effectiveness of materials that they have created.

### **Links with other agencies and existing programmes**

A link between literacy programmes and other development efforts emphasizes the principle of immediacy in programme design. Adult learners want to be able to use what they have learned to improve their lives. The report from the Chinese programme among the Lahu shows that there has been particular thought given to poverty alleviation by structuring the programme to help meet the economic needs of the participants.

Within the Philippine report, links to established educational assessment programmes are mentioned that give accreditation to learners. Such recognition is often an incentive for learners to participate in non-formal education programmes.

Within programme development, contributions from the academic sector (linguists and anthropologists), universities and other agencies complement the work done at local and government levels. Within the preliminary baseline research that informs programme development, it is helpful to analyse the agencies that have a concern/involvement in a community's language development activities.

## Evaluation and documentation

Integral to such a programme outlining innovative plans for mother-tongue literacy programmes is effective evaluation of both the process and the outcomes. Documentation of the activities implemented and background to decisions that are taken will be invaluable as governments and NGO's consider the potential for replicating the projects in other ethnolinguistic communities. Documentation needs to be regularly updated and compiled in order for it to be an effective resource for others. These reports provide a good foundation for such ongoing documentation and evaluation.



## Bangladesh

### “Action Research on Literacy and Curriculum Development in the Mother Tongue for the Oraon Community of Northwest Bangladesh”

Implemented by ASHRAI Bangladesh

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#### 1. Background: Socio-economic situation in the country

Bangladesh has a geographical area of 147,570 square kilometres. It has a high average population density of 775 people per square kilometre, with an annual growth rate of 2.1%. Indigenous people in Bangladesh are found in the old districts of Rajshahi, Bogura, Rangpur, Dinajpur and Pabna in the Barind region; Maymansingh, Jamalpur, Sylhet districts of the northwestern border; part of Tangail district (north central region) and the entire hill tracts of Chittagong. The tribal populations are not counted separately in the country's census. Instead, they are counted as part of the minority community, along with Hindus, Buddhists and Christians. Their numbers are, thus, difficult to ascertain.

According to the 1991 Bangladesh Census, the size of the indigenous population was 1.2 million (actual number is 1,205,987) which constituted around 1.13% of the country's total population. This was an increase of 3,008,150, or 34.32%, in a decade, or 3.43% per annum from 1981 to 1991. The 1991 census documented 30 groups as indigenous/tribal people in Bangladesh. Other literature, however, indicates as many as 58 groups of indigenous/tribal people are living in different parts of Bangladesh. Whatever may be their status in number, it is recognized that besides Bengali,

a significant number of minority groups live in different parts of the country. They have separate social, cultural, religious and economic identities, and are easily distinguishable by their different religious, language, and cultural characteristics. Inter-community administrative and judicial systems, patterns of marriage, social and family life, and values that they continue to preserve and practise also contribute to this separate identity. (S. Akhter & M. Kamal)

## 2. Social Context of Tribal People

The ethnic communities live mostly in the border regions of the country with a numerically larger Bengali population. Distinctly different from the majority of the country, ethnic communities are sometimes forced into situations that generate tension and conflict at the cultural, psychological and economic levels.

Broadly speaking, there are three linguistic families among the tribes in Bangladesh. These are:

- Tibeto-Burmese: All the tribes of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and the Garos, Kochs, and Tipras
- Austro-Asiatic or Mon-Khmer: Khasis, Santal, Mundas, and Mahalis
- Dravidians: Oraons, Paharis, etc.

The Chakma and Tanchingya language is a dialect variant of Bengali. The Rajbanshis, Pahari, Kochs and Pathors have lost their original language, and have been speaking Bengali. Almost all the tribal people are now bilingual. They have learnt the Bengali language in order to communicate with wider Bengali society; however, they speak their own language among themselves. The Garos and Khasis are matrilineal, while other tribes are patrilineal. Though a moiety structure is found among the Garos, all other tribes have a clan system.

The majority of indigenous peoples in the Barind and north central region are the original inhabitants of the Chotonagpur Plateau (Ali. A: Santals of Bangladesh, 1996).

The table below shows the linguistic breakdown of the tribal communities in northwestern Bangladesh that have been working under the ASHRAI literacy project:

|    | Name of the Ethnic Community   | Language they speak | Other Language        |
|----|--|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Santal   | Santali             | Can understand Bangla |
| 2. | Oraons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in Barind Tract</li> <li>• in Dinajpur Area</li> </ul> | Sadri<br>Kuruk      | Do<br>Do              |
| 3. | Pahans   | Sadri Mixed         | Do                    |
| 4. | Mundas   | Santali Mixed       | Do                    |
| 5. | Mahatos  | Sadri               |                       |
| 6. | Raj Khatriyos or Sing Khatriyos  | Sadri Mixed         | Do                    |
| 7. | Rajowars   | Sadri Mixed         | Do                    |
| 8. | Mahalıs  | Santali Mixed       | Do                    |
| 9. | Karmokar   | Sadri & Hindu Mixed | Do                    |

|     | Name of the Ethnic Community  | Language they speak          | Other Language |
|-----|---|------------------------------|----------------|
| 10. | Patni   | Hindi Mixed                  | Do             |
| 11. | Kolkamar  | Sadri & Hindi Mixed          | Do             |
| 12. | Robidas   | Hindi Mixed                  | Do             |
| 13. | Turis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shing Turis</li> <li>• Mredah Turis</li> </ul> | Sadri Mixed<br>Santali Mixed | Do<br>Do       |
| 14. | Chais   | Sadri & Hindu Mixed          | Do             |
| 15. | Rais  | Sadri Mixed                  | Do             |
| 16. | Godats  | Sadri Mixed                  | Do             |
| 17. | Bhuyas  | Sadri & Hindi Mixed          | Do             |
| 18. | Malpaharis  | Bangla                       | –              |

### Socio-economic situation

The tribal populations hardly have any land of their own. A large number of them do not even have homesteads. Most of them are either share-croppers, or work as labourers. With income being small in comparison to expenditure, tribal people are forced to borrow from moneylenders and other rich landlords. There are no constitutional safeguards accorded to tribal groups.

### Health situation

Access to health facilities in terms of medical care, family planning, water supply and sanitation is minimal. Thirty to forty households share drinking water from one well. Usually, they use pond water for domestic purposes like cleaning utensils and clothing. There are generally no latrines, and almost all practise open defecation.

### Gender situation

Most all of the adult women are involved in both farm and household activities. The volume of work that tribal women do is more than double that of men. Wife-beating because of perceived negligence of duty is a very common scenario.

Tribal women (except the Garo community) do not have hereditary rights on land. Only sons inherit land and other resources. There is wage discrimination between men and women. Male workers may earn Tk. 50 daily, but female labourers receive only Tk. 40.



## Representation in elected bodies

Each ethnic group has its own internal organization to perform their socio-political activities at village and regional levels. Positions in these tribal organizations are hereditary, and often in a state of disorganization.

Until now, a very few – from ethnic minority communities living in the plains – have contested in general elections for parliament, or at the district, sub-district and union levels. Ethnic minority people in the Northwest, however, are distant from both local and national politics.

## Education

An extremely low level of literacy prevails in the tribal communities. According to the 1991 Census, only 14.1% are literate. The female literacy rate is only 7.41% compared to 20.5% male literacy. (Biponna Bhumija by M. Kamal & A. Kibria)

In both the government and non-government schools, tribal children aged between 6 to 10 years are admitted. After some time, however, they tend to drop out of school due to cultural and language problems. The enrolment rate of tribal children in primary schools is much lower than non-tribal children.

In government and non-government schools and literacy classes, the medium of instruction is Bengali (the national language). There is no provision for using tribal language in these schools. A negligible number of teachers from indigenous communities are recruited in the government/non-government schools and colleges.

Indigenous people live in remote villages, and often they are far from the government/non-government schools. Children have to walk many miles to get to the school. On average, they have to walk 3 to 5 km. There are few government schemes related to indigenous literacy and education. There are quotas assigned to admission numbers, scholarships and the teaching profession, but these are not maintained properly.

In the northwest plains of Bangladesh, the indigenous people have formed a political platform called Jatio Adivashi Parishad in order to address their socio-political issues.

The government allocates approximately 6 lac taka to the indigenous inhabitants of upozilas<sup>1</sup> for their educational, as well as cultural, development.

The relationship between the tribal and non-tribal people is often strained due to socio-economic and cultural exploitation, abuse of human rights, forced eviction from their homesteads and other causes. Through this insecurity in socio-economic and cultural life, indigenous peoples have been pushed to the margins of society and have experienced powerlessness. Thus, on many levels, the tribal people are isolated from wider society.

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<sup>1</sup> “Upazilla” means sub-district.

### **3. A Brief Profile of ASHRAI**

#### **Mission and vision of ASHRAI**

Since 1990, ASHRAI has been working with tribal people in northwest Bangladesh to assist in their socio-economic development. In 1999, ASHRAI revisited its Vision, Mission and Goal statement through a strategic planning workshop, framing its course of direction for the next 10 years, 2000-2009.

#### **Vision**

Integration of tribal and non-tribal very poor people within the national stream of economic development through human resource development and self-reliance.

#### **Mission**

Develop self-help and self-reliant groups/organizations in order to achieve social and economic development.

#### **Goal**

To improve the living condition of the tribal and the very poor people.

#### ***Strategies to fulfil its goals and objectives***

- Organize tribal people into village/para-level societies, Para-Committees (PC) and Union-level Tribal Development Councils (TDC)
- Provide human resource development training to the societies
- Initiate savings and credit programmes with their own savings funds, and arrange life skill and livelihood training
- Provide revolving loan funds (RLF) to cater to the increased demand for loans by
- Establish linkage and coordination programmes with GOB and NGOs
- Promote ASHRAI's organizational and institutional development

### **4. Problem Analysis: Indigenous People in Barind Tract**

It has been observed that simple wage enhancement cannot solve problems when people are facing abject poverty, landlessness, illiteracy and isolation. From this perspective, ASHRAI started institution building and organization of savings/credit groups among the Adivasis. However, these are not enough when the people are facing widespread illiteracy, abuse of human rights, and underdevelopment.

There is still no special government development programme for people living in the areas of northwest Bangladesh to address and help them overcome their backwardness. According to national statistics, the agricultural farm sector is almost visibly oversaturated. In all probability, it will not

be able to absorb much more of the rapidly growing labour force. Thus, tribal children must have good primary education to develop their personal resources, which can enable them to access secondary and higher level education and training. This can help them diversify their economic activities by transcending the traditional occupations of their parents through future employment in non-farm sectors. Such a move might very well be their best hope for survival and sustenance as equal citizens with basic human rights and dignity.

### **Education status in the country**

According to the 2001 Census, Rajshahi Division has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest population density in the country at 869 people per sq. km. The average density for the country is 834 people per sq. km. Though the Ministry of Education claims the present literacy rate is 62%, non-government education campaign forum research revealed that the current rate of literacy in the country is only 41.4%.

The study states that there is a large 12% gap between male and female literacy, and a staggering 26% disadvantage for rural people compared to their urban counterparts. The literacy status of the population manifests large disparities in terms of gender, socio-economic attributes and geography. Though the national literacy is 41.4%, it is much lower for Rajshahi Division, which is only 37.2%.

A study focused on tribal literacy status is yet to be done. From the above figures and scenario, it may be assumed that it would be much lower than 37.2% – it may be half or even less than the figures above.

### **ASHRAI's education programme**

Recognizing the prevailing poor literacy rate among tribal communities in the Barind region, ASHRAI has been facilitating non-formal primary education (NFPE) in tribal villages with assistance from the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). From 1992 to 2001, about 900 tribal children from poor families in ethnic minority communities graduated from 10 NFPE schools. Of those, about 80% are continuing their education in formal secondary schools. This high rate of participation in secondary schooling by NFPE graduates indicates a positive trend towards sustainability of the education programme, as well as for ensuring that tribal children can qualify for higher education.

ASHRAI has been implementing non-formal primary education for tribal children and life skills training for adults using the Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT) approach. It runs 133 schools for tribal children through BRAC's NFPE approach. In addition, there are two pilot schools in Oraon mother tongue where research is taking place to develop educational materials in the mother tongue of the Oraon Community, the second largest indigenous community in northwest Bangladesh. There are 320 Lahanti Circles (adult learning through REFLECT approach) for women. There are also 200 Literacy Centres to facilitate continued learning for adult women who have graduated from Lahanti Circles.

From past experience, ASHRAI has realized that a congenial environment in the learning centre or school is an important factor in developing interest in learning, and in avoiding attrition among tribal children and adult learners.

## 5. The Oraon

The Northwest prefecture of Bangladesh exhibits a luminous mosaic of about eighteen different ethnic groups with over 10 languages and dialects mostly belonging to Austro-Asiatic, Dravidian and Indo-European linguistic families. The Oraon are the second largest group in northwest Bangladesh. The Oraon mother tongue is either *Kurukh* or *Shadri*, while their wider social setting is largely Bengali in orientation.

### The need for a functioning system of communication

The Oraon community of Northwest Bangladesh is located in remote rural areas, but they are increasingly coming into contact with and participating in national life. *Kurukh* or *Shadri*, the Oraon languages, are exclusively and uniformly the languages of the home. Skills in Bengali are, however, a precondition for developing wider connections, since government officials are Bengali and service providers in all sectors are Bengali. Moreover, the association of Bengali language with education and literacy requires the Oraons to learn Bengali for survival and existence.

## 6. Project Description

In 2002, the project “Action Research on Literacy and Curriculum Development in the mother tongue for the Oraon Community of Northwest Bangladesh” was launched with assistance from UNESCO.

### Objectives of the Project

The purpose of the project was to explore the means and tools for the development of education materials in the mother tongue. The viability of basic education in the mother tongue project required a comprehensive overview of the language structure and linguistic relativity of the language.

#### *Study Goals*

The specific study goals were to:

- Prepare an inventory of the basic phones and grammatical rules of the language
- Reveal the existing lexicon and semantic structure of the particular language
- Explore the perceptions of local interest groups in relation to different linguistic modes of communication
- Examine interactions, i.e. reading, writing, speaking, and listening
- Unveil the perceptions of local interest groups on solutions to resolve identified constraints
- Introduce and develop education in mother tongue
- Determine the positive and negative impact of the perceived constraints and explored solutions on various interest groups

- Explore the viability of the proposed mother tongue basic education project in its broader sense – the result of a cost-benefit analysis, not only in economic, but also in cultural, social, and environmental terms

## 7. Implementation Plan and Study Activities

Implementation of the project has been structured around the following implementation plan:

### Study Activities

- *Project Briefing:* The study will begin with a briefing on the Action Research Project by core team members to key ASHRAI education programme staff.
- *Contact with Local Stakeholders:* The team will contact local stakeholders of the target ethnic community. The objective of the activity is to formally seek the local people's help in conducting the study.
- *Reading and Reviewing Secondary Sources:* The study team will review the available information obtained from different sources. The team will analyse the information using a defined structural format. This format will be developed at the beginning of the study. If any previous study report and journal articles are available, those will also be reviewed at this stage.
- *Field Reconnaissance:* Field reconnaissance is vital. The study problem is definitely a new one, and is of critical importance. Therefore, it is necessary to go to the field and to assess the situation before conducting fieldwork. The team will identify possible constraints and threats, and will devise the best possible fieldwork plan.
- *Orientation and Training for the Field Team:* A seven-day training will be organized for the field team. If necessary, interim training will be a regular activity for this study, as it is a highly critical and dynamic research issue. The research consultants and experts will conduct the training to familiarize the field team with the methods and tools, including rapport-building skills and analytical tools.
- *Data Collection Regarding Language Structure and Related Phenomena:* Data will be collected on language structure and other related phenomena. In the secondary sources review, information will be gathered on the linguistic aspects of the ethnic community. In light of this review, the study team will survey different categories and levels of speakers. A number of group discussions will be conducted using this approach.
- *Contact with Key Informants:* In the first three months, the study team hopes to identify potential key informants, and to establish confident relationships with them. After questionnaire surveying and initial contact with key informants, a series of in-depth interviews will follow.
- *Data Collection on Culture and Language:* This stage of the research will focus on language classification with representative samples of all speaker categories and levels. Selected speakers will be chosen on the basis of field reconnaissance and in-depth interview with key informants. All the field team will be included in this activity.

- *Data Analysis and Reporting:* Data will be analysed continuously from the data collection period. Reporting will be a continuous activity during this period. Two interim reports, one draft report and one final report, will be produced over the duration of the study.
- *Documentation of Writing System and Language Structure:* After six to eight months, the team will document the writing system and language structure of the ethnic community's language.
- *Testing the Writing System and Language Structure:* The initial orthography and language structure will be tested in pilot schools established by the project and amended as necessary. Review must be a regular activity during the research project.
- *Finalising the Writing System and Language Structure:* At the end of the study period, the team will submit a final recommended orthography and language structure. Sample education materials will be developed, which in turn will test the appropriateness of the writing system and language structure.
- *Establishing a Pilot Primary School:* The Action Research Project Team will set up and run a low-cost primary school for 3 months beginning January 2003 as a laboratory school for the Research Team to apply and test the results of their research.
- *Level and Location of the School:* The Pilot School will be located in a suitable place in an Oraon village within the selected project area. Thirty pupils – boys and girls – will be enrolled. The teacher will be selected from the Adivasi Oraon Community. The teacher will have a Secondary School Certificate Examination degree.
- *Duration of the Project:* The Action Research Project will last 3 years, beginning from October 2002 to September 2005. At the end of each year, the Project will have produced Course Curriculum and Primers for class I, II & III, respectively.
- *Selection of Study Area:* In order to maximize interaction between the researchers and the community, the selected study area will be where the density of Oraon people is highest in the region.



## 8. Implementation of the Project: Developing Education Materials

### Project Briefing

A briefing session on the Action Research Project was organized for its core members and ASHRAI's key education programme officials at the beginning of the project.

### **Contact with local stakeholders**

The team visited and communicated with local stakeholders of indigenous communities living in different parts of the region. The study and research was carried out with the direct help of the local community leaders.

### **Reading and review secondary sources**

The team successfully developed materials for the intended curriculum through reading and reviewing available information and resource books obtained from several sources. A survey report of 'Dip Shikha' and writings from chief researcher Dr. M.A. Jalil's 'Uraon,' a research-based information bank, proved invaluable for this exercise.

### **Field Exploration**

The team selected the best possible way to approach fieldwork among the communities. Although it initially encountered some constraints and threats at the local level, the team eventually successfully carried out the fieldwork.

### **Orientation and training for the field team**

Training sessions were conducted for the field team. The Chief Researcher conducted the training to familiarize the team with methods and tools, rapport-building skills and analytical skills. These issues are critical for effective research work.

### **Collecting Oraon language data**

During the secondary source appraisal, members of the tribal community expressed certain important concerns. In light of the appraisal, the study team surveyed different categories and levels of speakers in isolated Oraon villages from different Northwest districts, i.e. Pabna, Sirajgonj, Natore, Chapai Nowabgonj, Naogaon, Joypurhat, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Nilphamari and Thakurgaon. At the same time, a number of group discussions with Oraon people were held in different places.

### **Inputs from the key-informants**

To ensure community participation and get genuine information, the research team identified some potential key informants from different parts of the region: Gonesh Kha Kha and Utpal Minji (Rangpur), Jogendra Nath Toppo and Ruhiny Kanta Ekka (Sirajgonj), Dr. Modan Kumar Barowar (Niamotpur), Sugrib Kumar Sarder and Usha Rani Lakra (Gomostapur), and Sumitra Lakra (Porsha). These resource people were very helpful by providing relevant information and by assisting directly in developing relevant materials.

