MTB MLE RESOURCE KIT
Including the Excluded: Promoting Multilingual Education
Booklet for Community Members
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Promoting Multilingual Education

Booklet for Community Members
Published in 2016 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

and

UNESCO Bangkok Office

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ISBN: 978-92-9223-556-7 (print version)

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TH/IQE/16/035-1000
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Introduction to this booklet

By the time children begin school they have already learned many things. They have learned about relationships as they interact with their parents and others in the community. They know about nature and the environment from watching the world around them and learning the names of the things they see. They sort and classify familiar objects and compare weights and distances as they go about their everyday activities. They evaluate the things that people say and do according to their understanding of what is good and bad, useful and harmful, appropriate and inappropriate.

Also by the time children begin school they are able to use their language for a variety of purposes. They know the correct way to talk respectfully to older people. They know how to ask questions and how to respond to questions from others. They can follow their parents’ step-by-step instructions to do a new task. They talk with family and friends about their ideas. They describe what they see and explain what they think. When they disagree, they know how to argue their point of view.

Through interactions like these, children have become confident in their ability to communicate with others and are excited about learning in school.

But what happens on their first day of school if their teacher does not speak or understand their language?

Many children from minority language communities quickly realize that school is not a good place for communication and learning—at least not for them. They cannot talk about what they know or ask the teacher questions. They cannot use their knowledge and experience to help them understand math or science lessons. For these children, school is an unfamiliar place where the teacher uses an unfamiliar language to teach things that they cannot learn because they do not understand the teacher’s language.

This booklet is about “Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education” (MTB MLE) programmes in which children use their home language or mother tongue (MT) as the first language for learning in school. In MTB MLE classrooms, teachers share their students’ language and culture. They know the things that small children learn and do at home and they use the students’ knowledge and experience to help them learn new things in school. The goal of MTB MLE is that all children, from every language community, will be successful in school and become productive members of their community and citizens of their country.

The remainder of this booklet is organized around a set of questions that parents, teachers, school administrators and other community members often ask about MTB MLE. The responses to each question include examples from real programmes in different parts of the world.
Q1 What problems do many children from minority language communities face when they begin school?

Children who speak a minority language must learn the same things as children who speak the dominant language when they begin school. They must learn the rules for behaviour in the classroom and on the school grounds. They must learn how to read and write. They must learn new concepts in math, science, social studies and other subjects. And they must be able to demonstrate that they understand and can use what they have learned.

But they can do those things only if they understand and speak the teacher’s language.

Children from minority language communities who do not use the official school language at home face challenges that make school very difficult for them:

- They do not understand what the teacher is saying and the teacher does not understand them.
- They cannot use the knowledge and skills that they have learned at home because those are not included in their lessons or learning materials.
- They are expected to learn to read and write in the official school language before they have learned to understand and speak it.
- They are expected to learn math, science, and other subjects but do not have the school language vocabulary to help them understand the concepts.

If they do poorly in their schoolwork—and many do because they cannot understand—they may have to repeat grades. Many students become so discouraged that they give up and quit school altogether. Here is what a researcher in India saw when he visited a classroom in 2005:

*The children seemed totally disinterested in the teacher’s monologue. They stared vacantly at the teacher and sometimes at the blackboard where some [letters] had been written. Clearly aware that the children could not understand what he was saying, the teacher proceeded to provide even more detailed explanation in a much louder voice.*

*Later, tired of speaking and realizing that the young children were completely lost, he asked them to start copying the [letters] from the blackboard. “My children are very good at copying from the blackboard. By the time they reach Grade 5, they can copy all the answers and memorize them. But only two of the Grade 5 students can actually speak [the school language],” said the teacher* (Jinghran, 2005, p. 1).
A teacher in Papua New Guinea identified the same problem. He described the confusion, and even fear that young students feel when they do not understand their teacher’s words:

During my teaching times I saw that a lot of children were kind of confused. They were just coming out of the village where their mother and father spoke to them in their home language. And then, here I was, standing like a giant over these small young children and talking to them in a strange language. I was frightening them, rather than encouraging them to learn (Rambai Keruwa, quoted in D. Malone, 2004, p. 17).