### **Data collection on culture and language**

In order to reflect the culture, language, and heritage of the tribe in the curriculum, the research team collected representative samples on vocabulary/dialects used among the Oraon communities

in different places. The team needed to survey a variety of Oraon villages in northwest Bangladesh, especially Sirajgonj, Chapai Nowabgonj, Nachol, Naogaon, Rangpur and Dinajpur districts to get information on the Sadri and Kuruk languages.

### **Analysis of data**

Chief Researcher, Dr. M.A. Jalil, analysed the field data. Antim Ekka, Utpal Minji, Ratan Siddique, Fahmida Haque and key officials of the ASHRAI education programme assisted him. The team has done the following:

- Comparative study on the GO and NGOs' existing educational materials
- Review of Government of Bangladesh primary education curricula
- Comparative study and sampling on the Sadri language of Northwest region
- Identifying tribal community areas on the basis of Sadri and Kuruk languages

### **Design and development of 1<sup>st</sup> year based draft Education Materials**

Through survey, collection of information and data analysis, the curriculum developers and Chief Researcher developed a draft curriculum for the Sadri language. During the development process, the team followed the Government of Bangladesh Primary Education Policy. The team considered and developed primers on three basic subjects – Primary Literature, Social Environment and Numeracy. These three books on three different subjects contain the following areas:

- Introduction to the alphabet
- Verbal language skills
- Saying name and address
- Saying number of family members
- Learning from the environment
- Drawing pictures by using numeric values
- Counting numbers 1 to 100 verbally and in writing
- Telling stories, rhymes and singing (individually)

## **9. Outcomes of the Project**

### **Expected Outcomes from the Project**

The following were the expected outcomes from the research study:

- An inventory of all Oraon lexicon
- Local classification system of language use
- Perceived solutions on constraints of local language use by the target groups
- Development of curriculum for literacy programme in mother tongue for Oraon children

## **Major Project Activities**

### **Staff Recruitment**

An experienced and qualified Researcher who is also a Linguist (full time), three Material Developers (part time), and a Project Support Officer (full time) were appointed to manage the project. A female member of the tribal community who has sat for the BA exam was also hired as Teacher.

### **Location of the Pilot School**

To select a suitable Oraon village, the Chief Researcher and Programme Coordinator of AHSRAI travelled to many villages in different areas. After initial selection of several potential villages, a survey was conducted for final selection. Following the village selection survey, the Pilot School was set up in an Oraon village named Agolpur, under Godagary thana of Rajshahi district. The school was opened on 18 February 2003.

### **Child Situation**

Thirty children were selected out of 72 surveyed – 51% girls/49% boys. Those who were selected had never enrolled in any school before. The age range of the children was between 6 and 10 years. All of them belonged to the ethnic Oraon minority community.

### **Organizing Workshop on Finalizing the Curriculum of Class I**

A one day workshop was organized on December 21, 2002 in ASHRAI Training Centre, Rajshahi to review the draft materials and solicit opinions from tribal leaders and educationalists. Twenty one participants actively participated in the discussions and provided their thoughtful and creative input. This helped immensely in finalising the materials and curriculum. All of them were Sadri users/specialists drawn from different educational institutions and Government Organizations. The books were published and put into use following the workshop.

### **Orientation Course for Teacher**

Just before opening the school, an orientation was held to train the teacher in use of the newly developed materials, some common teaching methods and implementation of the programme. The Chief Researcher organized the orientation at the ASHRAI Training Centre.

### **Parents Committee**

To ensure both the smooth operation of the school and community participation in the Action Research, a Parents Committee was formed in the pilot school village. The Parents Committee consists of the school children's parents, and is responsible for the general supervision of the school. The parents committee is composed of seven members.

### **Competency Level of the Students**

According to observation and tests, our students have already achieved a satisfactory competency level in the areas of reading, writing, calculation and awareness, as follows:

#### **Hamar Bai – Parthom Bhag (Literacy for Class I)**

The students are able to:

- Make words using the alphabet
- Rhyme words according to the order of alphabet
- Spell words without conjoint letters
- Read sentences correctly without conjoint letters
- Write simple sentences correctly after listening, without conjoint letters
- Know and write vowels and consonants

#### **Awaw Anko Shikhbaei – Parthom Bhag (Mathematics for Class I)**

The students are able to:

- Recognize numbers 1 to 100
- Write numbers 1 to 50
- Add two digit numbers following the rules of addition
- Subtract two digit sums following the rules of subtraction

#### **Hamar Dekhal Paribesh – Parthom Bhag (Social studies for Class I)**

The students are able to:

- Describe a family, family members and the work of their parents
- Explain the importance of living together peacefully with neighbours
- Explain the importance of safe drinking water
- Name different food, fruits and flowers
- Explain the differences between towns and villages
- Know about kinds of roads in our country
- Know about our national anthem, fruits, flower, birds etc.
- Understand the advantages of cleanliness and disadvantages of dirtiness
- Describe the advantages of eating good food and its vital role for our body
- Know about the indigenous communities in our country

### **Present Status of the Action Research Project**

As was mentioned earlier, one pilot school was opened in February 2003 in Agholpur village, which is now fully operational with 26 students who are now in Class II. Second year materials have been developed for class testing, and these will be reviewed before being finalized. Another pilot school opened in January 2004 in Edolpur Oraon village, where 35 children are in Class I, learning in the Sadri language.

## **10. Challenges of the Project and Possible Solutions**

When the project was launched, there were questions regarding the best writing system to select so that learners could read and write in their mother tongue. The language has no previous alphabet. Christian missionary attempts at introducing the Roman alphabet proved unsuccessful because it was not culturally appropriate for the community.

Leaders of the Oraon community came to realize that the Bangla alphabet could be more accessible and useful for them. The ASHRAI Research Team concurred with their opinion. In order to promote mass education among the Oraon, the ARP Team devised a method of using the Bangla alphabet to write the Sadri language so that Sadri speakers could enjoy studies in their mother language. The development of an appropriate writing system was one of the problems encountered during materials development.

The Oraon mainly use two colloquial dialects – Sadri and Kuruk. Kuruk has emerged from the Dravir language group. This language is very complex. Sadri, on the other hand, is a popular language among the working people of the Oraon community. Sadri is rich with words from the Bangla, Urdu and Persian languages. Kuruk is purely an indigenous language. Thus, dialect selection for the development of language materials was a challenge. As Sadri is the most used vernacular of the Oraon of Northwest part of Bangladesh, the research team selected Sadri.

The teacher from the tribal community who was recruited for our pilot school had no teaching experience. However, qualified teachers are rarely found in the tribal communities. To overcome this weakness, we conducted monthly refresher training to enhance her teaching skills.

## **11. Future Plans**

### **Partnerships between various stakeholders**

ASHRAI has partnerships with various stakeholders to support indigenous communities through education and training. We have partnerships with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in non-formal child and adult education in order to develop the human resources of indigenous people. In addition, we have also developed partnerships with UNESCO, BRAC and NETZ (Germany) in non-formal primary education. Finally, we have a plan to work more closely with ActionAid Bangladesh in adult education. Our partners provide both technical and financial assistance to improve the standard of non-formal education for indigenous people.

### **Future action plan**

ASHRAI has a 3-year plan (2002-04) for educational support of indigenous communities. Gradually, ASHRAI will extend its assistance to 4,000 tribal groups comprising 80,000 indigenous women.

We are now running 133 NFPE Schools for Adivasi children. In January 2005, 20 more schools are expected to begin. ASHRAI will explore every possibility to expand its education programme to benefit indigenous people. In the near future, ASHRAI also plans to use the recently developed Sadri educational materials in every school where Oraon children are studying.

## **12. Conclusion**

Education accelerates social change. Since its inception, ASHRAI has been trying to facilitate and promote education for tribal communities. The ASHRAI project for tribal people in the Barind region over the last decade has tremendously developed the consciousness among tribal families for their children's education. As a result, ASHRAI has been implementing a separate, but large, education programme for tribal children and their mothers in the name of PLEASE and TCDP since January 2002. Cooperation and assistance from UNESCO for curriculum development and educational materials significantly helps to promote universal literacy among the tribal communities through mother tongue education. There is no doubt that this initiative from ASHRAI and UNESCO will enhance confidence and enthusiasm among disadvantaged tribal communities towards other change activities. Certainly, these project activities have been a major contribution towards achieving the GOB's pledge of "Education for All" by 2015.



# China

## Bilingual Literacy Project for the Lahu Ethnic Minority in Lancang County, Yunnan Province, China

Dr. Liu Yibing & Mr. Zhao Yuchi<sup>1</sup>

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As we know, the mother tongue is key to effective basic education, and education in the mother tongue is one of the best tools for preservation of the culture of ethnolinguistic minority groups. Using the mother tongue for early education is an effective strategy that contributes to eradication of illiteracy, ignorance, discrimination and poverty. It can also be a catalyst towards the development of unity and national identity.

### 1. Policies on Ethnic Languages in China

In China, there are 56 nationalities with 61 languages, of which there are 39 written languages. Thus, China's nationality distribution creates a complex bilingual society and multilingual population.

*China's Constitution* and *National Law for Language* points out that “every nationality has the freedom to use and develop their own language.” The Law for Ethnic Autonomy states “schools which mainly enrol students of ethnic groups ought to use text books in their own language if it is possible. The teaching should be done in the ethnic language. In the upper grades of primary school and middle school, they should have a bilingual curriculum and popularize Mandarin.”

In the field of adult literary education, Item 6 in *Regulations for Illiteracy Eradication* issued by the State Council of the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) notes “Mandarin ought to be used for literacy teaching. In ethnic group regions, the local ethnic language is allowed as the language of instruction or one of the local ethnic languages should be chosen for literacy teaching.” Also, it prescribes that “in the places where people use ethnic language as the language for literacy teaching, the illiteracy eradication criteria will be constructed by the provincial or Regional governments.”

### 2. Bilingual Literacy for Ethnic Groups in China

The Chinese government has a supportive approach towards bilingual education for ethnolinguistic groups in minority regions in China. However, there is inequity in the development of opportunities for different ethnic groups and in different regions.

Generally, in formal education, bilingual education for ethnic groups has been given attention and financial support. In non-formal adult literacy education, however, it has not received the necessary support in order to ensure the implementation of bilingual literacy approaches. In formal education, bilingual teaching for ethnic groups refers to teaching in the ethnic language and Chinese, including teaching with the use of the mother tongue as a supportive tool. Bilingual teaching in ethnic community areas mainly includes three types:

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- Mainly focused on the first language. Students begin Chinese classes in primary school Grade 2. Chinese is a subject for them, but the teaching language is the ethnic language.
- Focused on the first language in lower grades of primary school, and the Chinese language in the upper levels, although ethnic languages continue to be included in the curriculum. For example, this approach is being used among some people of Zhuang nationality in Guangxi, Yi nationality in Liangshan (Sichuan Province), Dai nationality in Xishuangbanna and Dehong nationality in Yunnan Province.
- Focused on Chinese, with the ethnic language considered a supportive tool. This is mainly the practice for those ethnic minority communities with a spoken language, but without a written language, or for those minorities where the written form of the language is not widely known or used.

In the field of non-formal education like adult literacy, bilingual literacy is understood as the use of both local ethnic language and Chinese as the language of instruction. In the first phase, the teaching is done in the local language; later, a rapid transition is made to the mixed use of the local language and Chinese. In this situation, bilingual learning materials are developed in both the local language and Chinese, e.g. the La-Han bilingual learning material.

In some ethnic minority regions, the local people can hardly understand Chinese, thus literacy instruction begins by using the local language and, later, both the ethnic language and Chinese are used as teaching languages.

### 3. General Experiences of Bilingual Literacy in China

Having implemented bilingual education for many years, especially after the adoption of the Regulation for Illiteracy Eradication by the State Council in 1988, China has made great progress in adult bilingual literacy. Based on the experiences in different areas, four principles can be drawn out:

- To solve various challenges in bilingual education, appropriate national policies and regulations are important. Bilingual literacy for ethnic minority communities is not related to language teaching strategies. It also involves national policies towards ethnic groups. Without appropriate regulations, the implementation of bilingual education will influence national solidarity and stability.
- To encourage the spread of bilingual literacy programmes, it will be important to share information with others. Bilingual literacy is closely related to the needs of ethnic groups, and it needs the attention of government officials and broader public support. We ought to assign more importance to the uniqueness of ethnic languages and the irreplaceable role they play in the education of ethnic groups.
- Bilingual education needs to be more effectively integrated into the educational system in order to promote a balanced approach to language issues in education and to counteract the tendency to lopsidedly emphasize either the ethnic language or Chinese. Bilingual education approaches for ethnic communities should adopt a systematic approach. Programme planning involves not only aspects of the language such as pronunciation, grammar, words, characters, and dialect, but also other non-linguistic factors such as

population distribution, economic development level, relationship and cultural learning styles. To make bilingual teaching for ethnic groups effective, it is necessary to identify the characteristics of individual languages, and also to take non-linguistic factors into consideration.

- Bilingual education programmes should be responsive to the environment in which the programme is being conducted. For historical and societal reasons, ethnic groups in China have experienced different levels of development. Thus, bilingual education approaches should be designed in relation to the language, society and culture of different nationalities in different regions. This means that the same mode of delivery cannot be adopted for different nationalities and for different regions. Programmes should also integrate the immediate interests, long-term interests and mutual interests of different nationalities together.

## **4. Challenges in Developing Bilingual Literacy for Ethnic Groups**

### **Lack of qualified bilingual teachers**

Teachers play significant roles in the effective implementation of bilingual education. However, there needs to be improvement regarding bilingual teachers in ethnic regions in China, not only in the quantity of teachers, but also in quality. Currently, those who have interest in and have been involved in research on bilingual education are mainly some linguists, education experts and university teachers. These people do not have specific experience in primary and middle school teaching, or knowledge of bilingual education approaches. Primary school teachers with experience in bilingual education are busy with their classroom teaching, do not have much research experience and are limited in their knowledge of bilingual education theories. Among these bilingual teachers, those who master ethnic languages do not tend to have a high level of Chinese, and those who master Chinese cannot understand ethnic languages. Generally speaking, there are few bilingual teachers who master both Chinese and ethnic languages, possess specific bilingual teaching experience and have knowledge of linguistics. There is, thus, an urgent need to train bilingual teachers and improve the skills of language teachers from ethnic group regions.

### **Lack of theoretical research on bilingual education in China**

There have been several decades of bilingual teaching for ethnic groups in China, and great progress has been made. However, there is little systematic theoretical research on bilingual teaching, and few case studies available. Research on bilingual education needs to be prioritized in order to inform bilingual teaching practice and, ultimately, contribute towards the comprehensive development of ethnic groups, local economy and society.

### **Lack of funds for bilingual education**

This is a national problem, especially in regions with cultural minorities. The conditions for educational development in regions where ethnic groups live are very hard. These places have

limited opportunities to raise funds locally for education, and this is a great hindrance for the development of adult bilingual literacy. There is also a lack of bilingual literacy materials.

## **5. Bilingual literacy project for the Lahu minority**

### **Context of the project**

Illiteracy, which is viciously interconnected with poverty, is a bottleneck for economic, social, and political development among poor ethnic groups. It is a serious problem that many countries have to face, especially developing countries.

It has long been a major concern in China to improve the literacy rate of ethnic groups. Among the ethnic groups in China, the Lahu nationality has the fewest average schooling years, and the adult literacy rate, especially among women, is the lowest among the county's minorities. About 60% of Lahu people in China live in Lancang County. In the west and southwest, Lancang County borders Myanmar. According to the 1990 population census, the average time in school for Lahu people is only 1.4 years. This results in poorly educated local people, and also hinders the economic development and the quality of life for Lahu people. Lancang County has been listed as one of the most poverty-stricken counties in the nation.

Since 1949, adult literacy work in Lancang County has received government support and encouragement. Literacy and continuing education have been targeted at various levels. However, little observable impact has been achieved, and literacy and continuing education has developed quite slowly. Since 1997, the Research and Training Centre for Literacy Education (RTCLE) has conducted research on innovative approaches to literacy and continuing education in Lancang County. The reason Lancang County was chosen is that literacy and continuing education there is typical of many other places and because its ethnic character, location, language situation, cultural diversity and level of education and economic development present many challenges.

The researchers from RTCLE and Lancang County, including literacy facilitators, have carried out projects on the integration of literacy and practical skills. Through the project, target learners have become interested in literacy, and family income has benefited. However, through field survey, participant observation and interviews with community members, the researchers have identified a significant challenge with transition from the Lahu language to Han Chinese. Adult literacy and continuing education for Lahu people develops slowly. There are many reasons for this, and the language problem is central. Almost all the reading materials on life skills and practical skills that are available are in Han Chinese and, within the community, people do not use the Han language.

The illiterate Lahu do not learn the Lahu writing system and, in turn, have difficulty learning the Han language. Almost all the learning materials and audio-visual materials available on technological development, rural practical techniques and health education have been developed in the Han language.

Originally, teaching was conducted in Chinese. Temporarily, it seemed that this met the needs of a group of learners, and learning took place. However, it seemed that the literacy skills acquired were soon lost, as it was difficult to apply them to daily life. Thus, there is a high rate of regression back to illiteracy among ethnic minorities. This seems to be a universal phenomenon among ethnic minorities in China.

Based on the results of field surveying and research, it seems that one important cause for this problem has been identified. Language is a very important tool for thought and communication. It is the bridge for the exchange of ideas and emotions among people. Most ethnic groups have their own languages. They are accustomed to thinking and communicating in their mother tongue. Thus, when courses are taught in Chinese, which is a new language and even a new culture for them, they may remember the characters, but do not internally acquire the Chinese language. Regression to illiteracy is then inevitable. Language is a special kind of culture. Literacy does not mean that people can only recognize the characters or read text. Literacy is also a very important tool for preserving ethnic cultures.

Therefore, the focal concern of the Government and other sectors of society has been to identify ways to make literacy for ethnic communities responsive to their real needs. In order to promote the sustainable development of minorities, literacy work should be carried out innovatively, and incorporate bilingual teaching. In relation to the above mentioned problem, RTCLE, funded by UNESCO Bangkok, has initiated the case study on “Bilingual Literacy for Ethnic Group’s Comprehensive Development – A Pilot Project for Lahu Nationality’s Innovative Practices in China.”

### **Research methods and instruments**

Before the project began, a research group was formed that included Lahu language experts, literacy experts, officials from the Lancang education bureau, administrators of target communities, and primary school teachers from the project sites. This group gathered first-hand information through interviews, family visits, check lists and questionnaires. Special training was conducted for the project researchers and practitioners at the project sites. To ensure smooth project implementation, the research group worked together on information associated with the project and on problem-solving. During this implementation process, the action research method was also widely used.



### **Lahu nationality in Lancang County and their language**

The Lahu are one of the most underdeveloped ethnic minorities in China. Educational provision for them started late, and has only improved slowly. There is a high illiteracy rate, which seriously hinders their social and economic development.

The Lahu are one of the oldest nationalities in Asia. The population is scattered in hilly and semi-hilly areas in the Yunnan province of China, Burma, Thailand, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam. The total population is over 600,000.

The Lahu in China live in Yunnan province. They number 400,000, which accounts for 66% of the total population.

During the long history of their development, the Lahu nationality has not settled down, and their life has been dependent on hunting and gathering. Because of the characteristics of their hunting lifestyle, the Lahu nationality has been historically matriarchal. Traditionally, the Lahu language has not been written – they keep records by tying knots and carving wood. The thoughts, culture and ideas of the community have been taught by personal example, as well as by verbal instruction that has been passed down from generation to generation.