Of course, some children from minority language communities do eventually learn the official school language very well. Those students complete their education and integrate successfully with society outside their home area. However, when the official school language is the only language they can use in the classroom and when lessons focus only on the dominant society, what happens to their relationship with their home community? The sad result is that many children from minority language communities are forced to abandon their cultural heritage in order to get an education. In 1985, when researchers asked one parent from Papua New Guinea to describe the situation for his child, this is what he said:

When children go to school, they go to an alien place. They leave their parents, they leave their gardens, they leave everything that is their way of life. They sit in a classroom and they learn things that have nothing to do with their own place. Later, because they have learned only other things, they reject their own (Delpit and Kemmelfield, 1985, pp. 29-30).

Unfortunately, even after many years, many children in minority language communities face the same situation as those children in Papua New Guinea.

Q2 What is Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE) and how does it help children from minority language communities do well in school?

MTB MLE is based on the foundational principle of all good education: We learn when we can use what we already know to help us understand what is new. MTB MLE teachers realize that young students’ MT and the knowledge and experience they bring from home provide the best foundation for helping them learn new things in school.

Here is an example of the way that an MTB MLE teacher applies this principle to help her students understand a new Math lesson.
Math lesson: Introduce students to the metric system

For today’s Math lesson, the MTB MLE teacher is supposed to introduce her students to the metric system. She wants to be sure that her students understand this new system so they can use it correctly.

The teacher realizes that her students already know about measuring because people in their community have had their own measuring system for a long time. The students have often seen people use their fingers, forearms, footsteps, pieces of bamboo and other things to measure objects of all sizes. They already know many of the MT words that people in their community use to describe different lengths, sizes and weights.

So the teacher does not start the lesson by handing out metric rulers and telling students to measure millimetres and centimetres. Instead, she divides the students into teams and assigns each team one of the traditional ways of measuring. She tells them to practice that way of measuring so they can demonstrate it for the rest of the class.

After all the teams have finished their demonstrations, the teacher asks questions such as these: In our community, what is the best way to measure things that are very small, like your fingernail? What word do we use to talk about something that small? What is the best way to measure things that are very long, like a vegetable garden? What words do we use to talk about something that size?

The teacher encourages her students to talk together and then share their answers. And then she introduces the metric system because now she can use the students’ knowledge about traditional ways of measuring to help them understand the new system.
The paragraphs below describe the features of MTB MLE programmes that help children learn successfully in school. As you read them, you will see that they are all closely related to the principle above—teachers start with what the students already know to help them learn what is new.

**MTB MLE students learn to read and write in their MT.** MTB MLE teachers realize that memorizing the names of letters is not the same as “reading.” They know that copying words and sentences from the chalkboard is not the same as “writing.” They understand that the purpose of reading and writing in school is to learn and communicate thoughts and ideas. And they understand that their students cannot “read-to-learn” or “write-to-communicate” in a language that they do not understand.

MTB MLE teachers read to their young students every day. They read stories in the MT about people, places and activities that the students know from their daily lives. Students see the teacher holding a small book or pointing to words on a Big Book or poster as she reads. Soon they realize that the “marks” on a printed page communicate a real message. That is an essential first step in helping students become fluent readers and writers.

MTB MLE teachers help their students learn to match the individual sounds of their language with the letters of their alphabet. They teach students to put letters together to understand words and read sentences. From the first week of school, teachers encourage their students to spend time with books. They show students how to use the pictures on each page to tell the story in their book. Through all these activities, students quickly begin to see themselves as readers. In fact, young students begin to enjoy reading so much that teachers say that their students want to stay in the classroom and read during recess time rather than go outside to play. One of the biggest “problems” for MTB MLE teachers is that their students keep asking for more books!
MTB MLE teachers encourage their students to write creatively in their MT about things they know and think about, even before the students can form letters neatly and spell words correctly. They also help students learn the MT spelling rules and give them time to practice writing words and sentences.

When MTB MLE students do all these activities, they become confident writers who love to communicate their thoughts and ideas in written form. Two Kindergarten Year 2 (KG2) teachers in the Patani Malay-Thai MTB BE programme described what happens in their classrooms:
“In the past, when we wrote incorrectly on the chalkboard, the students didn’t know but now they notice our mistakes!”

“I cannot leave chalk on the table during the lunch period because students use it to write stories on the chalkboard. When I come back to the classroom, they call me to listen to them read what they wrote and that takes up class time. I did not teach them those stories; the stories come from their own ideas.”

**MTB MLE students learn to understand and speak the official school language.**

At first, students listen and respond (no speaking) to their teacher’s commands in the school language to do specific actions. Examples: “Walk to the door.” “Pick up a book.” “Point to the tree.” Teachers follow a careful plan that introduces new vocabulary and new sentence constructions in “small steps” that never make students feel frustrated or afraid. Quite the opposite--students have fun as they learn new words and new sentence constructions.