During the matriarchal time, the male adults would often go hunting, and household management was a women's role. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, great changes have taken place for them. However, the internal characteristics of the traditional cultural community have not changed. Traditional superstitious beliefs, notions of matriarchy, conservative thought and the old life customs dominate the daily life of the Lahu people to some degree, and hinder economic development. The economy has not reached the state of small-scale peasant economy. Because of the limited educational experience of women, economic productivity is low. In 2000, the average grain available to peasants of Lahu nationality was only 268 kgs and the per capita income was 554 Chinese Yuan. Seventy percent of Lahu families do not have enough to eat and wear. Because of illiteracy, women are not willing to send their children for schooling, which results in a vicious circle of intergenerational illiteracy.

Lancang is the only autonomous county of Lahu nationality in China. The population of Lahu in Lancang County is 200,000, which is 43% of the total population of the county, and half of the Lahu people in China.

The Lahu language belongs to the Yi language branch of Tibeto-Burman of Sino-Tibetan. Historically, the Lahu language has had no writing system. The original written script (writing system) of the Lahu nationality was developed by Christian missionaries in the 1920's. The old Lahu writing system was made of Latin characters, was not widely used, and few people can understand it. From 1954, the Ethnic Group Research Institute of China Social Science Academe conducted a comprehensive survey on the Lahu language, and then helped develop a writing system for Lahu based on the original script. The new Lahu writing system selected the Nuofu Lahu dialect as the basic dialect, and the pronunciation of Donghui Lahu dialect as the standard pronunciation. It has 48 consonants and vowels, as well as 7 tones.

Though the Government has helped the Lahu nationality develop a writing system for the Lahu language and encourages them to use it, this has had little impact. There are only a very few intellectuals and religious personnel who can use the Lahu writing system.

The Lahu people have long been separated from other ethnic minorities and Han nationality. Thus, they do not know languages of other nationalities, especially Chinese. Bilingual teaching is not popular in literacy and continuing education. More and more of the young generation neglect study of the Lahu script and writing system because they think that it has no use in non-Lahu areas. As a result, the language can only be used in their families and communities. Increasingly, Lahu people only identify the value of their mother tongue as a tool for communication, but do not see the special cultural value of their language. It is very dangerous for Lahu people to seek their nationality's sustainable development without paying attention to their cultural development.

## **The target communities and their language situation**

After two field surveys among typical Lahu villages in 2002, researchers of RTCLE, language experts from the Education Bureau in Lancang County, and some skillful literacy facilitators in Lancang County agreed to select Nanuoke and Banli villages as the project target villages. Both of these two villages are composed of Lahu people.

Nanuoke village is located in a semi-mountainous area, about 500-1,000 meters above sea level. The village has 76 households, with a total population of 304. Of those, 219 are labourers. The village comprises 1,298 acres of cultivated area. The average grain possessed by each individual is about 300 kilograms.

Banli village is an administrative village under which there are ten natural villages, with 303 households and a total population of 1,460. Most of the villagers are Lahu people, but some belong to other ethnic groups such as Wa and Hani.

Both Nanuoke and Banli are located in remote mountain areas where transportation is inconvenient. The income of villagers mainly comes from planting tea, sugarcane and other farming work. Local illiterates and semi-illiterates are engaged in planting and breeding livestock. This is a form of self-sufficiency, and has not been integrated with trading.

In daily life, the villagers speak their own language, and only when going to the hospital, going shopping or going to governmental agencies do they speak Chinese. Some young people can speak a little Chinese. Many villagers can also speak and write the Dai language. The Dai are another ethnic group located mainly in Xishuangbanna Prefecture, Yunnan Province.

Based on the literature search, historical research and field surveys from the two villages, the research group found the following:

### ***Vicious circle of illiteracy and poverty***

The means of production for the Lahu people lags behind other areas. In some places, the Lahu people are still involved in slash-and-burn farming. Though there have been great changes and improvements in their farming methodology through external support and influence, Nanuoke and Banli villagers are still engaged in agriculture and livestock production as a form of self-sufficiency, and not for trade. The crops they plant can only ensure their food. If they want to buy other goods such as fertilizers, seeds and other daily necessities, they have to try other means. This underdeveloped local production and economy understandably results in low villager income.

Nanuoke and Banli villages are located in a remote mountainous area which lacks convenient transportation, information or personnel for training on farming technology. There is no health centre with qualified health personnel or disease prevention centre. People maintain their traditional lifestyle, means of agricultural production and traditional thoughts and values.

Since Nanuoke and Banli are located far away from cities and towns, even if they were to have extra farm products for sale, they would not benefit from their sale because the cost would be higher due to transportation costs to the markets. As the population of the community increases, they

need more trees to build houses and more cultivated land to match their needs for shelter and food. This will inevitably lead to destruction of the natural environment.

From the field survey, we see that the functional adult illiteracy rate is high. The villagers have access to very few social services and live in poverty. Illiteracy is viciously connected with poverty in the community. The disadvantaged Nanuoke and Banli communities have long been isolated from the outer world, and there is little communication with other people. Local people are slow to adopt new approaches, prefer to maintain their present situations and are hesitant to adopt new technology into their farming. Local people believe that their world is the Nanuoke or Banli village and the mountains around them, where they can at least have food and shelter. These traditional ideas prevent the villagers, even junior middle school graduates, from seeking change. Thus, some villagers who have received elementary and even secondary education are still living in poverty. This may cause local people to suspect the functionality of education, and they may question, “What does education mean if it cannot help improve personal income and help one enjoy a better life?”

When asking about the causes for the drop-out of local children, the literacy learners think the main causes are: they do not have enough money; parents pay less attention to their children’s education; the students themselves have low ability in learning; local people pay less attention to schooling; and students do not have interest in learning. It is beyond our expectation that half of the learners think that parents pay little attention to their children’s education, which will likely lead to the creation of new illiterates. Indeed, those parents with less education, especially the illiterates and semi-illiterates, are more likely to keep their children from schooling. Inevitably, most of the children of illiterates and semi-illiterates are also illiterates. That is the cycle of intergenerational illiteracy. Therefore, it is one of the tasks of literacy education to make the parents realize the importance of education for their children.

#### *Language problem and lack of learning materials*

The survey reported that most Lahu people speak their own language, which is quite different from Chinese. Chinese is their second language, and the culture in which the Chinese language is rooted is also quite different from theirs. Thus, local illiterates and semi-illiterates differ greatly from the illiterates of the Han nationality, who cannot write Chinese, but can speak and understand the meaning of the language. According to the field survey, Lahu people speak their own language in their agricultural work and in daily communication with other community members and their families. From Grade 1 to 3 of primary school, pupils



have difficulties when they use Chinese learning material in the classroom. Difficulty in learning Chinese discourages them from using Chinese learning materials.

According to China's Constitution, people can use their own ethnic language as the medium of instruction in autonomous regions. For literacy teaching, people can also use the local language to teach, and for developing learning materials to meet the needs of the local people. However, most Lahu people think that the Han language is more practical. They are more willing to use the Han language in literacy classes even though it is difficult for them to directly learn the Han language. Because they use Chinese when assessing the illiterates of ethnic groups, the government often adopts the national criteria directed at the people of Han nationality. According to the measurement and calculation of local literacy administrators and researchers of RTCLE, it needs about 2 years (having two hours' instruction each day) for Lahu illiterates to become literate according to the national criteria, which are focused mainly on literacy acquisition without considering economic functionality. Illiterate Lahu learners do not have enough time, adequate teaching facilities or sufficiently supportive conditions, such as formal primary schools, and so little is achieved with respect to Chinese language learning.

No learning materials in Lahu could be found in the bookstores of Lancang County before 2001. In Lancang, where there are 200,000 Lahu people, there is no newspaper, magazine or other kind of reading material for Lahu people. There are no TV programmes in the Lahu language. All the science and technology materials distributed by the Government are developed in Chinese, and Lahu people cannot understand the materials.

#### *The situation of bilingual literacy in Lancang County*

The old Lahu script was created by American missionaries during the 1920's. At that time, it was very popular because the missionaries gave local people free medical help and made other contributions to local community development. Thus, the old Lahu script was often used not only in churches, but also in daily life. In the 1950's, the Chinese Government helped develop a new Lahu script based on the original one, and made donations to help the development of the Lahu people. The Lahu written language was adopted for literacy teaching, and also for the first two years of primary school. Later, however, many people thought that there was no advantage in learning Lahu, as it is of no use in non-Lahu areas. Thus, bilingual education suffered a set-back for two decades.

During the 1980's, the Government began to reconsider the value and function of ethnic minority languages, including the Lahu language. Much more attention began to be focused on bilingual teaching in primary schools. In Lancang County, seven schools were selected as experimental schools for bilingual education. The ultimate purpose of bilingual teaching was to help local people acquire the Han language that is widely used in China. Though great success has been achieved with such approaches, local people regard the Lahu spoken language as a supportive tool for learning Chinese, and they do not realize that it is necessary to learn the Lahu writing system in formal primary schools. People in Lancang seldom consider the value of written Lahu in the process of cultural preservation, and only consider its communicative role.

As for adult and continuing education, people prefer to use oral Lahu, but they think that it is unnecessary to learn the writing system. According to a 2002 survey in Nanuoke and Banli villages, researchers from RTCLE found that among 18-50 year olds, almost no one can correctly use the Lahu written language. Most of the villagers think that the writing system has no practical use. They prefer to learn Chinese immediately. Most of the learning materials in science, technology and health have been developed in Chinese, and some new words about new technology do not have counterparts in Lahu. During their literacy learning, there is no structured bridge from Lahu to Chinese.

### *Literacy facilitators*

There are few La-Han bilingual teachers at the project sites. The lack of qualified bilingual teachers is a serious problem. Few local teachers can speak the Lahu language because most of them are not Lahu people. In this situation, it is quite difficult to keep illiterate learners in literacy classes.

It is common knowledge that most of the literacy facilitators are teachers of local primary schools who also teach adult illiterates. The teachers do not really know how to teach adult literacy classes, and do not have special training. They do not understand bilingual teaching methods and the characteristics of adult learning. As has been mentioned, most of the literacy learners are adults who have rich experience that can be a resource for their learning, and they primarily are interested in content that is closely related to their lives. The teaching methodology for adult literacy should, hence, differ from that for children.

Inappropriate methods adopted by literacy facilitators may lessen learner interest and motivation to participate in literacy classes. The teachers should have training in bilingual literacy teaching in order that they can more effectively help the learners.

## **6. Target Learners and Objectives of Bilingual Literacy Classes**

Based on the analysis of research materials concerning bilingual literacy for the Lahu people, field surveys, language situation analysis and assessment of Lahu language (including spoken and written language), the target learners and project objectives are as follows:

- **Target learners**

The target learners are adult illiterates and semi-illiterates (mainly 15-50 year olds) with basic motivation for literacy learning. Women are particularly encouraged to participate in the bilingual literacy project.

- **Objectives of bilingual literacy teaching**

With about 1 to 2 years' study, the objectives of the literacy teaching are that:

- community members of project villages will show more respect for their own language and realize the importance and value of the mother tongue in the process of learning Chinese;
- Lahu illiterates, especially women, will bridge from learning in the mother tongue to Chinese language learning, and strategies for better learning of these two languages will be developed;

- learners will be able to read simple articles, write practical notes, and do some simple calculation using written Lahu. Lahu people will be encouraged to use written Lahu as much as possible and build their confidence in their written language;
- learners will learn new income generating techniques and some basic marketing skills through using the La-Han bilingual learning materials;
- dependent on the community context, local learning resources will be mobilized and community bilingual teachers will be encouraged to develop La-Han bilingual learning materials closely related to the daily life of Lahu illiterate learners.

### **Teaching/learning content**

The teaching/learning content is closely connected with the learners' lives and was chosen after a thorough analysis of the felt needs of the learners and the potential contribution of the learning materials to the development of the target communities. The localised learning materials are the main content of learning and teaching. Of course, the teaching may not necessarily follow the sequence of the materials, and can be responsive to the context. For example, if there are many people suffering from diarrhoea in a special period of the year, lectures on diarrhoea prevention and treatment can be held for the learners.

### **Learning materials**

The main learning materials have been developed in response to the needs of the target communities. The literacy teachers will also use pictures, audio-visual materials on farming technology and some materials developed by local educational agencies.

### **Teaching patterns**

Class teaching is the main approach of the literacy class. There are other techniques practiced such as site teaching, field visits, using VCD's, case teaching, group work, discussion, recreation and sports activities.

Like other ethnic groups in China, Lahu people like singing and dancing, especially during their traditional festivals. The community learning centres have organized many recreational and sports activities, and the target learners are willing to come and learn. Some of the literacy activities in Nanuke and Banli are integrated with the activities mentioned above. Local traditions, legends, folk songs and dancing have been adapted and adopted into the literacy programme. This can improve their personal identity, as the teaching resource originates from a world with which they are familiar.

## **7. Innovative Bilingual Literacy Activities**

### **La-Han bilingual learning material**

Without mastering the writing system of the Lahu language, it is difficult for the Lahu people to learn Chinese. In order to solve this problem, the research group thought that it was important to develop Lahu-Han bilingual functional literacy materials that put particular stress on Lahu. Before

materials development, the research group trained bilingual (Lahu-Han) learning material developers at the local level, and have developed La-Han bilingual learning materials based on the field survey and needs assessment of the target learners.

Before materials development began, a team for materials development was formed and provided with the necessary training in techniques for materials development. The materials development team included researchers of RTCLE, grass roots literacy facilitators and the staff of the Lancang Education Bureau. Two materials development workshops have been held. One was the Workshop on La-Han Bilingual Learning Material Development, and the other a Workshop on La-Han Bilingual Learning Material Improvement. At present, the materials developed in these workshops are being field tested, and they will be revised and finalized based on the feedback from the field testing. The steps for materials development were field surveying and needs assessment, working out the framework for the materials and assigning the development work to individuals, developing the Chinese version, making improvements to the Chinese version, translating the Chinese version into the Lahu language, making improvements to the Lahu version, field testing the bilingual material, and finally, making improvements based on the feed back from field use.

The material has been developed according to the document Guidelines for Literacy Curricular Reform in China issued by the Ministry of Education, P.R.C. The document puts forward new criteria for the literacy curriculum, which pays much more attention to the functionality of literacy. The general curriculum includes five parts – Basic Chinese, Basic Mathematics, Knowledge and Skills for Family Life, Knowledge and Skills for Civic Life, and Skills for Income Generation. The new curriculum proposed by the Chinese Government has laid a sound foundation for the implementation of functional literacy.

Based on the objectives of the project and the actual needs of Lahu people, La-Han bilingual learning material has been developed focusing on practical La-Han language; practical mathematics; knowledge and technology for family life; knowledge and skills for civic life; environment and health; and knowledge and skills for income-generation.

### **Community learning centres for the Lahu to ensure the sustainable development of bilingual literacy project**

In order to ensure the smooth implementation of the bilingual literacy project and promote ongoing learning by local people, the research group realized that it was necessary to establish community managed learning centres to carry out bilingual literacy activities. Thus, with the mutual support of UNESCO Bangkok, Lancang Education Bureau, local village commissions and community primary schools, the project group has set up 2 community centres in Nanuoke and Banli in Lancang County.

Since the villagers of these two communities are living in poverty, it is difficult for them to raise funds to establish community learning centres. In this case, with the support of local government and primary schools, the community learning centres have been set up in the primary schools in order to make use of resources such as teachers, classrooms and the school reading material. Thus, formal education resources are helping to develop non-formal education projects. In Nanuoke and Banli villages, the primary school teachers will teach literacy in the evenings, at weekends and during vacations when the primary school is not in session.

For both communities, the director of the community learning centre is the village commission leader, and the deputy director is the head teacher of the primary school. The village commission and primary school cooperatively mobilize various resources for the implementation of the literacy project. With the coordination of the village commission leader and the head primary school teacher, the primary school teachers have been assigned tasks related to bilingual literacy teaching in the community learning centres. They teach literacy two evenings each week and on weekends. After one year, this method has proven applicable and successful.

To ensure the effective running of the community learning centres, and to enrich learners' lives, RTCLE has provided the two community learning centres with some literacy materials free of charge, and donated teaching equipment (colour television set of high quality, DVD player, amplifier, stereo component system, some VCD's, etc.) worth 16,000 Chinese Yuan. The learning materials and facilities help enhance the capacity of the community learning centres, and create conditions for improving teaching effectiveness and enriching the learners' lives.

The community learning centres we have set up are multi-purpose centres for learning, entertainment and gathering. They will be used as information and materials centres, learning and training centres, centres for practical science and technology, and activity centres for culture and entertainment. The centres will be run by the community and serve the community.

### **Comprehensive functional literacy and continuing education**

The bilingual literacy activities aim to integrate literacy and practical skills. In the literacy classes, in addition to basic reading, writing and numeracy, we have also integrated language learning with civic education, life skills, health and population education, and environmental education. With the women learners, the teaching content is oriented to the development of self-esteem, self-confidence and independence, and education for child and maternal health care. The literacy teaching also includes content focused on Lahu traditional culture.

## **8. Results and Findings**

In the first year of project implementation, the research group achieved the following results:

- With the support and coordination of the village commission and village education commission, the project group has set up community learning centres for the Lahu ethnic group by using the resources (such as teachers, teaching facilities, classrooms, materials and administrators, etc.) of formal primary schools. It is appropriate to carry out literacy and continuing education activities in the community learning centres established for poverty-stricken Lahu communities.
- Language is the carrier of culture. Through learning their own language and also Chinese, Lahu people can not only communicate with other people, but also tell others about their own culture, which will increase their self-esteem and help them develop a stronger identity.
- Through the bilingual literacy activities carried out in these two villages, literacy learners have made rapid progress in the learning of the Lahu written language, and they can

write if they can speak. As the bilingual literacy includes a lot of functional literacy content, it motivates illiterate learners to learn written Lahu. During the bilingual literacy activities, Lahu people have reconsidered the value of their mother tongue (especially writing system) and have gained a new understanding of it, which promotes their interest in their first language. As they have become more literate, they have overcome psychological barriers associated with learning written Lahu.

- In the process of becoming literate in their mother tongue, the Lahu have developed a new and deeper understanding of their traditional ethnic culture and significant ethnic spiritual heritage. It also has helped the Lahu people develop a stronger sense of identification with the culture, and promote their respect for and confidence in their culture. Gradually they begin to realize that language is an indispensable component of their culture that characterises their ethnic group. The bilingual literacy programme has helped preserve the traditional culture of the Lahu. The community learning centres, with the participation of learners, have carried out many cultural activities, such as traditional Lahu dancing and singing, and have resumed some traditional festivals. Through these activities, young people have a better understanding of their ethnic culture, and it will be handed down generation to generation. As learners become more involved with their language and culture, and also with the resumption of traditional festivals and ceremonies, much more attention has been paid to the Lahu culture by the outside world. The literacy programme has also helped the Lahu understand mainstream culture better.
- Experience from project sites shows that it is very difficult for learners to learn Chinese immediately because there are great differences between Lahu and Chinese in word construction, grammar, tones, sentence structure, and expressions. Through the field survey and literature analysis, as well as through comparison between the bilingual literacy classes with others, we have found that:
  - it may take more than 800 hours for Lahu illiterates to reach the level of basic communication in Chinese and get the certificate of illiteracy eradication;
  - it may only take 360 hours for this to happen using a bilingual literacy programme. It may save time to adopt a bilingual literacy teaching approach to reach the same goal. Therefore, it is an effective strategy to implement bilingual literacy for Lahu people in the first phase of literacy course.
- In order to ensure the sustainability of the bilingual literacy project and to help literacy learners' better master their own language, the project group has organized materials developers to develop bilingual learning material. The main contents include Practical Chinese, Practical Mathematics, Civic Life and Practical Skills. Learners have shown better understanding of the outside world. Learners have also acquired some practical knowledge of science and technology through La-Han bilingual adult literacy.
- Experiences from Lancang County also emphasise that it is necessary to integrate language learning with the learning of practical knowledge and skills related to farming, the handicraft industry and other activities related to the daily lives of learners in order to better master language, especially written language. It is motivational for poverty-stricken people to integrate the learning of 3Rs with income-generation.

## 9. Challenges and Strategies for the Sustainable Development of Lahu

During the implementation of the project, we have identified challenge and strategies for the sustainable development of the Lahu spoken and written language. The challenges are:

- Utilitarian values towards language
- Lack of learning materials in Lahu language
- Lack of available teachers for written Lahu
- Absence of modern media in the Lahu community
- Narrow domain for Lahu language use
- Influence of the mainstream culture

The strategies are:

- to work towards policies and regulations concerned with bilingual literacy and support – funds and facilities – from government, especially local government;
- to develop Lahu-Chinese bilingual literacy learning resources and materials;
- to train Lahu-Chinese bilingual teachers with the cooperation of GOs and NGOs;
- to set up community learning centres for Lahu people;
- to emphasize cultural and economic values through the implementation of bilingual functional literacy approaches; and
- to introduce the cultural traditions, productive means and unique values of the Lahu nationality to the outside world.



## India

### Literacy through the Mother Tongue: The Indian Experience

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#### Socio-economic situation in India

A Common Country Assessment based on acknowledged data about the demographic, cultural, political and socio-economic situation in India identifies nine priority problem areas of concern in India. These are:

- i) **Population stabilization:** With an estimated population of over 950 million in 1996, India is the second largest country in the world. Even if replacement fertility (2.1 children per woman) is reached by the year 2016 – a goal set by the Government of India – the size of the Indian population would continue to grow, and would only stabilize at 1.45 billion by the year 2056 before beginning to decline.
- ii) **Gender equality:** Gender inequality in India is reflected in the adverse sex ratio of 927 females for 1,000 males. Discrimination against the girl child throughout her life cycle is widespread. Women and girls suffer from a low status in society and, consequently, a low self-image. Feminization of poverty is a trend almost all over India.
- iii) **Health of women and children:** Although the average life expectancy has increased from 44 years in 1970 to 61 years in 1993, the health of women and children still needs to be improved. The goals by 2000 are to reduce the infant mortality rate from 91 per 1,000 live births in 1989 to 50, and to reduce the under 5 mortality rate from 142 per 1,000 live births in 1989 to 70. Similarly, the maternal mortality rate is to be reduced from 430 per 100,000 live births in 1992 to 200.
- iv) **HIV/AIDS:** HIV/AIDS is more than a health issue. It is a cross-sectoral, cross-regional development issue. In India, it is estimated that between two and five million people are infected by this disease. To deal with the epidemic, future programmes will need to deal with gender and economic power imbalances, social and economic marginalization, and ways to stimulate the development of new community responses.
- v) **Primary education:** Universalizing primary education is seen as the key to solving many issues, such as child labour, malnutrition and drug abuse. In 2001, the average literacy rate for males age five and above was 75.85%, while for females it was approximately 54.16%. The issue is to increase access to primary school as well as retention, and to decrease drop-out rates, especially of the girl child, by making elementary education compulsory, increasing the quality of education, mobilizing the community and creating a social norm that every child should be in school.
- vi) **Food security and nutrition:** Although India, in aggregate terms, is self-sufficient, large sections of the rural and urban poor, approximately 360 million people, are not able to achieve the minimum nutritional level. Furthermore, more than one third of infants are born with low birth weight, caused primarily by poor maternal and adolescent nutrition, and some 53% of children under five years old are malnourished.
- vii) **Water and sanitation:** Although India has achieved significant coverage during the last decade, a large number of people still lack access to adequate water and sanitation services. As of 1995, over 74% of the rural and 85% of the urban population had access to potable water. Access to adequate sanitation in the urban areas was above 46%. Access to sanitation in the rural areas is low, at approximately 17%.
- viii) **Employment:** The 1996 UNDP Human Development Report has called the present pattern of growth in India ‘jobless growth,’ where economic growth does not necessarily result in opportunities for employment. While, from 1975 to 1989, yearly GDP growth was about five percent, yearly employment growth lagged behind at two percent. Ways must be found of generating employment both in the formal and the informal sectors, as well as improving working conditions.

- ix) **Environment:** The pressure on the environment is visible in India with problems of air and water pollution, solid waste generation, deforestation, overexploitation of natural resources, floods, soil erosion and sedimentation. These, in turn, have affected living conditions, health, productivity and other socio-economic factors.

These issues cut across mandates and country programmes of various UN agencies active in India. They are also key intersectoral areas that have been elaborated at the global level during recent major UN conferences.

### **EFA plan focusing on NFE and literacy in the country**

The EFA plan has been adopted by the Government of India focusing particularly on primary education and literacy according to the National Education Policy of 1986. The NLMA was set up on 5 June 1988 to propagate literacy. NLMA has a three-tiered programme of Total Literacy, Post Literacy (PL) and Continuing Education (CE) that covers illiterate people ages 15-35 years. The programme is implemented through the ZSS (District Literacy Committee) of the country. At present, nearly 90% of districts in the country have completed the PL Programme, and 40% are in CE or completed. The NLMA has set up 26 State Resource Centres (SRCs) throughout the country to provide institutional support through training and material production.

### **Policy on mother-tongue/bilingual education in the country**

#### **Mother-Tongue Education**

Even about four decades after the formulation of the 3-Language Formula, it is yet to be effectively implemented. Despite all the changes in the socio-economic scenario, market pressures, and behaviour patterns of Assamese youths, the 3-Language Formula still remains relevant.

#### **3-Language Formula**

- **First language** to be studied must be mother tongue or regional language
- **Second language**
  1. in Hindi speaking states will be any modern Indian language or English
  2. in non-Hindi speaking states will be English or Hindi
- **Third Language**
  1. in both Hindi and non-Hindi states, will be English or a modern Indian language not studied as the second language

#### **On Mother Tongue**

Though the State of Assam has accepted the 3-Language Formula in school education, there is an urgent need to give more weight to the multilingual and multiethnic situation within the State. Realizing the importance of mother tongue as an instrument of thought, communication, appreciation and creation, government officials in Assam have allowed education to be delivered in the following mother tongues as a medium of instruction:

#### Elementary

1. Assamese
2. Bengali
3. Bodo
4. Manipuri
5. Garo
6. Hmar
7. Nepali
8. Hindi
9. English

#### Secondary

1. Assamese
2. Bengali
3. Bodo
4. Manipuri
5. Hindi
6. English

Besides these mediums, the government has recognized the following mother tongues as language subjects starting from Class III:

10. Rabha
11. Bishnupriya Manipuri
12. Mising
13. Tiwa
14. Tai

At present, a large number of languages are being introduced as mother-tongue languages in schools throughout different parts of the state. However, these languages have no standardised writing system or dictionaries, and thus, it is difficult to include them as a medium of instruction.

### **Project on mother-tongue/bilingual literacy programmes for minority communities**

The following organizations have been involved in the project:

#### **Academic Support**

Summer Institute of Linguistics International  
Department of Linguistics, Gauhati University

#### **Language Support**

Rabha Bhasa Parisad  
Rabha Literary Society

#### **Organizational Support**

District Literacy Committee, Goalpara (Zilla Saksharata Samiti)  
District Literacy Committee, Bongaigaon (Zilla Saksharata Samiti)



**Figure 1. Background of Project Site: Goalpara District**



**Figure 2. Map of Assam**

**Location:** The present Goalpara district is located between latitude 25.53 and 26.30 degrees north and longitude 90.07 and 91.05 degrees east.

**Climate:** The climate in the district is moderate during the winter, and in summer it is hot. Rain makes its appearance in the month of April with occasional irregular light showers and heavy down-pours followed by cyclonic storms. The irregular rainfall continues until the end of May. This rain occurs due to the influence of the north-easterly wind. Monsoon rain normally begins in the early part of the month of June, and heavy rain occurs in the district until September. The maximum

temperature is 33°C in July and August; the minimum is 7°C in January. The annual rainfall of the district is 1,614 mm. About 80% of rainfall is from the southwest monsoon.

**Topography:** The topography of Goalpara is generally characterized by an almost flat plain, except for a few low forested hills that break the monotony of the terrain. The main hills are Pancharatna, Sri Surjya, Tukreswari, Nalanga and Paglartek, with elevations ranging from 100 to 500 m. A large number of Char (riverine tracts and sandy river islands) can be found in the river Brahmaputra. The Brahmaputra flows east to west on the northern boundary of the district, and the main tributaries are the rivers Dudhnoi, Krishnai, Jinjiram and Jinary. Dudhnoi and Krishnai originate from the Meghalaya Hills, then join each other on the western part of Matia and flow as the river Mornoi up to its confluence with the Brahmaputra. The Jinjiram originates from Urapad Beel, flows parallel to the Brahmaputra and ultimately joins near South Salmara of Dhubri District. The rivers are all perennial in nature. There are a few other minor streams in the district, as well.

**Economy:** The district is industrially backward, and there is no major industry. Land-locked, historically Goalpara has had poor transport and communication facilities. It has been observed lately, however, that district avenues have somewhat opened up, and the problems of transport and communication have lessened with the opening of a rail cum road bridge, the Naranarayan Setu over the river Brahmaputra, and also with the completion of a railway tract from Jogighopa to Kamakhya. It is also expected that the proposed industrial growth centre of Matia (near Sainik School, Goalpara) will give a boost to industrial development in the district.

The district is primarily agrarian. Ninety percent of the population depend on agriculture for their livelihood. The principal agricultural products are paddy, jute, green and black gram and potatoes. The district is also known for its production of arecanut and bananas. A big banana producing market has developed at Darangiri, which exports all over India.

**Communication:** Goalpara is located in the western part of Assam. The headquarters of Goalpara district, Goalpara Town, is situated on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra. After construction of the Naranarayan Setu (bridge) over the Brahmaputra, road communication from the north bank has become easy and convenient.

**Surface Communication:** After reaching Guwahati, the capital city of the state, one can use either government or private bus services to travel about 150 km to reach Goalpara. Similarly, bus services connecting different places in the North Bank, like Dhubri and Bongaigaon in Assam, or Cochin Behar and Siliguri in the state of West Bengal, are also available.

**Railway Communication:** The nearest rail head is at New Bongaigaon, which is connected by train service from all places in the country. Railway track has been laid down through Goalpara, and connects New Bongaigaon and Guwahati. Passenger train services as well as goods train services are available between the two stations through Goalpara.

**Internal Communication:** On reaching Goalpara Town, bus and taxi services can be used to visit different places of interest spread over the whole of the district.

**District Profile:** The Goalpara district was created in 1983 with two sub-divisions, Goalpara (Sadar) sub-division and North Salmara (Civil) sub-division. In 1989, Goalpara Sadar sub-division was

upgraded into a district, and North Salmara sub-division was merged with the newly created Bongaigaon district. Presently, Goalpara consists of only one sub-division.

**Administrative Setup:** In 1983, Goalpara Civil sub-division was separated from the original Goalpara district, and the present Goalpara district was formed. The administrative structure of the district is as follows:

**Sub-division:** The district consists of only one sub-division, namely Goalpara (Sadar)

**Revenue Circle:** At present, there are five revenue circles under the jurisdiction of Goalpara district. They are:

1. Balijana
2. Lakhipur
3. Matia
4. Rangjuli
5. Dudhnoi

**Community Development Blocks:** There are eight community blocks in the district according to the 1991 Census. They are:

1. Balijana
2. Rangjuli (TD)
3. Matia
4. Lakhipur
5. Kharmuja
6. Krishnai
7. Kuchdhowa (TD)
8. Jaleswar

### Demography:

The total population of the district is approximately 8,022,306 (4,020,707 male, 4,001,599 female). Goalpara is very thickly populated. The population density is 451 per sq. km. against the state average of 340 per sq. km. Out of the total population of the district, approximately 1,200,000 belong to ST, and about 40,000 to the SC communities (1991 Census). The district is home to a large number of different ethnic communities. There are Rabha's, Bodo's and Garo's. The literate population accounts for 58.56% (2001 census) of the district.

### THE RABHAS

According to the 1991 Census Report of India, Rabha is the fifth largest tribe among the 21 ethnic minority communities of Assam, constituting 1.05% of its total population. Our study has shown that there are as many as 11 sub-groups. They are: Rangdani, Maitori, Dahori, Patirabha, Sunga, Bitolia, Kosa, Dumesa, Totla, Mohadi and Hana. However, the Modahi is not a true subclass, but rather, refers to those Rabhas who are excessive consumers of alcohol; similarly, Dumesas is a term for those who are the offspring of a Rabha woman and a Garo man.

It is noteworthy that among these various subclasses, the Rabha language is spoken at present by only a handful of the tribe who belong to the Rangdani, Maitori and Kosa groups. Of the three sub-classes, there is 99% similarity of speech between the Rangdani and Maitori, and 50% between them and the Kosa. The remaining sub-classes do not know the Rabha language, and use Assamese to communicate. From the socio-cultural viewpoint, it has been observed that only these three groups have preserved the age-old Rabha culture through rites and rituals.

The Rabha society is matrilineal. The village economy is based on agriculture, and both men and women work in the fields. The women love to wear colourful clothes that they weave themselves. They wear a lot of beads and silver ornaments. The Rabhas celebrate three main festivals, and also observe Farkanti in remembrance of the dead kings of their clan. In the various festivals, both men and women sing and dance to the local instruments such as the *karra* flute and *singa*. The Rabhas are non-vegetarians, and rice is their staple food. They brew a local beer called junga, which is consumed, not only at festivals, but also on a daily basis.

**Table on Rabha Population**

**Distribution of Rabha language speakers in the different districts of Assam as per 1991 Census**

|     | District           | Total Population | Rural | Urban  | Total |
|-----|--------------------|------------------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1.  | Dhubri             | 8,586            | 0.640 | 8,550  | 36    |
| 2.  | Khokrajhar         | 10,672           | 1.330 | 10,641 | 31    |
| 3.  | Bongaigaon         | 2,563            | 0.320 | 2,547  | 16    |
| 4.  | Goalpara           | 49,744           | 7.450 | 49,437 | 307   |
| 5.  | Barpeta            | 27               | 0.002 | 26     | 1     |
| 6.  | Nalbari            | 8,344            | .820  | 8,344  | –     |
| 7.  | Kamrup             | 15,068           | 0.750 | 14,717 | 351   |
| 8.  | Darrang            | 14,442           | 1.110 | 14,376 | 66    |
| 9.  | Sonitpur           | 1,674            | 0.120 | 1,671  | 3     |
| 10. | Lakhimpur          | –                | –     | –      | –     |
| 11. | Dhemaji            | 836              | 0.180 | 835    | 1     |
| 12. | Marigaon           | –                | –     | –      | –     |
| 13. | Nagaon             | –                | –     | –      | –     |
| 14. | Golaghat           | –                | –     | –      | –     |
| 15. | Jorhat             | –                | –     | –      | –     |
| 16. | Sibsagar           | –                | –     | –      | –     |
| 17. | Dibrugarh          | –                | –     | –      | –     |
| 18. | Tinsukia           | –                | –     | –      | –     |
| 19. | Karbi Anglong      | –                | –     | –      | –     |
| 20. | North Cachar Hills | –                | –     | –      | –     |
| 21. | Karimganj          | –                | –     | –      | –     |
| 22. | Hailakandi         | –                | –     | –      | –     |
| 23. | Cachar             | –                | –     | –      | –     |

**Needs assessment:** In the course of its literacy campaign, the State Resource Centre, Assam found that literacy is best implemented in the mother tongue. This conforms to the UNESCO norm on mother tongue being the best medium for education. SRC started material preparation in Bodo language to assist literacy. The second language to be taken up was Rabha. The Rabha language, though the fifth largest language in Assam, is gradually facing extinction. So apart from facilitating

literacy, this project was targeted at preservation of the language. A language can be preserved only if it is used by the people. To use a language, one has to learn it.

During the course of the literacy campaign in Assam, it was observed that many illiterate people were not coming forward to take part in the exercise. SRC Assam has to date produced reading materials in Assamese, Bengali and Boro based on its participation in a workshop organized by UNESCO on minority language material production, on research and on country experience. SIL International was one of the participants.

There are many such minority language groups in Assam. SRC Assam has, therefore, decided to prepare materials in a phased manner for these indigenous language groups in effort to eradicate illiteracy.

SRC Assam has already taken up materials development in the Rabha language for propagation of literacy in the state. Our experience has shown us that literacy is successful when the community is a stakeholder in the campaign. This comes from a spirit of voluntarism and the community taking ownership of the campaign. The present initiative is a step in this direction. The workshop will be a success when the participants involve themselves in the literacy campaign. SIL International and Gauhati University have also offered their academic support.

### **Community mobilization**

The State Resource Centre has involved the community in the research and field study. There have been awareness meetings, and local interaction with government officials and school teachers.



### **Learning needs**

There are nearly 200 spoken languages in the northeast, some of which do not have a script of their own. In such cases, they have adopted Devanagari, Roman or Assamese as their written script. Only a few languages, like Assamese and Bengali, have their own script.

As there are many minority language groups in Assam without any reading materials in their language, the SRC has decided to prepare materials in a phased manner for the minority language groups. For the first project, the SRC has taken up the development of material in the Rabha language. In this project, entitled “Action Research on Literacy through Indigenous Language,” SIL International came forward to offer their academic support.

### **Developing writing systems**

Since the language spoken by the Rabhas does not have a script of its own, any material production will have to be done in some other script. The Rabha Literacy Society has also unanimously decided to accept the Assamese script for the development of books. This is due to the fact that most of

the indigenous language speakers use Assamese as the language of communication when dealing with people of other language groups. Assamese can be easily used to express their language, and the people already know Assamese both in the written and spoken form. Besides, many Assamese words are common to the Rabha language.

## Process of developing teaching/learning materials

### Objectives of the Programme:

The Rabhas have not had the opportunity to learn in their mother tongue like some other tribes, such as the Garo and Bodo. When SRC Assam thought of starting literacy in the Rabha language, it had to face several issues that needed special attention:

- Of the eight Rabha sub-groups, only three have retained their mother tongue.
- Of these three sub-groups, Rangdani and Maitori have 99% similarity, but Kochas has only 50% similarity with the other two.
- The other five sub-groups have mostly forgotten their languages, and have accepted the mainstream Assamese language.
- These five sub-groups are keen to revive their own language.
- The Rabha Literary Society and the Rabha Cultural Society is working towards revitalisation and spread of the language and culture.

In the above circumstances, SRC felt that in the Adult Literacy Programme, the opportunity to learn in their mother tongue should be given. Thus, to provide a chance to re-learn their own language, some motivational bilingual materials should be made available to the five sub-groups in order to create a favourable atmosphere.