When they are ready, teachers encourage the students to begin talking in the official school language. At first they respond to the teachers’ questions with single words. Then they respond in short sentences. Their teacher continues to help them take “small steps” in learning and as a result, they are confident in using their new language. Parents laugh when they tell teachers that their small children come home from school and tell them commands in the official school language!

**Students begin reading and writing the official school language.** When students have begun to develop fluency in reading and writing their MT and when they have learned the

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1 Translated from an article in www.isranews.org March 2010
necessary vocabulary in the official language, they are ready to begin reading and writing that language. Students continue to develop fluency and confidence in listening, speaking, reading and writing their MT and the official school language(s) to the end of primary school.

Teachers use students’ MT as one of the languages of instruction in all grades.

Teachers use the students’ MT for teaching all subjects, except the official school language, in early grades. They provide activities that encourage students to use their MT as they think and talk together about new ideas. They use the things their students already know to introduce new concepts in math, science and other subjects. They provide team activities that challenge students to talk together as they apply what they have learned so they understand and can use their new knowledge for further learning.
Teachers use the students’ MT and the official school language for instruction in middle primary grades. Once students have learned something in their MT, they will transfer that knowledge to any other language they have learned. So MTB MLE teachers introduce new concepts in the MT and, when the students demonstrate that they understand, they re-teach the main points in the official school language. They speak carefully so students can understand and learn the vocabulary. They ask questions that students answer in official language and encourage students to help each other as needed. Then teachers finish the lesson by asking questions in the MT to make sure students understand the new concept.

Teachers use the students’ MT to support the official school language for instruction in the last year of primary school. Teachers know that their students must be able to use a higher level of the official school language once they move into secondary school and their subjects become increasingly abstract. So in the last year of MTB MLE teachers focus on helping students learn new concepts and at the same time learn more abstract vocabulary in the official language. Now teachers begin the lesson in the official school language. They introduce the more abstract terms relating to the new concepts and make sure students understand and can use the terms correctly as they do activities and then talk about what they have learned. Teachers then finish the lesson by asking several questions in the MT to check students’ understanding.

Why continue the MT to the end of primary school? The answer to that question, given in the quotation below, has been confirmed many times and in many places:

*The level of development of children’s mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development… Children…with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the school language.*
When children continue to develop their abilities in two or more languages throughout their primary school years, they gain a deeper understanding of language and how to use it effectively. They have more practice in processing language, especially when they develop literacy in both, and they are able to compare and contrast the ways in which their two languages organize reality (Cummins, 2000).

To summarize: Using the MT as the first language in school is not a waste of time. It does not take away from the students’ ability to learn the official school language and it does not make it harder for students to learn other subjects. In fact, students’ MT is an essential resource for learning new languages and new concepts.

Q3 How can we develop and support MTB MLE in our community?

Successful MTB MLE programmes require cooperation and support from many people at all levels of government. Most important is that people in the community want MTB MLE for their children and that parents and others in the community support teachers, principals and local education officials in making their programme successful.

The diagram below identifies the essential components of strong and successful MTB MLE programmes. If the programme is established in the formal education system, responsibility for some parts of the programme belongs to policy makers and to district, provincial and national education officials. But community members’ support is essential.
The *Booklet for Policy Makers* and the *Booklet for Implementers* describe the activities related to each of the components in the diagram above. Community members who want to support MTB MLE for their children can use those booklets to learn more about the process of implementing strong programmes. The short sections below describe the parts of the programme that especially need support from the community.

**Preliminary research**

Before beginning an MTB MLE programme for their children, local leaders collect information from parents and other community members. These questions are especially important:

- What language(s) do small children in this community hear and use at home? What language(s) do they hear and use in the community?
- Are people proud of their language and culture and committed to passing it on to future generations?
- Do people recognize a problem with the education provided by their local school?
- Do they want to work together to improve the situation?
If people answer a strong "NO" to the last three questions, it will be difficult to get community support for an MTB MLE programme. However, sometimes people have not yet understood the importance of language in education. They may not realize that their heritage language is in danger because children hear and use only the official language in school and are starting to forget their MT. Programme leaders may take “no” as a reason to start a good awareness-raising campaign for MTB MLE.