### Methodology

Under the initiative of a field investigator, Prabhat Bania, identification of the Rabha populated areas in the districts of Assam was successfully carried out. Bania collected the addresses of the people in the Rabha community. The textbooks used in the Rabha primary schools were also collected. Further interaction with the Rabhas began. As a second step, SRC Assam held a one-day awareness camp on October 18, 2002 at Agia, Goalpara to highlight the project for the Rabha community, and to identify writers/participants for the upcoming workshop. The meeting also resolved to communicate with Don Bosco School of Guwahati and SIL to gather information about the Rabha language. At that meeting, SRC Assam resolved to organize a five-day residential material preparation workshop from November 9-13, 2002 at a suitable venue in either Dudhnoi or Goalpara. The meeting decided to invite some noted writers representing Bongaigaon, Goalpara, Meghalaya, Dhemaji, Darrang and Kokrajhar.

### Materials Production Workshop

**Supplementary Materials:** At the workshop, the writers belonging to different sub-tribes of the Rabha community and from different disciplines, areas, subjects and fields, assembled to prepare

manuscripts on various issues. The writers were further informed about the process of grading books into different levels for different groups of learners. As per GVSA rules, the books for neo-literates should be graded into Level 1, 2, and 3 according to the number of words, sentences, and illustrations in a particular book.

The manuscripts were then field-tested, and modifications or corrections were made. This was followed by the review of the final manuscripts by Rabha language experts. Finally, the manuscripts were printed and published. They will be used as supplementary reading materials.

### **Literacy campaign in Rabha language**

Our earlier experience of working with the Rabha community of Assam brought out certain vital facts. There are a number of sub-groups within the community who speak variations of the dialect. Some of the weaker dialects are dominated by other stronger dialects. Others have merged with the mainstream language, completely forgetting their own language. For example, the Patirabha group among the Rabhas does not know the Rabha language, but rather, speaks Assamese.

During standardization of a minority language, there is often conflict within the community. Again, it is impractical to prepare primers in various dialects of a language so the weaker dialects die out. Hence, it is more practical to include words of various dialects. For example, words from different spoken sub-groups of Assam are incorporated into standard Assamese. This has not only enriched the language, but has also helped in creating a broader society.

Our earlier experiment of preparing books in the Rabha language was bilingual-Rabha and Assamese. This is because some Rabha people have merged with the mainstream linguistically, thereby decreasing the number of Rabha speakers. This bilingual approach will help those people to learn their language along with Assamese. This will give them confidence and a sense of belonging to their own community, as well as prepare them to face the outside world.

In this project, our objective is to prepare primers in the Rabha language along with Assamese, so that they can first learn their language and, after becoming literate, can go with confidence to learn the mainstream language. We hope this will have a huge impact on the literacy rate of the community.



### **Preparation of Primers**

A week long workshop entitled “Preparation of Learning Materials” was organized by the State Resource Centre, Assam from July 14-20, 2003. The purpose of the workshop was the preparation of a Rabha primer according to Improved Pace and Content of Learning (IPCL) norms, promoting education in the mother tongue at the primary level. This is the second phase of the UNESCO-sponsored project.

### **Contents of Rabha Primer I**

- Fish and Agriculture
- Uncles' Firm
- Our Home
- Read Throughout the Day and Night
- Benefits of Market
- How Abinash and His Family Make Fans
- Golden Silk Cocoon
- Our Baikho Festival
- On the Bank of the Ghagna

### **Contents of Rabha Primer II**

- Letters of Dudhnoi and Udalguri
- Khirod Purchased a Car with a Banking Loan
- The Elephant of Gauripur Just Like an Airabat
- Tampak on His Boat During the Floods
- Mridula Weaving Beautiful Designs
- Satyabati's Husband is a Member of the Panchayat
- Health Care
- The Battle of Harihar over Usha
- Rahmat Miya's Invitation for Id

### **Contents of Rabha Primer III**

- Festival of Dhoopdhara and Festival of Hanaghora
- Nirmali and Her Family of Auguri Visit Burha Pahar
- What a Draught this Year!
- 15<sup>th</sup> August – An Independence Day
- Kalpana's Piggery
- Biplab and His Rubber Machine
- Assamese Culture
- Naranarayan Bridge over Brahmaputra
- Republic Day of India

### **Outcomes of the Project**

One of the issues of the project was to develop publications in the Rabha language. SRC Assam produced five bilingual books, which were widely received. This, in turn, has given others an impetus for further publication in the language.

Bilingual materials were produced (Assamese and Rabha texts on the same page) for awareness generation and demand creation. These are supplementary reading materials that can be used by neo-literates. The following materials were produced.

**Pidaan Gange** is a story book written in the Rabha language by Sri Prakash Rabha. It is a story based on environmental protection.

**Ang Gena Tikkar** (Am I a Witch?): A collection of two stories written in the Rabha language by two writers, Mrs. Malaya Rabha and Mrs. Hima Rabha. The first story is based on the existence of superstitions in the society, and other is about the impact of literacy on girls.

**Rangsiri Sampai**, is a Rabha folk tale written in Rabha by Shri Prakash Rabha. This folk tale deals with the greatness of a Rabha woman.

**Minku Amangni Katha** (“A Tale of Cat”): A collection of two stories in Rabha. The stories were written by Bhupandra Khanda and Tarak Barchung. The first story is based on a myth about cats. The second is the story of a monkey and an owl.

**Monimala**: Written by Charumohan Rabha, the story is about the role of women in societal development.

Another important effect is that other ethnic minority communities have approached SRC Assam to facilitate them in the preservation of their languages and culture. The Deori Literacy Society, Tiwa Literacy Society, the Sadris (Tea Garden community) and others have shown a keen interest in developing their languages. Some ethnic communities from other states have also asked for help. SRC Assam was compelled to take up the case of the Adi-Galo community of Arunachal Pradesh. An alphabet book was published in Adi-Galo with academic support in developing the orthography from SIL International. Three basic primers for adult literacy, along with a teacher handbook in Rabha, were also developed and printed by SRC Assam. These primers are being used in Goalpara for literacy programmes.

To make the programme sustainable, the Rabha language project is integrated with the existing literacy programmes conducted by the District Literacy Committee, Goalpara (ZSS) which is working under the NLMA, Government of India. The District Literacy Society has a three-tier system to oversee the literacy campaign up to the village level. Monthly meetings are held where the field information is collected for monitoring. SRC Assam supplements this process and evaluates it at the same time. This integration with the existing literacy programme will ensure the continuation of literacy in Rabha even after the completion of the project term.

**Formation of SHG’s:** The revamped Goalpara District Literacy Committee (ZSS), under the chairmanship of the present Deputy Commissioner has stressed the empowerment of women. ZSS, Goalpara has selected women as Secretaries of the Society at the ground level (lowest tier) for their literacy drive. As a part of the programme, Self Help Groups (SHGs) for women have been formed, thereby involving the community as a whole, and women, in particular. This formation of SHGs has a two-fold agenda:

- Economic empowerment

- Using the SHGs as a means to build capacity and awareness creation on issues such as health, universalisation of primary education, prevention of school drop-outs, skills upgrading and support for the literacy campaign

The SHGs are formed under the banner of Prochesta in cooperation with SRC Assam and various District Literacy Committees. In Goalpara, under the aegis of the District Literacy Committee (ZSS) and SRC Assam, about 500 groups have been formed involving nearly 9,000 women. Inculcating the saving habit while at the same time using money for economic development will eventually help the community. The groups sit together to discuss various social issues along with their economic activity. The women manage the groups. Health issues become a part of their discussions, and training is given for this. Special emphasis is given to Reproductive and Child Health (RCH), Life Skill Education for adolescents (both in school and out of school), awareness creation about STD/AIDS, family planning and gender sensitization.

### **Project challenges and possible solutions**

Since the Rabha language has become standardized with printed matter of its own, the other sub-groups, mainly the Kochas, have become discontent because their dialect has not received due focus and faces the threat of becoming extinct. Due to this resentment, there were instances where they did not cooperate with our work.

In our project, we have prepared only a small number of primers (1,000 copies each). At present, however, the demand has increased to more than 5,000 in Goalpara district, itself. The number might grow if we propose to cover more districts.

When we initiated the project, we did not envisage that there would be the need for the three different categories (bilingual reading materials, literacy primers and children's primers). Fortunately, the District Literacy Committee (ZSS, Goalpara) is taking up the matter of printing more primers for adult learners with national government funds. For the children's primer, we are negotiating with the Assam government for printing.

The problems cited can be overcome if government authorities at the central and state levels respond positively. There are many ethnic language groups in India, in general, and in Assam, particularly, which need to be taken care of in terms of literacy. Working with the Rabhas made us feel that we need to expand our area of work. Many other ethnic communities need help in initiating education in their mother tongue. We hope to start the campaign on a national basis, and provide support to other SRCs and Indian NGOs to carry on the literacy work. Our work will also have a positive impact in developing the aspirations of other ethnic groups throughout the country.

### **Facilitators/Teacher Training**

The District Literacy Societies will be given responsibility for reprinting the teachers training manual that was prepared by SRC Assam. In this way, they will be able to function independently.

**Action research on the project:** Our target is to complete the ongoing Action Research in Goalpara.

**Policy and expansion of the project:** There are over 200 languages in the northeast of India. Most of these languages do not have written scripts of their own. Mother-tongue education will become feasible only when there are learning materials in these languages. SRC Assam started its literacy campaign in ethnic languages with the preparation of materials in Bodo and Rabha. The next project to be taken is Tiwa. Our work in Rabha has caught the attention of influential people and educators in many language groups, like Deori and Karbi, from Assam and some languages of Arunachal Pradesh. These groups have approached us to publish books in their native languages. SRC, for instance, successfully brought out a primer in the Galo language last year.



## Philippines

### Action Research on the Development of an Indigenous Peoples Education for the Magbikin Tribe in Morong, Bataan, The Philippines

Dr. Milagros C. Valles<sup>1</sup>

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#### 1. Introduction

For years, the Philippines has been noted for its high literacy rate. Based on the 1994 FLEMMS, the Simple and Functional Literacy Rates of the Philippines are **93.9%** and **83.8%**, respectively. Although the country enjoys these national literacy rates, pockets of illiteracy in the rural areas, particularly in the indigenous peoples' (IP) communities still remain. It is noted that the regions where illiteracy rates are high are also the areas characterized by the following:

- Population growth is high, thus negating gains in economic growth
- A significant rise in the number of out-of-school population and young adults
- More than half of the population is below the poverty threshold
- A high rate of unemployment and underemployment
- Average annual family income is below the national average and inequity in income distribution is marked
- Incidence of malnutrition and both maternal and infant death is generally high

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- Peace and order conditions are unstable
- Delivery of basic services to the population is limited and is hampered by natural and man-made causes

## **EDUCATION FOR ALL (EFA) 2004**

To address the problems and to reduce the number of both basic and functional illiterates, the Department of Education, Bureau of Non-formal Education has implemented various programmes and projects aimed at reaching the unreached including the indigenous peoples/cultural minorities.

The NFE programmes/projects and activities are also undertaken to respond to the Dakar goals and to operationalise the proposed Philippine EFA 2015 vision, which states that:

*“By the year 2015, the Philippines envisions the attainment of a universal functional literacy brought about by excellence in formal, non-formal and informal delivery of basic education built on a comprehensive early childhood care and development...”*

The main programmes and projects implemented under the EFA Plan are as follows:

- ***Basic Literacy Programmes (BLP) through Literacy Service Contracting Scheme (LSCS)***

The programme is delivered by contracting the services of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private institutions, local government units (LGUs) and other qualified NFE literacy providers to deliver literacy services/educational interventions to the illiterate out-of-school children, youth and adults from the poorest segments of society.

- ***Non-formal Education Mobile Programme***

This programme provides an educational intervention that aims to make education accessible to out-of-school youth and adults in the remote, deprived, depressed, underserved and difficult to reach areas. A mobile teacher goes to the far flung communities to conduct learning sessions with a group of illiterate learners, and will not move to another village until the learners become basically literate.

- ***Family Literacy Project***

A literacy service learning intervention utilizing literate family members to help non-literate members upgrade their skills and eventually improve the educational opportunities of poor families.

- ***Indigenous People Education***

The project aims to provide learning intervention, which responds to the conditions, needs and aspirations of the IPs in the country.

- ***Non-formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency (NFE A&E) System***

This is certification of learning for out-of-school youth and adults who are unable to avail of the formal school system, or who have dropped out of formal elementary or secondary education.

- *Establishment/strengthening of the Community Learning Centres*

The community learning centre aims to provide learning opportunities and community development activities to different types of learners in the community. The activities to be undertaken will eventually improve the living conditions of the people through lifelong learning.

## 2. Bilingual Policy

The 1987 Philippine Policy on Bilingual Education under the auspices of the Department of Education aims to achieve of competence in both Filipino and English at the national level through the teaching of both languages and their use as media of instruction at all levels. The regional or mother tongue shall be used as auxiliary languages in Grades I and II. The regional language or mother tongue shall also be used as the initial language for literacy, where needed.

DECS Order No. 80 s. 1999 specifies that the medium of instruction in all learning areas in Grade I will be taught in the lingua franca widely spoken in the community where the school is located, which may be Tagalog, Ilocano, Cebuano or other dialects. The teaching of English as a subject will be done orally in the second semester.

Under the Non-formal Education Programme, the lingua franca or the mother tongue as spelled out in the 1987 the Philippine Policy on Bilingual Education should be used as the medium of instruction in literacy sessions. In order to preserve the use of the mother tongue and to facilitate the easy acquisition of the basic skills and competencies by the IP learners, literacy facilitators should preferably be qualified members or residents of IP communities who can speak the language. These processes are valuable in addressing the problem on the diminishing use of the mother tongue among the younger generation brought about by intermarriage and assimilation with other people in the neighboring communities.

## 3. Current Scenario of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines

In 2004, the total Philippine population is projected to be around eighty-two million people, 11.8 million of whom are indigenous peoples. The majority of the 11.8 million IPs are found in Regions XI and X, while the least number are found in Region VII and the National Capital Region. Currently, most of the indigenous peoples in the Philippines still experience discrimination/differentiation as reflected by the following situations:

### *Culture and Educational Situation*

- The IPs are the most uneducated and the least to benefit from the social services and educational opportunities provided by the government
- IPs are still perceived as second class citizens
- Traditional knowledge, practices, and culture of indigenous peoples are dying out
- World views of the young and old differ due to the assimilation processes
- Non-formal education is appropriate for indigenous peoples, but often not sufficient in content and length of time

- Indigenous learning systems are disappearing, and consensus building in local decision-making is declining
- Indigenous peoples are seldom/never consulted about the design and implementation of education and development programmes

### ***Economic Situation***

- Development is often seen by IPs as the development of infrastructure like roads, bridges and buildings
- Many IPs experience extreme deprivation; some IPs eat only one meal a day, often sweet potato
- IPs have a variety of products for sale in the market, but they are usually short-changed by middlemen
- IPs need the help of people or groups who are genuinely sincere in working for their welfare and development
- IPs need education and training in sustainable management of their ancestral domain

### ***Political Situation***

- Indigenous territories are caught in the crossfire of armed conflicts between Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) vs. New Peoples Army (NPA), AFP vs. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and other leftist/extremist groups
- There is a continuing exploitation of IPs by both GOs and NGOs; some IP leaders are manipulated by politicians for their own selfish interest
- Traditional leaders are able to resolve conflicts using customary laws

### **Strategies and Recommendations**

Based on the national scenario and IP view, the following recommendations were given by the IPs themselves:

- IPs should participate actively and substantially in all decision-making activities that affect them.
- NFE programmes should respond and be relevant to IPs' needs and aspirations. The competencies should, therefore, be drawn from the wealth of tribal heritage.
- Programmes should respect and integrate traditional knowledge and indigenous learning systems.
- Activities should preserve local values, beliefs, culture and reinforcement of IP community, unity and solidarity.
- Initiatives should use local dialect/lingua franca.
- Programme design should provide incentives and capacity-building for teachers (IP teachers are preferred).
- Programmes should integrate literacy skills with livelihood.

- Programme implementers must strengthen networking among IP network for sustainable development.

#### 4. Project on Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programmes for Minority Communities

Over the past years, there have been many attempts by some sectors to provide educational opportunities for indigenous peoples, and thereby slowly reduce their marginalization. However, because of inadequate resources and unclear government policies, some of these efforts were not sustained.

Likewise, the BNFE has also initiated IP-oriented projects, but because of limited resources, the projects were not implemented as planned. One example of these is the *Project on the Development of an Equitable Learning System among the Aeta Tribe in Sitio Kurong, Cogon, Aklan*. Under this project, a local curriculum was developed using participatory action research. However, the curriculum was not properly utilized because of lack of resources, e.g., learning materials, trained facilitators, funds for the honorarium of literacy facilitators, community learning centre etc.. The BNFE is still considering the possibility of continuing the efforts already started in Sitio Kurong by adapting the development processes used under the UNESCO-funded action research conducted in the Magbikin community.

Currently, the BNFE is now pushing for the development of a Culture-Sensitive IP Core Curriculum which attempts to capture the common needs and aspirations of indigenous peoples all over the country. A series of local dialogues and writeshops involving IP service providers, IP education networks and the IPs, themselves, have been conducted. The core curriculum will still undergo a rigid validation process with the IPs to make sure that the specific needs of the IPs can also be integrated in the curriculum, particularly in the development of learning materials designed for a specific IP community.

Another IP project implemented by the BNFE is **Action Research on the Development of an Indigenous Peoples Education for the Magbikin Tribe in Morong, Bataan** with funding assistance through an approved proposal from UNESCO, Bangkok. The project was successfully implemented because of the availability of funds from UNESCO and a counterpart fund from the Philippine Government.



There were two inter-related project phases, namely: **First Phase** – identification of learning needs, development of local curriculum and development of learning materials, and **Second Phase** – reproduction/printing of the learning materials, capacity-building and organization of learning group sessions. These are interrelated in the sense that the outputs of the first phase were used as inputs in the implementation of the second phase of the project.

The main objectives of the Action Research were to be able to develop a curriculum and literacy/learning materials in the IPs own dialect based on the result of the community dialogue/survey, and to use these learning materials in literacy sessions for illiterate Magbikin.

## 5. Action Research: Development Processes/Best Practices

To translate the objectives into action points, the following activities/strategies were undertaken:

### Phase I

#### A. Community Needs Assessment, Development of Local Curriculum and Learning Materials

**A.1 Community Needs Assessment:** In the conduct of the community needs assessment, various strategies were employed to maximize the generation of data/information regarding the community:

**A.1.1. Community dialogue/orientation (*Getting-to-Know You*)** – This was basically conducted to establish rapport with the IP leaders and the other members of the Magbikin tribe.

**A.1.2. Project Orientation** – The orientation session was focused on the description, objectives and procedure concerning how the action research was to be undertaken in the community.

**A.1.3. Focused Group Discussion: *Knowing the Community*** – After the orientation, a focused group discussion was conducted to generate more information about the community in terms of the following:

***Accessibility:*** The Magbikin tribe is an indigenous group that lives in a community called Barangay Kanawan in Morong, Bataan. The community lives on top of a rugged mountain that can be reached only by foot (about half kilometre) after crossing a hanging bridge that connects it with the main road from the town proper 20 kilometres away.

***Environment:*** The environment is generally clean, with rich vegetation and fruit-bearing trees. The natural springs from the mountain are the main source of running water piped into strategic locations in the neighborhood and electric power is round the clock.

***School Facilities:*** There is one complete elementary school in the community, but it is poorly maintained in terms of physical facilities. Only a few of the graduates get into the secondary level due to the inaccessibility of the high school which is located in the town proper about 15 km away. Students have to use the mountain trail and travel on foot.

***Education and Literacy Level:*** The majority of elderly people do not know how to read, nor write other than their names. They have been categorized as under the basic literacy level. Since these indigenous people are not educated, unscrupulous politicians and businessmen take advantage of them for personal gain.

**Health and Personal Hygiene:** Malaria is the most common ailment, followed by fever, cough, colds, flu and diarrhea. All are often fatal among toddlers. There is no health centre in the community, and no health worker that caters to their needs/problems. They depend on herbal medicines and healing rituals to help their sick get well. However, there is a health centre in the nearby town where they can seek health care with free medicines.

**Governance:** The community is headed by a chieftain they call “Kapitan.” The dynamic of power is evident with the leadership of the chieftain who depends so much on the members of the tribe. In every issue and concern that confronts the community, a series of consultations through general assemblies are called so that the people may decide on a course of action. The community is peaceful, and has the potential of being a self-sustaining unit; however, it does need assistance from non-governmental organizations, as well as government agencies, to improve present living conditions.

**Religion:** There are three religious sects in the community: Roman Catholic, born-again Christian and Iglesia ni Kristo. As part of her mission, the pastor’s wife of the born-again Christians conducts a literacy class and serves as the literacy facilitator.

**Industry:** The major means of livelihood are farming, (pagtatanim), paid services (hired by middlemen) for transporting farm products to lowland where transportation is available (pagpapaupa), gathering honey (pangunguha ng pulot), hunting wild animals (paninilo ng baboy-damo), and small-scale fishing.

**Home and Family Life:** Most of the houses are made of bamboo and nipa leaves. Each household was given specific land area on which their houses were built, but there is no land title as proof of ownership. The women/mothers stay at home to take care of the children, wash clothes, cook the food, clean house and upkeep the surroundings while the men go out to earn the daily subsistence. There were several intermarriages of the tribe with the ‘unat’ (means straight-haired or the lowlanders).

**Dialect:** They have their own language, which is also called Magbikin. There is no in-depth study on how the language came about. The dialect has been transmitted from generation to generation with some modification in spelling/pronunciation because of their association with the Tagalog and Visayan-speaking people. Unfortunately, the old Aytas did not teach the young generation their language; hence, there is a diminishing use of the mother tongue among the members of the tribe, especially among the younger generation. This situation was also brought about by their intermarriages with the lowlanders and interaction with other residents of the neighboring towns. The majority of the Magbikin community expressed their desire to preserve their mother tongue as part of their tribal identity.

**A.1.4. Home visitation and interview of key informants** – The Action Research Team went around the community for home visitations, and interviewed some members of the tribe. They were able to gather information, which validated and supplemented the data/information generated through focused group discussions.

## **A.2 Identification of Learning Needs**

The different community survey strategies utilized by the research team, e.g., getting to know you, knowing the community through project orientation, focused group discussion, interview, home visitation, helped the team determine the literacy level and identify the needs of prospective learners.

Based on the results of the Demographic Information Questionnaire, the majority of respondents are in the basic literacy level. In fact, the chieftain himself said: “I have no more aspiration to learn how to read and write. I’m very old – he is the oldest member of the tribe – but I hope I will be able to encourage the men and women of my tribe to avail of your programme so that they would never ever be like me.”

The community survey identified the following needs:

### ***Programme needs***

1. Basic Literacy Programmes
  - Out-of-School children, youth and adults
  - Parent education
2. Training of literacy facilitators
3. Provision of basic literacy materials

### ***Content needs/areas for learning materials***

#### **Health**

- Maternal and child care
- Proper nutrition
- Prevention and treatment of ailments (malaria, cough/colds, flu, diarrhea, kidney ailments)
- Personal hygiene

### ***Building the community***

- Appreciation of the mother tongue/local language
- Preservation of culture, customs and beliefs and tradition
- History of the local community
- Sense of cooperation, unity and teamwork
- Resourcefulness and self-reliance

### ***Sustainable use of resources and productivity***

- Marketing of farm produce: fruits and vegetables, root crops
- Clean and green
  - Reforestation

- Waste management
- Caring for water and its resources
- Preservation of wildlife
- Livelihood skills development/income generating projects

#### ***Rights and Responsibilities***

- Civil and political rights
  - Land ownership and titling
  - Suffrage
- Human rights
  - Rights of women
  - Rights of children

### **A.3 Categorization and Prioritization of Problems/Needs**

Based on the above listing of needs/problems identified by the Magbikin tribe, themselves, through the community needs assessment, categorization and prioritization of needs/problems were undertaken. During the categorization process, the problems/needs were categorized into content areas.

Representatives of the Magbikin tribe prioritized the above-mentioned content areas/needs with the assistance of the researchers. The strategy used in prioritizing the needs is a modified New Participatory (NP) Method utilizing the Non-formal Education Five Learning Strands as the core areas, as follows:

- Communication Skills (Basic skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking)
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Skills
- Sustainable Use of Resources and Sense of Productivity
- Development of Self and a Sense of Community
- Expanding One's World Vision

The content areas/needs were further prioritized according to importance and urgency. Likewise, these prioritized content areas/needs were anchored to the above-mentioned Five Learning Strands as the core areas. This process in the curriculum development cycle facilitated the indigenization or localization of the Non-formal Education (NFE) National Curriculum. The content areas/needs that were found to be related to a specific learning strand were placed under the corresponding strand/core area.

### **A.4 Preparation of Curriculum Content Grid for the Magbikin Tribe (Aeta)**

The Curriculum Content Grid for the Magbikin tribe (Aeta) was developed based on their categorized and prioritized needs and problems.

The listing of specific contents for each content area considers further the expressed needs of the Magbikin people. The topics and subtopics are listed in a matrix that shows the spiraling of concepts

in terms of difficulty. This presents more or less the whole picture of the knowledge, skills, competencies and values that the members of the Magbikin tribe need in order to improve the quality of life for their families, and in turn, eventually rebound to develop and progress their community.

#### **A.5 Preparation of Sample Writing Brief**

The next step undertaken by the participants as part of the process in curriculum development was the Preparation of the Sample Writing Brief. This is already in preparation for the development/writing of a set of learning materials that would respond to the expressed learning needs of the target group as documented in the Curriculum Content Grid. The Writing Brief includes the following parts:

- The identified needs/problems
- Learning objectives (listening, speaking, reading, writing, functional content objectives, numeracy objectives)
- Functional content
- Format (of the materials to be developed)

In the selection of skills and competencies, the writers were advised to always bear in mind the literacy level of the target learners, their culture and sensitivities, their learning style and the locally available technology and resources.

The Writing Brief served as a guide for the curriculum writers in the development of specific learning materials. Although it intends to facilitate the work of the learning materials developer, it does not limit the creativity of the writer. It also aims to systematize the sequencing of functional content according to the level of difficulty, and provides the opportunity for prioritization of skills and balanced treatment of concepts in each functional content area. It must be understood by the users of the Writing Brief, however, that the first and foremost consideration while in the process of development is the intensity of the expressed needs and problems of the target beneficiaries.

The development of the Writing Brief was a cooperative effort, wherein the participants were given the opportunity to work as a group. This strategy provided an opportunity especially to the representatives of the Magbikin tribe to provide the necessary information and interact/exchange ideas with their professional counterparts, the NFE field practitioners. This strategy was specifically utilized not only to maximize the participation of the Magbikin participants, but also to empower them as they go through the whole process. This is also considered as an indirect way of training people at the grassroots level in the step-by-step process of indigenous learning materials development.

#### **A.6 Review of Existing Basic Literacy Materials**

In order to maximize the use of existing basic literacy materials, a thorough review of the basic literacy modules developed by the Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE) was undertaken by the curriculum writers and translators composed of NFE central and field practitioners and representatives of the Magbikin tribe. A review of the Package for Developing Adult Learning Materials prepared by ACCU has also been undertaken to generate ideas on the format and

presentation of the materials. This process facilitated the identification of materials that can be developed/adapted/modified to suit the needs and reflect the real situation of the Magbikin tribe.

### A.7 Preparation of the Basic Learning Materials

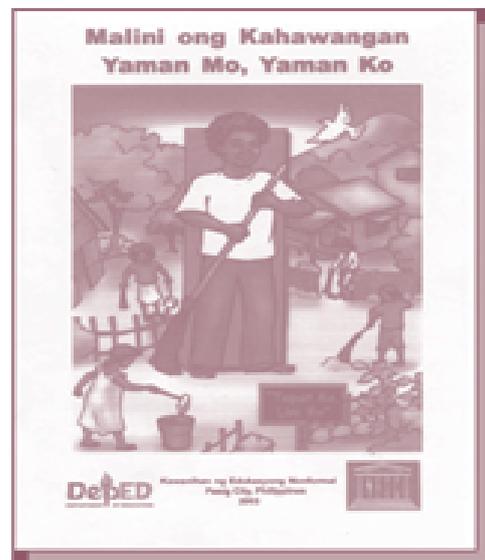
**Initial Development:** Before the writers and translators started developing sample basic literacy learning materials, a resource person on curriculum and literacy materials development provided input on the rudiments of curriculum and materials development.

The writers used the writing briefs in identifying the format of the learning materials and competencies to be developed. They also agreed on the number of learning materials to be developed based on the writing brief in consultation with the Magbikin representatives. The following is the agreed format of the materials to be developed: posters (folded poster and accordion poster), modules and primers/booklets.

Initially, one sample basic literacy material was developed during the workshop. In order to see whether the writers were on the right track, the draft of the sample literacy materials underwent a rigid peer and group critiquing by the participants. Additional guidelines on learning materials development were given as they went through the review. Feedback generated during the critiquing process served as a basis for revision of the learning materials.

**On-site Preparation of the Basic Literacy Materials:** The Research Team decided to continue the learning materials preparation in a place closer to the actual site. This gave the writers, illustrator, layout artist and all others involved in the learning materials development process the chance to have an actual visit to the Magbikin community to see for themselves what the Magbikin people and their community look like, how their houses are built, and their environment.

This process also ensures that the learning materials being developed will truly reflect the physical features of the Magbikin people, their surroundings, the houses and other unique characteristics of their community. This is being done to make the learning materials close to the people's hearts.



### A.8 Validation of Learning Materials

The main objectives of the validation process are to try out the new indigenized learning materials with tribe members and to document respondents' corrections, suggestions and recommendations in order to improve the materials. A total of twenty respondents participated in the validation of the learning materials.

The respondents were grouped into four groups with five members in each group. The members of the Action Research Team composed of BNFE staff and NFE field implementers served as facilitators of the whole process of validation. Because the respondents were zero literate, the

facilitators orally read the text of the materials for them while they followed what was being read to them visually.

Their attention was focused on the following aspects: a) spelling of the words according to their correct pronunciation; b) relevance of the drawings to real-life situation; and c) concepts and ideas functional and relevant to their day-to-day life. These focal points were examined page by page while the facilitator of each group documented respondents' corrections/suggestions.

All four groups reviewed all four booklets to ensure consistency and counter-checking between and among the groups. All corrections/suggestions of the groups were consolidated with all commonalities put together shown in the matrix on the next page. The Action Research Team together with the layout artist and the illustrator sat down together in several sessions to integrate all the corrections and suggestions gathered in the validation process done at the project site.

Among the comments and corrections/suggestions gathered were the following:

| Comments  | Suggestions/Recommendations   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Malini na Kahawangan Yaman Mo, Yaman Ko</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The module was clearly written out</li> <li>• The size of the letters is good enough</li> <li>• The content is a true experience in life so, it is easy to understand on what to do</li> <li>• The module is really for their own use</li> <li>• Easy to understand</li> <li>• Can be learnt through self study</li> <li>• The pages are good enough, not boring</li> <li>• The color made the module very interesting</li> <li>• The drawings are fit to the lifestyle of the Magbikin tribe</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The fence should be changed to bamboo</li> <li>• The letters to be traced should be clear</li> <li>• To have vocabulary words of Magbikin dialect</li> <li>• The words to be changed are the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Plasa to Patyo</li> <li>– Palikuran to Panak-an</li> <li>– Mamahaling to Maal-ti</li> <li>– Ane to Hale</li> <li>– Malusog to Malaku</li> <li>– Basura to Gala</li> <li>– Kasangkapan to Kahangkapan</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <p><b>TAW TAGAPANGALAGA ONG KALUSUGAN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The module is clearly written</li> <li>• The pictures add beauty to the modules</li> <li>• The drawings are good and can be recognized at once except the doctor and midwife</li> <li>• The module is easy to understand</li> <li>• The facilitators guide is very helpful to the facilitators</li> <li>• The module is very inspiring</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The translation of the words in Magbikin dialect should be in depth</li> <li>• To change the picture of the doctor and midwife for easy recognition</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>KALINIHAN GAWAON HA KALUSUGAN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pictures are very interesting</li> <li>• The module is good enough for the children or youth but not so much with the adults</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To change the words in the cover of the module</li> <li>• The words to be changed are the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Tungo to Gawaon</li> <li>– Kuko to So-o</li> <li>– Gayaen to Gayaon</li> <li>– Maiwaan to Liwaon</li> <li>– Maingat to Maitag-ay</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |

| Comments   | Suggestions/Recommendations   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>HALAMANG GAMOT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The module is beautiful</li> <li>• It is also easy to read and understand</li> </ul> | <p>The words to be changed are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nanay to Inang</li> <li>• Boy to Bay</li> <li>• Nay to Noy</li> <li>• Basaen to Basaon</li> <li>• Tate to Tati</li> <li>• Gawon to Gaw-on</li> <li>• Malinin to Maline</li> <li>• Nagtida to Nagtinda</li> </ul> |

Based on the comments and recommendations generated during the validation process, the following learning materials were revised and finalized:

- MALINI NA KAHAWANGAN YAMAN MO, YAMAN KO – A Clean Surrounding, Your Wealth and Mine
- TAW TAGAPANGALAGA ONG KALUSUGAN – Guardians of Health
- KALINIHAN GAWAON HA KALUSUGAN– Cleanliness Towards Healthy Living
- HALAMANG GAMOT – Medicinal Plant

## Phase II

### B. Capacity-Building, Reproduction of Learning Materials and Organization of Learning Group Sessions

#### B.1 Training of Magbikin Literacy Facilitators

In order to maximize the use of the learning materials developed under the first phase of the action research, the BNFE conducted the training of literacy facilitators on the use of the Magbikin learning materials and the *APPEAL Handbook for NFE Adult Facilitators*. Among the participants in this training were two Magbikin community members who had been hired as literacy facilitators for the Magbikin.

During the training, the use of the mother tongue was emphasized particularly for indigenous peoples. This was to facilitate easy understanding and integration of new concepts, and acquisition of basic skills in reading, writing and numeracy. The andragogical teaching-learning approaches were also provided so that the IP facilitators could respond appropriately to the learning styles of their learners.

It was also emphasized during the training that the literacy programme contents should be built around the culture, traditions and best practices of the IPs, and must also be responsive and relevant to the Magbikin's needs and aspirations.

#### B.2 Reproduction and Utilization of the Learning Materials

Four types of learning materials were reproduced and used as learning materials during the conduct of basic literacy sessions in the Magbikin community. Most of the contents of the learning materials

were on health and sanitation. This is because health and sanitation were major problems identified during the community needs assessment conducted in the IP community.

### **B.3 Organization of Learning Group Sessions**

Two learning group sessions with 25 learners per group were organized. The learners were under the basically literate level. Learners who are already in the elementary and secondary levels will be enrolled under the BNFE's "NFE Accreditation and Equivalency (NFE A&E) Programme" delivered by the Literacy Instructional Managers.

A maximum of 200 contact hours spread out over 3 to 4 months is required for each IP facilitator to complete the basic literacy programme. Graduates of the Basic Literacy Programme will then be elevated to the NFE A&E Programme. Those who do not intend to enroll in the NFE A&E will be referred to institutions offering income generating or livelihood skills development courses.

### **B.4 Monitoring and Evaluation**

A regular monitoring and evaluation will be conducted by the BNFE, regional/division/district offices to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the project. Documentation of the project impacts will also be done for sharing and dissemination to other IP communities and to other Asian countries.

## **6. Outcomes of the Project**

Based on monitoring and field visits undertaken by the BNFE and the field implementers, the following outcomes/changes have been observed in the community:

**Community Participation:** There is a shift from apathy/dependency to pre-critical stages as shown by their active participation during the series of dialogues conducted in the community. The community members are now involved in community issues like ancestral domain claims. They are also involved in the identification of other problems and possible strategies to solve their own problems.

**People Empowerment:** Two capable Magbikin members were actively involved in the development of the learning materials, which were used for the conduct of literacy sessions. These Magbikin members are now serving as literacy facilitators for the basically illiterate learners.

**Leadership and Self-Governance:** The tribal council headed by the barangay captain now regularly meets and discusses its plans for the community. The community members participate actively in whatever agreements are set during the general assembly. An IP youth group has been organized, and is already consulted on major issues and decision-making processes involving the community.

## **7. Challenges and Possible Solutions**

Although there are improvements/changes in the lives of the Magbikin tribe, as a result of the project, there are still challenges and concerns that need to be looked into by the Government and other IP-oriented sectors.

The following are among the challenges and possible solutions:

| Challenges   | Possible Solutions  |
|--|---|
| Lack of a community learning centre for use in the conduct of the literacy sessions              | BNFE in collaboration with the local government units and other IP oriented sectors should initiate the establishment a community learning centre in the Magbikin community |
| Provision of Income Generating Activities for the completers of the Basic Literacy Programme     | Local NFE implementers should link with community-based industries to provide skills training to the learners   |
| Provision of follow-on learning interventions for the completers of the Basic Literacy Programme | Organization of the NFE A&E Learning Support Delivery System to provide follow-on learning intervention to completers of the BLP  |

## 8. Future Plans

- Expansion of the project to other indigenous communities in the country.
- Preparation of reading material reflecting the processes and best strategies utilized in undertaking the action research on the development of indigenous education for the Magbikin tribe.
- Development of Magbikin Language Dictionary that will promote the preservation of the Magbikin dialect.



## Thailand

### Research Study and Material Development for Ethnic Minority in Omkoi District, Chiang Mai Province, Thailand

Dr. Wisanee Siltragool and Dr. Suchin Petcharugsa<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Socio-economic Situation in the Country

Situated in the heart of the South-East Asian mainland and covering an area of 513,115 sq. km., Thailand borders the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar to the north, Cambodia and

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the Gulf of Thailand to the east, Myanmar and the Indian Ocean to the west, and Malaysia to the south. Thailand has a population of 64,265,276 people (2004), the vast majority of whom are of Thai ethnicity. Significant minorities of Chinese, Malay, Khmer, Mon and various hilltribes also reside in Thailand.

*Ethnic groups:* Thai 75%, Chinese 14%, other 11%.

*Age structure:* 0-14 years: 24.2% (male 7,955,597; female 7,604,652)  
15-64 years: 68.8% (male 21,819,445; female 22,362,085)  
65 years and over: 7% (male 2,081,768; female 2,441,729)  
(2003 est.)

Buddhism is the dominant religion in Thailand, although a variety of tribal religions continue to be practiced. Buddhism 95%, Muslim 3.8%, Christianity 0.5%, Hinduism 0.1%, Other 0.6% (1991).

The main language in Thailand is Thai, although Lao, Chinese, Malay and English are also spoken by significant numbers of people.

The economy is market-oriented with a strong tradition of private enterprise, although state enterprise plays a significant role in some sectors. Gross domestic product (GDP) growth is estimated to be approximately 6% per year. Annual per capita income is approximately \$2,005. According to the National Statistical Office, approximately 41% of all employed workers are employed in the agricultural sector, although agriculture only accounts for approximately 9% of the GDP.