When they do have community support for MTB MLE, programme leaders need additional information. Here are examples of questions to ask:

• Who can write stories in the MT about people and activities that are familiar and interesting for children in each grade?
• Who can edit the stories and check that the language is written correctly?
• Who can draw pictures that will help children understand the text on each page?
• Are there people who can serve as teachers?
• Which women and men are experts in the culture and can identify traditional wisdom and practices that can be used in classrooms and put into books?
• What buildings, equipment and other resources might be available for materials development and training?
• How can the community support MTB MLE teachers?

Programme leaders also need to identify problems that might hinder or even stop the programme so they can plan possible actions before the problems arise. Examples of questions to ask:

• What happens to local roads and rivers during the rainy season?
• Do parents migrate to different areas for farming or work and take their children?
• Do the school and/or teachers’ houses need repair?
• Are there separate clean toilet facilities for girls and for boys on the school grounds?
• Is the water safe for students to drink?
• Is there a place to store books and other classroom materials so they will be safe from rain, rats and insects?

Also, in regard to identifying potential problems, programme leaders need to talk with the principal and teachers in the local school. What do they know about MTB MLE? Do they understand why and how it helps children learn? As the example from Liberia (p. 13) demonstrates, community members might be very supportive of MTB MLE but if the school principal and other staff or local officials do not understand and support it, they can stop the programme before it begins.
As programme leaders interact with people, they can also share information about the benefits of MTB MLE. Research, along with awareness raising and mobilization, should continue as the programme expands to additional communities.

**Awareness raising and mobilization**

Some local education officials (and some parents) may think that, in order to become fluent in the official school language, children need to start learning it as soon as possible and use it as much as possible. They are afraid that any time spent using the children’s MT in school means less time, and even less success, in learning the official school language. This is what happened in Liberia:

### The importance of good information

During a meeting with the school authorities, one of the teachers informed us that even though they had completed two MTB MLE training workshops, the school principal refused to accept the programme in their school. According to the teacher, the principal told them, “We are trying to take the children from darkness and you want us to take them back? Such a programme cannot be allowed in the school.”

Later, one of the local authorities told the MTB MLE supervisors, “If we had fully understood the essence of this programme, we would have prevailed on the principal to allow the programme to start in the school because it is good for our children.”

The purpose of awareness raising and mobilization is to share information about MTB MLE and encourage people to take an active part in implementing and supporting an MTB MLE programme for their children.

Here are a few examples of activities that programme leaders can use to raise awareness and mobilize their community:

- Make colorful posters that provide information about MTB MLE and put them in places around the community where many people will see and read them.
- Encourage community people who support MTB MLE to give speeches, do skits and demonstrations in different places with different groups, for example
  - Council meetings
  - Village markets and other informal gathering places
  - Religious meetings
  - Women’s and youth group meetings
  - NGO meetings and workshops

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2 2011, Supervisor’s report, Liberian Languages and English Multilingual Education (LLEME) programme, Liberia
3 From S. Malone 2010
• Produce short books and other materials in the MT and sell or distribute them at the local market, churches, schools, shops and other places where people gather.

• If an MTB MLE programme has been established outside the community, encourage local officials to attend special events in which young students demonstrate their reading and learning abilities.

acceptable alphabets

Researchers have identified 7,097 “living languages” in the world (Ethnologue. 2016). Several decades ago that number was over 8000. Most of the languages that have been lost are “non-dominant” or minority languages. The quotation earlier in this booklet from the parent in Papua New Guinea describes the situation clearly: When schools focus only on the official language and culture, students lose respect for the language and culture of their parents. When that happens their language begins to die.

Researchers have also found that almost half of the languages that are still used for oral communication have never been put into written form. A strong MTB MLE programme is not possible in an unwritten language but that does not need to stop people who want MTB MLE for their children. The Booklet for Policy Makers in this MTB MLE Resource Kit describes the basic steps in developing an alphabet for unwritten languages or revising an alphabet that is no longer accepted by the local community or by the government.

MT speakers, supported by a linguist who is familiar with languages like theirs, can make decisions about which letters or symbols best represent the important sounds of their language. When the community has developed a tentative alphabet, they test it with as many MT speakers as possible and make the necessary revisions. In some countries, a designated government agency must approve alphabets for minority languages before they are officially accepted for use in school.
The idea of developing an alphabet for an unwritten language may seem very difficult. However, with help from linguists, hundreds of language communities in every part of the world have done just that and with great success. Even while they are still testing their alphabet, MT speakers can begin creating graded reading materials for their MTB MLE programme. In fact, the process of writing stories, and asking other MT speakers to read them, is an excellent way to test the choice of letters and/or symbols used in a new alphabet. An important point to remember is that it’s best to use an inexpensive process (such as photocopiers) to print classroom materials, at least until MT speakers accept their alphabet and it has been officially approved.