## 2. EFA Plan Focusing on NFE and Literacy in the Country

At present, the framework of education in Thailand is based on the 1997 Constitution and the 1999 National Education Act. They provide principles and challenging guidelines for the provision/development of Thai education to prepare all Thai people for a place in a knowledge-based economy. For the first time, the Constitution states that **“all Thai people will have an equal right to receive basic education for at least 12 years, equal and free of charge”** (Section 43). The new Constitution ensures that all Thai people will have both the right and duty to receive education and training (Section 30 and 69), as well as academic freedom (Section 42). It also includes the right to receive care and education for children, youth, women, the elderly, the underprivileged and the handicapped, as provided in Section 53, 55 and 80. These provisions will protect the rights to education of all Thai people, thereby moving the nation forward towards a knowledge-based economy.

The National Education Plan (2002-2016) represents a major reform plan, bringing together relevant provisions of the Constitution and the National Education Act. It is based on government policy aimed at transforming Thai society into a knowledge-based society. The scheme enables all Thai people to have equal access to lifelong learning and training, and being endowed with intellect, serve as a capital resource for income generating employment. In this way, the scheme aims to protect the country from economic and social crisis.

Based on the principles and guidelines provided by the 1997 Constitution and the National Education Act, it is hoped that the National Plan will: 1) lead to a knowledge-based society; 2) promote continuous learning; and 3) involve all segments of society in designing and decision-making concerning public activities. It is also expected that the National Education Plan will empower

Thai people so that they will be able to adjust to world trends and events while maintaining their Thai identity, as well as desirable characteristics like virtue, competency, happiness and self-reliance.

According to the National Education Act, it also enables the Thai people to embrace lifelong learning through all types and levels of education, and through the transfer of learning outcomes. Education provision will be based on 3 principles: 1) lifelong education for all, 2) participation by all segments of society, and 3) continuous development of the bodies of knowledge and the learning process. Education will be provided in three types: formal, non-formal, and informal education.

**Formal education** provides 2 levels of education; basic education and higher education.

Basic education is provided before higher education covering pre-primary, 6-years of primary education, 3-years of lower secondary education, and 3-years of upper secondary education. Basic education can be provided by early childhood development institutions, schools and learning centres.

**Non-formal education** has more flexibility than formal education in determining the aims, modalities, management procedures, duration, assessment and evaluation conditional to its completion. The contents and curricula for non-formal education can be adjusted to meet the needs of individual groups of learners.

**Informal education** enables learners to learn by themselves according to their interests, potential, readiness and the opportunities available from individuals, society, environment, media or other sources of knowledge.

**The Office of Non-Formal Education Commission (ONFEC)**, the new name of the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) after education reform, is the new body directly responsible for the promotion and development of adult education. It aims to organize non-formal education for the disadvantaged all over the country. There are various NFE organizations established throughout the country, namely regional NFE centres, provincial NFE centres, district NFE centres and Bangkok Metropolis NFE centres, respectively, to help provide basic education, vocational skills training and information services for the out-of-school population all over the country. With its policies on development of:

- Basic education involving literacy promotion, basic education equivalency programmes and continuing education based on the needs of the target groups
- Education for occupational development
- Education for life skills development
- Education for community and social development – The ONFEC can provide non-formal and informal education to cover a wide range of disadvantaged groups based on their rights as stated in the Constitution. They are, for example, prison inmates, the disabled, the aged, ethnic minority groups, i.e. the hilltribes, Thai Muslims in the south, unreached groups of people in remote areas and Thai people living in foreign countries who have the right to learn as those within the country.

## **NFE for Basic Education and Literacy**

NFE for Basic Education programmes are provided for those who have missed the opportunity for formal schooling or have dropped out, and would like to come back or continue their education. The programmes in this area are as follows:

### **Functional Literacy Programme**

This programme has been implemented since 1971 to help adult learners learn basic skills in reading, writing and numeracy, as well as problem solving through the “Khit-pen” process, which consists of information on academic knowledge, self-knowledge, and environmental knowledge. Adult learners can make decisions to solve their problems by considering those three areas of information. The curriculum of this programme is designed to be responsive to the needs and conditions of the various target groups, such as southern Thai Muslims, northern hilltribes, etc. The functional literacy programme has a curriculum equivalent to Grade 4 of formal schooling system.

### **Hill Area Education project**

This project is specifically designed for another major group of the illiterate population, who live along the mountain ranges in the northern and western parts of the country. ONFEC tends to extend the educational services, which are responsive to the needs and problems of the hilltribe community. This project can allow a number of hill people to become literate.

### **Continuing Education Programme**

The programme provides out-of-school people who have no chance to study in formal schools with an opportunity to increase their knowledge and obtain certificates equivalent to those offered upon completion of Grade 6, 9 and 12 of general formal schools.

Even though Thailand has implemented literacy programmes over a long period of time, the national literacy rate is 95.5%, or there are still 2.1 million illiterates. There are some reasons for having such a high percentage of illiterate Thais.

- There are children aged 6-11 years who cannot access the formal schooling system because of problems and constraints e.g. health and family problems.
- There are a number of people who finished primary education but relapsed into an illiterate state, because they didn't have the opportunity to read and write since there was no library or village reading centre nearby.
- There are hilltribes and ethnic minorities in different regions of the country e.g. the ethnic minorities in the north, some areas in the central part and the Muslims in the south. These people do not use Thai language in daily life.

2002 statistics from the Ministry of Education indicated the percentage of students in formal schooling and the target of non-formal education as follows:

| Age       | Level of Education  | Percentage       |                      |
|-----------|---------------------|------------------|----------------------|
|           |                     | Formal schooling | Non-formal education |
| 3-5 yrs   | Pre-school children | 69.94            | 30.06                |
| 6-11 yrs  | Primary education   | 104.77           | –                    |
| 12-14 yrs | Lower secondary     | 82.23            | 17.77                |
| 15-17 yrs | Upper secondary     | 59.82            | 40.18                |
| 18-22 yrs | Higher education    | 43.82            | 56.18                |
| 22 yrs up | –                   | –                | 100.00               |

The EFA plan focusing on NFE and literacy in the country is operated under a limited budget. In the 1998 fiscal year, for example, the education budget for Thailand was set at 23.1% of the country's total budget, or about 4% of GDP. This demonstrated the commitment of the Thai Government towards providing education for the people of Thailand. However, from this funding, the adult and non-formal education received only 1.19% of the country's budget.

In 2004 fiscal year, the budget was allocated for education as follow:

|                                      |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Total budget for education</b>    | <b>= 190,262,836,200 Baht (100%)</b> |
| Office of Non-formal Education       | = 3,795,241,900 Baht (1.9%)          |
| Office of Basic Education Commission | = 124,288,877,200 Baht (65.3%)       |
| Office of Higher Education           | = 40,006,029,800 Baht (21.0%)        |

These figures show a distinct bias in funding educational programmes for out-of school people. It was thought that many adult learners worked and gained income, which should therefore allow them to pay for their own further education. This ignored the fact that often the money earned from jobs was barely enough for day-to-day survival of the workers and their families. With a limited budget, it was difficult for the non-formal education organizations to effectively reach those unable to afford or have easy access to further education opportunities. Furthermore, 69% of the budget allocated to education was set for staff salaries, and the rest was then used for investment and development of equipment, land and construction.

### 3. Policy on Mother Tongue/bilingual Education in the Country

In Thailand, ONFEC was assigned to run literacy programmes in order to **promote Thai people to read and write Thai language which is the national language**. At present, this policy is continuing and implemented in all target population groups. This reflects the long-standing “cultural unity” policy of the country. However, there is a trend to focus on the mother tongue for the following reasons:

The Constitution has greatly increased the right of Thai people to political participation and the right to voice public opinion on major problems while the *National Act* has introduced new initiatives and provides principles and guidelines for the comprehensive reform of education. The new *Constitution* promulgated in October 1997 contains several provisions relating to education, religion and culture. It is stated in *Section 81* that the State will “improve education to be in harmony with economic and social change”, which means that the Government is committed to initiating education reform whenever it is necessary to keep up with the pace of change.

The Education Act emphasizes maximum public participation in the conservation and restoration of local wisdom (*Section 46*). The role of the private sector in the provision of education at all levels is also emphasized (*Section 43*). It ensures the right of local organizations to facilitate the decentralization of educational management.

By including the mother tongue in the education process, participation of local people and communities in educational provision will be enhanced, which will make education both relevant to the needs of people and responsive to changing environments, demands and opportunities at a local level.

As mandated by *Section 33 of the 1999 National Education Act*, a 15-year *National Education Plan* was prepared that focuses on the integration of all aspects of quality of life. It emphasizes human-centred development and an integrated and holistic approach to education, religion, art and culture. In this regard, Thai people shall attain full development in term of physical and spiritual health, intellect, morality and integrity, as well as a desirable way of life that focuses living in harmony with other people.

Covering the 15-year period from 2002-2016, the *National Education Plan* will serve as a framework for formulating development plans pertaining to basic education, vocational education, higher education, and religious/cultural education. It also provides guidelines for formulating operational plans at the levels of educational service area and educational institutions.

Thus, there are opportunities for local educational institutes to set up a policy and formulate an action plan to promote mother tongue education. At present, there are already Chinese schools in northern villages (Chiang Rai Province) teaching in the mother-tongue language.

#### **4. Past and Future of Education for Hilltribes in Thailand**

For some time, ONFEC has provided unique NFE and informal education services for the hilltribes. In the hill areas, there are several tribes who have their own languages and cultural heritage. Thus, it is necessary to design education programmes which are most relevant and suitable for each tribe. Functional literacy packages have been developed for the hilltribes since 1974. During 1978-1979, ONFEC found from field surveys that even though there were several organizations offering education services for hilltribes, the service coverage was not satisfactory. A model for hilltribe community learning centres was explored with financial support from UNSAID at the time. This new education service model was extended to cover 16 provinces in the north and central regions of Thailand.

In 1996, the Cabinet approved the NFE policy for hilltribes, identified under the name, “Project on Hilltribe Community Learning Centre” called ‘Mae Fah Luang’ – the name assigned by the

King – which was operating in 18 provinces: i.e. 13 provinces in northern Thailand – Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Mae Hong Son, Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, Nan, Phayao, Phetchabun, Phitsanulok, Sukhothai, Tak and Uthai Thani, and 5 provinces in central Thailand – Suphan Buri, Kanchanaburi, Ratchaburi, Phetchaburi and Prachuap Khiri Khan. In order to safeguard the future of this project, ONFEC had done SWOT analysis and developed strategic plans for 2005-2008. Some details are presented below.

Concerning **opportunity**, the following supportive factors exist:

*Policy and political factors:*

- Strategies of national education reform are based on the principle of the hilltribe community learning centre.
- The Constitution provides equal right in access to education services, and local administration organizations recognize its necessity and provide support.

*Social and cultural factors:*

- The royal family, national/international organizations provide support.
- National, as well as international, agencies highly regard the project.
- Local communities recognize its value and participate in various activities.

*Education factors:*

- The possibility of change in content and methods of study in the 2001 national basic education curriculum, which will then become more suitable for hilltribe communities.
- Other organizations cannot provide education services due to the fact that they have no experiences and working personnel in the hilltribe communities.

*Economic factor:*

- International agencies and private organizations support the project.

*Technology factor:*

- There is an increasing use of technology in hilltribe communities.

Concerning **threats**, there are some barriers:

*Policy and political factors:*

- Government policies on the target population are unclear.

*Social and cultural factors:*

- The target population devalues education.

*Education factors:*

- There is no special curriculum for hilltribes.

*Economic factors:*

- There is a high level of poverty among the hilltribes, and the government budget is limited.

*Technology factor:*

- There are transportation difficulties in bringing technology to hilltribe communities.



Concerning **weaknesses**, important factors include the following:

*Personnel:*

- The teachers have inadequate knowledge and experience in teaching, are overloaded with tasks in comparison with teachers from other departments, receive inadequate training on NFE and related topics, and often have low morale and motivation. In addition, due to high teacher turnover and difficulty in finding new teachers, there is a discontinuity of education.
- Unsuitable administrators are assigned to the tasks or areas, they are ignorant of education for hilltribes, having different personal policies, inadequate understanding of philosophy, principles, goals and approach of hilltribe education, and they are not proactive.
- Local supervisor have an inadequate salary so that they cannot work effectively.
- Children often have no nationality. It is difficult to diversify learning activities due to differentiation of learners, i.e. children and adult; there are few learners who can pass all the requirements of the curriculum.

*Education quality:*

- No concrete and standard indicators exist, thus preventing the implementation of education activities for achieving such indicators.
- Learning materials are inadequate.

*Education management:*

- Resources are inadequate or not available.
- Due to inadequate public relations to show the value of education, and discontinuity of supervision and monitoring, learners, local people and related persons cannot get a real understanding of education services.
- Data on hilltribes is unclear.

Concerning **strengths**, the following factors are important:

***Personnel:***

- CLC teachers are the only government representatives working in local communities; most of them have bachelors degrees and are from hilltribe communities.

***Education quality:***

- Curriculum is flexible, integrated, and can be implemented for both children and adult learners.
- Local wisdom and culture can be preserved through the process of learning.

***Education management:***

- Hilltribe communities participate in the process of learning.
- Members of hilltribe communities have networks and coordination.
- The hilltribe CLC is a model resource/learning centre.

**Vision:** By 2008, the hilltribe population will have suitable, quality and diversified NFE and informal education that will lead to a learning society.

**Mission:**

- To offer learning opportunities through non-formal and informal education which is relevant to the hilltribes' culture and ways of living.
- To promote quality NFE and informal education for the hilltribes.
- To increase the effectiveness of NFE and the informal education management system.

**Target:**

- Hilltribe populations have continuous learning opportunities.
- Hilltribe communities become a learning society.

**Strategies:**

1. Assuring lifelong learning opportunities:
  - Promote management of the self-learning process by the hilltribes
  - Extend coverage of NFE and informal education to all hilltribe communities
2. Developing quality and standard of NFE and informal education for hilltribes:
  - Promote and support research on NFE and informal education for hilltribes
  - Develop standards of NFE and informal education for hilltribes
  - Develop curricula, materials, learning processes, models and measurement/evaluation measures which are suitable for hilltribe communities

3. Capacity-building on management of educational establishments and CLCs:
  - Develop MIS and knowledge management
  - Increase the effectiveness of educational management systems for hilltribes in order to promote and support a learning society
  - Develop networks for increasing participation in NFE and informal education for hilltribes

## 5. Project on Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programmes for Minority Communities

The Office of Non-formal Education Commission (ONFEC) participated in the UNESCO Regional Workshop on Functional Literacy for Indigenous People, 26 November – 1 December 2001 in India. At this workshop, ONFEC drafted a project to develop a bilingual literacy programme. The target site was Omkoi District, Chiang Mai Province, where the population are from the Karen tribe. There is a project there, initiated by Her Royal Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, to help in child and youth development.

In September 2002, ONFEC submitted a proposal to UNESCO to undertake the project, *A Research Study on Literacy Programmes for Ethnic Minority Peoples in Omkoi, Chiang Mai*. The project was conducted through an action research approach from December 2002 – December 2003. It aimed to develop bilingual curriculum and literacy materials, and promote literacy among the Karen people (Pwo Karen) in Omkoi District, Chiang Mai Province.

The objectives of the project:

- study the community and context of the target group
- identify needs and problems of Karen in the target area
- develop bilingual curriculum and literacy materials
- test bilingual literacy materials, publish and print for wider use
- review and report the research project

### Organizations involved in the project

ONFEC formed a research team comprised of its personnel from the Non-formal Education Development Division, Bangkok; Northern Region Non-formal Education Centre, Lampang Province, Chiang Mai NFE Provincial Centre; and Omkoi NFE Service Centre. From the beginning, some Pwo Karen teachers were selected to participate in the project. They played an important role, both at the community level and at the project level, in helping to initiate a writing system.

Since the bilingual approach is very new to ONFEC, the staff viewed it as a learning project and implemented the project with the cooperation of *Summer Institute of Linguistics-International*, who provided technical support and resource people for the workshops. From the first workshop, 'Planning the Activities,' in January 2003 until the 'Writers Workshop' in February 2004, SIL has been working closely with ONFEC.

### **Background information on the project site including minority groups**

The project began by conducting a survey of the Omkoi target area. The project staff from the central office of ONFEC, as well as staff of provincial and district NFE centres and concerned agencies, were involved in the analysis survey of the site during 13-14 January 2003. The survey was done in 2 villages: **Pa Kha village** and **Nong Ung Tai village**. The former is 25 kilometres from the centre of Omkoi District, while the latter is 37 km away. It took 1½ hours to travel from Omkoi to Pa Kha village. Pa Kha village has a population of 226 persons living together in 43 households. The people are Christian, using local Skor Karen language, and they already have a writing system.

In **Nong Ung Tai village**, there are 270 village members living together in 70 families (58 households). Most of the people are animist or Buddhist. They speak the Pwo Karen language, which does not have a writing system. It took 2 hours from the centre of Omkoi to reach Nong Ung Tai, or 4 hours from Chiang Mai. In the rainy season, the village cannot be reached. Nong Ung Tai village was selected to be the target site with the agreement of the NFE team. It would be a challenging pilot programme for the development of a bilingual approach to literacy.



This village was established 200 years ago. At that time, there were only 10 households. At present, most people work in agriculture. They grow rice and some vegetables such as green cabbage, pumpkin, chillies and long beans. Chicken, cows, buffaloes and pigs are raised for meat. The average income is 2,500 baht/family/year (US \$625). The Pwo Karen in this village are peaceful.

The Community Learning Centre (CLC) is where the children receive their education.

This CLC was begun in 1993 with the cooperation of the community, who constructed the building. Originally, it was a small bamboo shelter but, in 1998, it was reconstructed using wood. In 2001, with financial support from Her Royal Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, the CLC was enlarged to 6 metres wide in order to serve a hundred children. Normally, there are 2 NFE teachers, with one volunteer teacher serving as a supervisor. When the bilingual project started in January 2003, one more Pwo Karen teacher was added to work on the project at the village site.

### **Needs assessment/community mobilization/Identification of learning needs**

This bilingual project is run in a different way to previous literacy programmes. The Karen CLC teachers are active participants in the project, not just recipients. As they work at village level, they know the needs and living conditions of the community. The project designed a set of questionnaires for the teachers to survey local needs and compile community data to indicate potential project entry points.

At the initial planning stage, the participants, comprising NFE administrators, practitioners, adult educators, linguists and local teachers, shared their experiences reflecting the importance of studying the needs of the target group and mobilizing the community for participation in the programme. Some recommendations were:

- Upon joining a literacy class, the ethnic minorities want to focus on oral Thai in order to communicate with other people.
- Normally, in running literacy class, we set goals of what we want to achieve. However, we should remember that we should not force people to learn what we want to teach, but to learn what they want to learn. If they want to start with talking, let them and encourage them to progress to reading and writing. It's more important for CLC teachers to develop relationships with the people and to learn their needs and how help them achieve their goals.
- The ethnic minorities in remote areas probably will not be interested in literacy. They are not accustomed to attending literacy classes. A reward, for example, giving them pigs or chickens to raise or to allow them to watch a television programme at the CLC after the class, might motivate community members to attend the class. Some learners want to learn the language of their ancestors in order to read and understand the writings of the herbalists. The teachers need to know the objectives of the learners.
- Learning is a social process. The target group wants to learn in group. It is the task of the facilitators to investigate the prior knowledge of the learners and identify the new things that they want to learn. In working with minorities, the teachers should start with the learners' experiences or with their strong points.
- The Karen teacher reflected that it is good to develop the material with both the Karen and Thai languages so that the Karen will be proud of their language.
- In developing a writing system for minority people, it is important to know what kind of script they want. If they do not want a particular script or they do not like a particular script, other choices should be made.