**Curriculum and teaching materials**

Community members are usually not responsible for developing curriculum and teaching materials for MTB MLE programmes established in the formal education system. But they have an essential role in checking that the materials used in their school use the language correctly, affirm the children’s cultural heritage and build on the knowledge and skills that children bring when they begin school. Here are some of the things that MT speakers contribute to the process of developing curriculum and teaching materials for their MTB MLE programme:

- They identify the things that small children have already learned by the time they enter school. When teachers have this information, they can use what the students already know to help them understand new math, science and other concepts.
• They identify the MT terms for things like “measure”, “add”, “subtract”, “weight”, and “directions” so teachers use the correct terms for teaching. In the process of identifying MT terms that relate to concepts in the curriculum, MT speakers can begin creating a “MT School Dictionary.” This will be a valuable resource for teachers and students.

• They identify traditional instruments, tools and other cultural items that can be used to create a “Cultural Corner” in each classroom and that teachers can use for lessons.

• They identify people in the community who can visit the school and teach traditional songs, dances, games, clothing, and tools.

Reading and learning materials

A common experience in strong MTB MLE programmes is that students keep asking for more things to read, first in their MT and then also in the official school language. Wise programme leaders make the production of graded reading materials a priority from the very beginning.

MT reading materials for early grades must be written in clear and simple language about people, places, and activities that are very familiar to the students. Pictures on each page match the words on that page in books for new readers because they will depend on the pictures to help them understand the text. People, animals, plants and buildings in the pictures look like the things students see every day in their community. In fact, the only new thing in books for new readers is that the stories are in written form.

One of the most enjoyable parts of preparing for MTB MLE are the “Writers’ Workshops”. MT speakers who are fluent in their MT get together to write graded reading materials in their language. When local artists are identified, MT authors work with them to plan the illustrations that will best match the text. Editors can then check spelling and grammar. With a good team

Torwali students dance during Culture Time. (Pakistan)
© Institute for Education and Development, Bahrain Swat
of writers, artists and editors, a language community can develop a collection of MT reading materials that will encourage children to love reading.\(^4\)

If there are not enough fluent MT speakers who have learned to write their MT fluently, it’s not a problem. MT speakers who have learned to read and write another language can quickly learn to read and write their own. A brief introduction to their MT alphabet and time to practice writing should be all the new authors need to begin producing their MT stories.

\(^4\) A resource for developing graded reading materials can be found at http://www.sil.org/sites/default/files/files/resource_for_developing_graded_reading_materials_2013.pdf
We can identify four general stages of materials that are needed in successful MTB MLE programmes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>MT</td>
<td>2nd language (L2)</td>
<td>MT and/or L2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Length / content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New and early readers</td>
<td>Learn that written text communicates meaning; gain confidence in reading.</td>
<td>Short and simple, about familiar topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers who have gained basic reading skills</td>
<td>Build fluency; begin to use reading to learn new things.</td>
<td>Longer, about familiar topics and introduce new topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers who are ready to read in a new language</td>
<td>Use what they have learned about reading in the MT to begin reading the new language.</td>
<td>Same as Stage 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluent readers in both MT and L2</td>
<td>Read to learn and for enjoyment</td>
<td>No specific length; variety of topics from the MT culture and from the world outside the community. Includes MT and L2 (or bilingual) textbooks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Young Dai students love to read “Stage 1” stories in their MT. (China)