It takes time to study the needs of ethnic minority peoples or to mobilize a community for mother tongue education. People need to work closely with community members and build trust relationships. Fortunately, in our project site we have both CLC teachers and Karen teachers staying in the village who know the local people and can introduce us to the community.

### **Developing writing systems (orthography development)**

This is a very important stage of the project. Linguists in association and cooperation with Pwo Karens worked together. There were 3 activities:

**Activity 1:** Workshop on the Examination and Analysis of the Pwo Karen sound system. (10-14 March 2003, Payap University, Chiang Mai)

The findings of previous research on Pwo Karen in Srisawat District, Kanchanaburi and Hot District, Chiang Mai, were used as the basis for collecting words to illustrate the Omkoi Pwo Karen sound system. About 360 words were collected to illustrate the consonants, vowels and tones of Omkoi

Pwo Karen. Three NFE Pwo Karen teachers from Omkoi District, two SIL members and one Payap University student worked together on the sound system project.

Activities included:

- Collecting and transcribing Pwo Karen words
- Pairing words for analysis of the Pwo Karen sound system
- The examination and analysis of the consonants, vowels and tones by SIL personnel
- Audio recording of the Pwo Karen tones and vowels for further analysis and examination using computer software

**Activity 2: Word List Checking in Nong Ung Tai village** (17-19 March 2003)

This activity was to bring the findings from Activity 1 and get confirmation from the Pwo Karen relating to the analysis of the sound system. The activity details were:

- Re-checking the word list with the Pwo Karen in the village
- Collecting, transcribing and translating into Thai a short folktale, “The Rabbit and the Snail”; the folktale was collected for use as an illustration of the sound system
- Taping further vowel samples for acoustic phonetic analysis with the computer

**Activity 3: Omkoi Pwo Karen Alphabet Design Workshop** (12-24 May 2003, at Omkoi Resort, Chiang Mai)

The workshop was attended by 29 participants, including 12 Pwo Karen from Nong Ung Tai, Sabom Hod and Yang Krog villages in Amphur Omkoi, Chiang Mai. The purpose of this workshop was to determine the Thai letters needed to write Omkoi Pwo Karen. The significant activities were:

- The Pwo Karen discussed the reasons for writing their language and the uses of an alphabet.
- The characteristics of a good alphabet were presented, e.g. easy to learn with one symbol for each sound.
- Participants were asked to write stories in Pwo Karen using Thai letters.
- The letters needed to represent the Pwo Karen sounds were identified in the stories. (These sounds included the consonants, vowels and tones.)
- Options for the representations of Pwo Karen sounds not found in Thai were presented and discussed. The Pwo Karen then made decisions as to how best to represent their special sounds.
- The Pwo Karen tested their new writing system by writing lists of words for each consonant and vowel. These lists were checked by Pwo Karen and corrected. Problems were discussed as they came up and changes to the writing system were made as necessary. Throughout the workshop, participants were reminded that the writing system was provisional and would likely be adjusted further as problems were discovered and dealt with.

- Participants continued to test the writing system by producing materials, including a draft alphabet chart, picture dictionary, spelling guide, posters and “The Rabbit and the Snail” booklet.

The materials produced at this workshop were an alphabet chart, picture dictionary and manual for writing Pwo Karen.

### Process of developing teaching/learning materials

After the alphabet design workshop, the Pwo teachers were assigned to study the cultural themes of the Pwo Karen at the target site and to bring them for a curriculum and materials development workshop. To develop teaching/learning materials, we decide to organize 2 workshops: “*Curriculum and Teaching Material Development Workshop*” and “*Writers Workshop*.”

### Process of Teaching Material Development

The outputs of this activity were six “Big Books” and other literacy materials. The process was:

- Identify the target group.
- Set up goals and objectives for organizing the bilingual literacy class.
- Learn about adult psychology and how it relates to materials development.
- Identify material content that is relevant and related to the lives of the learners.
- Learn how to make teaching/ learning materials (Big Books, small books and others materials).



The **Big Book** is a large book with large print and large pictures. Stories are interesting and easy to follow. Words and phrases are repeated throughout the book, and the story is written so that learners can predict what will happen next.

**Small books** can be developed for each learner. It can be copied from the Big Book or developed separately by teachers or learners.

**Games** can be made for literacy classes (e.g. Stepping Stone game, Picking Up Mangoes, Fishing game, Bubble game, Picking Coconuts, Flashcards, Matching Cards, etc.)

- Develop the materials (learning techniques of making a Big Book and small books/ drawing/colouring etc.)
- Editing
- Testing the materials

### Process of a Writer Workshop

The outputs of this workshop were small books written by learners.

- Introduction to workshop/importance of literature
- Writing Experience 1 (What makes a good story?)
- Writing Experience 2 (Writing Skill 1 – Writing a well known folk-tale in their own language)
- Writing Experience 3 (Writing Skill 2 – Basic writing skills while writing a personal experience story)
- Writing Experience 4 (Writing Skill 3 – Developing writing skills while writing a personal experience story)
- Writing Experience 5 (Writing for new readers)
- Stages of writing:
  - Discuss ideas together
  - Tell a story to a friend
  - Write it down, skipping every other line
  - Read it to someone else and let other people read it
  - Edit the story yourself and let other people read it
  - Type it on the computer (or write it)
  - Print it out
  - Check it once again (for spelling, spacing, pagination)
  - Make into book



## 6. Outcomes of the Project

From our observation and interviews with teachers, we found that the bilingual project can help to improve literacy programmes for minorities, motivate learning, empower learners and build capacity.

- The project started with the current limited knowledge of the target people, so it was challenging for them to participate and help to initiate a literacy programme. Nonetheless, they were confident to participate in the activities.
- Pwo Karen teachers played active roles in the project. They participated in planning the activities, played key roles in orthography development, produced teaching/learning materials and organized a bilingual literacy class at the CLC.
- Material production was shifted from production by outsiders to teacher/learner production at the village level.

- The content of the materials was relevant to the learners.
- Villagers supported and participated in material production. They were interviewed, requested to tell stories and helped edit the materials. They were empowered through the bilingual literacy project.

## 7. Challenges of the Project and Possible Solutions

This is the first year of the pilot project. We attained the main objective which was to develop bilingual literacy materials. If we consider it as a '*Learning Project*' for the facilitators, there were many lessons learned. However, there are some challenges and potential solutions:

**Project administration:** There are a number of NFE personnel involved in the project, from the Central NFE office, Bangkok; Regional NFE centre, Lampang Province; Chiang Mai NFE provincial centre; Omkoi NFE district; and Nong Ung Tai Community Learning Centre. It is almost 1,000 km from Bangkok to the village site. Such a long distance effects working together as a 'research team.' Besides the difficulty in travelling, there is also difficulty in communication with each other, whether by telephone or letter. Sometimes, contact is lost.

**Bilingual approach is very new to NFE:** The aim of the literacy programme is actually to teach people to read and write in the Thai national language. When the bilingual literacy programme was introduced, we were reluctant to implement this new approach. Many questions arose that could not be immediately answered. (Is it an effective approach of literacy programme? How long does it take to build the literature bridge? Who is going to do what and how?)

**Sustainability of the project:** Even though Pwo villagers were involved in the project from the beginning, some questions still arose. For example, why do they have to learn their own language when they have not had a Pwo writing system for more than 200 years? It's challenging to see how the project can be sustainable, and what factors will make it so.

The development of a literacy programme is not an easy task. It takes greater effort to run the project because of the target group's constraints. The bilingual project is more difficult because it was necessary to begin with developing a writing system. In addition, there is a paradigm shift from "making for" to "making with" the people. This is more challenging.

## 8. Future plans

### Facilitators/Teacher training

There are now four Pwo Karen teachers (3 are CLC NFE teachers working for 2 CLCs and the other is a cross-area supervisor). Through discussion and agreement of the teachers with the Director of Omkoi NFE District, one Pwo teacher will work for each CLC from now on. So there are three CLCs working with the bilingual literacy programme. The project plans to train about four more Pwo Karen teachers in Omkoi district to work with this approach.

In addition to the teachers, there are a group of six out-of school youth – both male and female. They have been actively involved in the project from the beginning. This group of Nong Ung Tai

youth should be encouraged to work in language development. A ‘Language Committee’ or ‘Pwo Language Development Group’ might be formed so that they will also work as literacy facilitators for members of their families and neighbours. This will need to be discussed further.

### **Conducting literacy classes**

At the beginning, we agreed that the bilingual-literacy class would be organized in the evening for the out-of school people, the targets of NFE. The problem was that villagers did not have time to learn since they had to go out to work all day, far away in the fields, and they were too tired to join literacy class late in the evening. This CLC has only a solar cell which has limited use. Children and other people wanted to watch television at the CLC, so the class had to stop. This was another problem. The literacy class had been organized only for adults until February 2004; then we discussed this issue again and decided to try out two types of bilingual literacy classes:

**Bilingual literacy class for CLC children:** This class is organized during the day at the CLC. Children of this target group are interested in writing using the Pwo writing system. The class started between 3 and 5 pm, flexible enough for them to join after a normal class.

**Bilingual literacy class for out-of school learners:** This is another option. If there are number of adults or youths who are interested in learning the Pwo writing system, the teacher can organize a class separately for them. The time and place are flexible.

We are thinking that Grade 1 children should start with the Pwo writing system, but the number of children at Nong Ung Tai is very small. This is another option, and might be started at a new site. All types of bilingual literacy class have to be discussed more after the three teachers have worked for a period of time and implemented the approach at the primary sites.

### **Action research approach**

This bilingual project will continue to run in an action research mode for the following reasons:

Action research is an inquiry or research in the context of focused efforts to improve the quality of an organization and its performance. It typically is designed and conducted by practitioners who analyse the data to improve their own practice. Action research can be done by individuals or by teams of colleagues. The team approach is called “collaborative inquiry.”

Action research has the potential to generate genuine and sustained improvements in schools. It gives educators new opportunities to reflect on and assess their teaching; to explore and test new ideas, methods, and materials; to assess how effective the new approaches were; to share feedback with fellow team members; and to make decisions about which new approaches to include in the team’s curriculum, instruction, and assessment plans.

### **Policy and expansion of the project**

ONFEC has been working out this project as action research with technical support from SIL and strong support from UNESCO. They have implemented the use of the Pwo writing system, which they could not have done previously. Furthermore, the project has found new ways of material

production, from production and sending from NFE Central Office to grass-root production by teachers and learners, themselves. This is considered to be the new paradigm of material production. However, the full outcomes of the project will take more time. We published documentation about the bilingual project in the NFE journal, disseminated it on the website of the NFE Northern Regional Centre, sent the research document to the National Research Council and have presented the project to the public many times. This heightens the public's interest and affects policy development.

There are indicators and trends that suggest the project will expand to other areas:

**Por-Nor School in the south:** The project idea and all literacy materials were already presented to three directors of NFE centres in Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat Provinces, together with the other 15 NFE educators who were assigned to initiate the new approach for Por-Nor School in the south. Those three directors will get financial support to take teachers for a study visit to Omkoi District, stay at Nong Ung Tai to learn with the Pwo teachers, and then apply the idea in the south. This Por-Nor Project is now supported by the former NFE Director General, Dr. Arthorn Chantarawimon.

**Highland Development Project in the north:** There was a meeting among NFE administrators in Chiang Rai Province in the north from 27-28 April 2004. Under Her Majesty the Queen's initiative, it is necessary for anyone who works with hilltribes to start learning their language.



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Bangkok, 16 May 2004

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UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education  
Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL)  
Bangkok, Thailand

**Regional Workshop on Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programme  
for Ethnic Minorities**  
(17-22 May 2004, Kunming, China)

**WORKSHOP PROGRAMME**

| Date/Time                     | Agenda/Activities  | Facilitators            |
|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| <b>DAY 1: 17 May (Monday)</b> |  |                         |
| 0900-0930                     | Registration   |                         |
| 0930-1000                     | <b>Opening</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Opening speech by Yunnan Provincial Department of Education</li><li>Speech by Chinese National Commissions for UNESCO</li><li>Speech by APPEAL, UNESCO Bangkok</li></ul>  | Chinese.Nat.Com<br>DR   |
| 1000-1040                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Overview of the project and brief orientation of the Workshop by APPEAL</li><li>Introduction of participants and resource persons</li><li>Selection of chairpersons and rapporteurs</li><li>Group photo</li></ul>  | DR<br>MT<br>MT          |
| 1040-1100                     | Tea break  |                         |
| 1100-1230                     | <b>Agenda 1: Situation of Minority Language Communities in Asia and the Pacific</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Brief overview by APPEAL (15 min)</li><li>Presentation by Ms. Anne Thomas (30 min)</li><li>Presentation by Ms. Catherine Young (30 min)</li><li>General discussion on situation (15 min)</li></ul> | DR<br>AT<br>CY<br>DR/MT |
| 1230-1330                     | Lunch break  |                         |
| 1330-1500                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Group discussion on situation of minorities and literacy programmes for minorities</li><li>Group reports</li></ul>   | DR/MT                   |
| 1500-1530                     | Tea break  |                         |

|                                |   |                                      |
|--------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1530-1730                      | <b>Agenda 2: Best Practices in Implementing Minority Language Education Programmes and Sharing Country Experiences</b><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation by 5 countries: Bangladesh, China, India, Philippines, Thailand (15 min each)</li> <li>• Presentation by Ms. Anne Thomas (20 min)</li> <li>• Presentation by Ms. Catherine Young (20 min)</li> </ul>  | DR/MT<br><br>Country<br><br>AT<br>CY |
| 1800-1930                      | Welcome reception hosted by Chinese National Commissions for UNESCO and Yunnan Provincial Department of Education   |                                      |
| <b>Day 2: 18 May (Tuesday)</b> |   |                                      |
| 0830-0845                      | Energizer and Review of DAY 1 by Rapporteur   |                                      |
| 0845-1045                      | <b>Agenda 3: Community Mobilization and Identification of Learning Needs</b><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing of experiences by 5 countries: Bangladesh, China, India, the Philippines, Thailand (10 min each)</li> <li>• Input by APPEAL (15 min)</li> <li>• Feedback from new countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, Viet Nam (15 min)</li> <li>• Presentation by Ms. Anne Thomas (15 min)</li> <li>• Plenary discussion and synthesis (30 min)</li> </ul> | Country<br><br>MT<br>AT<br>AT<br>AT  |
| 1050-1105                      | Tea break   |                                      |
| 1105-1230                      | <b>Agenda 4: Developing Minority Language Writing Systems</b><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing of experiences by 5 countries: Bangladesh, China, India, the Philippines, Thailand (10 min each)</li> <li>• Feedback from new countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, Viet Nam (15 min)</li> <li>• Presentation by Ms. Catherine Young (15 min)</li> </ul>   | Country<br><br>CY<br>CY              |
| 1230-1330                      | Lunch break   |                                      |
| 1330-1400                      | • Plenary discussion and synthesis (30 min)   | CY                                   |
| 1400-1530                      | <b>Agenda 5: Developing Teaching Learning Materials and Graded Reading Materials</b><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing of experiences by 5 countries: Bangladesh, China, India, the Philippines, Thailand (15 min each)</li> <li>• Input by APPEAL (15 min)</li> </ul>  | Country<br><br>MT                    |
| 1530-1545                      | Tea break   |                                      |
| 1545-1645                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from new countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, Viet Nam (15 min)</li> <li>• Presentation by Ms. Catherine Young (15 min)</li> <li>• Plenary discussion and synthesis (30 min)</li> </ul>   | CY<br>CY<br>CY                       |

|  |  |                              |
|--|--|------------------------------|
| 1645-1715                                      | <b>Orientation to the Field Visit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefing on background information of field visit sites (15 min)</li> <li>• Guidelines for field visit observation by APPEAL (15 min)</li> </ul>  | Chinese.Nat.Com<br>AT/CY     |
| 1800   | Departure from Hotel<br>→ Move to Simao by flight MU4485 (2010-2050)   | Chinese.Nat.Com              |
| Night  | Stay in Simao  |                              |
| <b>DAY 3: 19 May (Wednesday) Field Visit 1</b> |  |                              |
| 0700   | Move from Simao to Lancang Country by bus  |                              |
| Afternoon                                      | <b>Field Visit to Ban Li Village in Lancang County</b>   | Chinese.Nat.Com              |
| Night  | Stay in Lancang County   |                              |
| <b>DAY 4: 20 May (Thursday) Field Visit 2</b>  |  |                              |
| Morning  | Energizer and Review of DAYS 2 & 3 by Rapporteur   |                              |
|  | <b>Field Visit to Na No Kuo Village in Lancang County</b>  | Chinese.Nat.Com              |
| Afternoon                                      | <b>Agenda 6: Developing a Framework for Planning Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programme</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflection from the field visit observation</li> </ul>  | AT/CY                        |
| 1500   | Move from Lancang Country to Simao by bus<br>→ Return to Kunming by flight MU4486 (2130-2210)  | Chinese.Nat.Com              |
| <b>DAY 5: 21 May (Friday)</b>                  |  |                              |
| 0830-0845                                      | Energizer and Review of DAY 4 by Rapporteur  |                              |
| 0845-1230<br>(incl. tea break)                 | <b>Agenda 6: Developing a Framework for Planning Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programme (continued)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group work on framework</li> <li>• Reporting of group work</li> <li>• Country group work on adaptation of the tool</li> <li>• Reporting of group work</li> <li>• Wrap-up by resource persons</li> </ul> | AT/CY                        |
| 1230-1330                                      | Lunch break  |                              |
| 1330-1500                                      | <b>Agenda 7: Training for Teachers/Facilitators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing of experiences by Thailand (20 min)</li> <li>• Input by APPEAL (15 min)</li> <li>• Presentation by Ms. Anne Thomas (15 min)</li> <li>• Plenary discussion (40 min)</li> </ul>   | Country<br>DR/MT<br>AT<br>AT |
| 1500-1530                                      | Tea break  |                              |

|                                 |   |                     |
|---------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1530-1730                       | <b>Agenda 8: Strategies and Tools for Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing experiences from countries (60 min)</li> <li>• Presentation by Ms. Anne Thomas (15 min)</li> <li>• Plenary discussion (30 min)</li> </ul>                         | Country<br>AT<br>AT |
| 1800-1930                       | Dinner hosted by UNESCO Bangkok   |                     |
| <b>DAY 6: 22 May (Saturday)</b> |   |                     |
| 0830-0845                       | Energizer and Review of DAY 5 by Rapporteur   |                     |
| 0845-1030                       | <b>Agenda 9: Strategies for Government Policy and Sustainability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing of experiences by 9 countries: Bangladesh, China, India, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, Viet Nam (10 min each)</li> </ul> | Country             |
| 1030-1100                       | Tea break   |                     |
| 1100-1215                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Input by APPEAL (30 min)</li> <li>• Plenary discussion and synthesis (45 min)</li> </ul>   | DR<br>AT/CY         |
| 1215-1230                       | <b>Agenda 10: Country action plans</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidelines for Country Action Plans by APPEAL (15 min)</li> </ul>   | DR/MT               |
| 1230-1330                       | Lunch break   |                     |
| 1330-1500                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group work for preparation of country action plans</li> </ul>  | DR/MT               |
| 1500-1530                       | Tea break   |                     |
| 1530-1600                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing of country action plans</li> </ul>   | DR/MT               |
| 1600                            | <b>Closing</b>  |                     |

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UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education  
Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL)  
Bangkok, Thailand

**Regional Workshop on Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programme  
for Ethnic Minorities**

*(Kunming, China, 17-22 May 2004)*

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

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