© SIL International, China
**Teacher (and other) recruitment**

The table below identifies the community members who will be needed to support MTB MLE in local schools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>General qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>As assigned by provincial or national education department.</td>
<td>Speak, read and write both languages fluently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Understand and appreciate the local culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Have clear and legible handwriting.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptable to parents and other community members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching assistants</td>
<td>Provide classroom support for the teacher, especially in subjects teaching or using the MT.</td>
<td>Speak, read and write the MT and school language fluently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Understand and appreciate the local culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptable to parents and other community members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural experts</td>
<td>Identify features of the students’ home culture that can be used to introduce new concepts in school.</td>
<td>Recognized and respected in the community for their knowledge of the language and culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify MT terms that teachers will use to introduce new concepts (Ex: MT word for measuring length).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writers, artists, editors</td>
<td>Write, adapt, and translate reading materials in the MT and official school language.</td>
<td>Speak, read and write the L1 competently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illustrate the materials.</td>
<td>Understand and appreciate the local culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check the materials for clarity, language, punctuation and spelling, then revise them as necessary.</td>
<td>Recognized in the community as good storyteller and/or artist.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Literate in the L2 and able to adapt materials from the L2 into the L1 or vice-versa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Understand MT grammar and punctuation rules (editors).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Approved by the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
<td>General qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>Visit classes regularly; help teachers when they have problems.</td>
<td>Speak, read and write MT and school language fluently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help main (government) supervisor to assess learners’ progress.</td>
<td>Knowledgeable about the community’s history and culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make sure accurate records are kept.</td>
<td>Confident in interactions with government officers, school officials and NGO leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help with pre-service and in-service training for teachers.</td>
<td>Experience in classroom teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure that adequate classroom supplies are on hand.</td>
<td>Approved by the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory / support committee</td>
<td>Communicate the goals, objectives and activities of the programme to the community.</td>
<td>Support the purpose and goals of the programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support communication between officials and community.</td>
<td>Committed to the programme and willing to work together for its success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage the community to maintain classrooms and classroom materials, toilets and school grounds and support teachers.</td>
<td>Approved by the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure that teachers are in school every day and treat students appropriately.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If needed, raise funds to support the program and ensure accountability in the use of funding and other resources.</td>
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Monitoring and evaluation

When MTB MLE programmes are established within the formal education system, education officials are responsible for evaluating most parts of the programme. But since people from outside the community may not understand the students' MT, they will depend on community members’ help in conducting the evaluations and in helping to analyze the results.

Community members also help to evaluate the quality of MT reading materials. They observe the materials that students choose to read during “free reading time” in school and at the end of the school year they identify the reading materials that are well liked and should be re-printed and those that need to be revised or discarded.

School committees meet regularly with teachers to identify problems and mobilize the community to maintain classrooms, toilet facilities, the school grounds and teachers’ residences.

Supportive partnerships

Successful programmes have the full support of people within and outside their language communities. MT speakers create the MT reading materials, teach the classes and ensure that materials and buildings are maintained. When they identify the components of the programme that are going well, communities work together to ensure that those components are maintained and when problems arise, they solve them together.
Successful MTB MLE programmes also require cooperation between MT speakers and people from outside the language community. Cooperation is especially important for developing or revising the MT alphabet, recruiting and training teachers and other staff, supervising classes, conducting and documenting preliminary research and evaluating programme components.

Establishing relationships with government agencies and NGOs is an important strategy but it is not always easy for people in local communities to reach “up” to district, provincial and national officials to ask for their help. Three of the programmes in the Case Study book in this MTB MLE Resource Kit describe the way that language communities developed MTB MLE programmes outside the formal education system. In all three cases, community members worked with partners from outside the community. In each case, the programmes have been successful in helping students move from the MTB MLE programme into the formal education system.

Q4 What do people within and outside minority language communities say about MTB MLE?

A teacher in the Regional Lingua Franca Programme in the Philippines compared her MTB MLE students with the students she had taught in Filipino and English:

Before, the children just sat in class but they didn’t say anything. They didn’t even know how to answer the teacher’s questions. Now they always have their hands up! They have so much to say. Now this is an active, excited group of children.

Supervisors report that teachers are happy because their students are learning the official school language so well. This is what a supervisor said about the Hmong MTB MLE programme in Thailand:
In the early years teachers worried that using the mother tongue would impede their students’ ability to learn Thai, the national language. However, support for the programme increased as people have seen that children in the MLE project enjoy coming to school and are confident in expressing themselves and responding to the teacher. Any remaining doubt turned to support when the teachers saw how quickly the children who had gained literacy in their MT were able to read and write in Thai.

Communities with good MTB MLE programmes report that now students love coming to school. Here is what Rajbanshi people in Nepal say about the children in their MTB MLE programme (one of the programmes described in the Case Studies booklet in this MTB MLE Resource Kit).

The students are ready to come to school even though it’s just 8 o’clock in the morning. They come early and enjoy playing with their friends. During the language session, they are fully engaged in the story. They are curious and have a great imagination. They have confidence in talking and asking questions. They learn mathematics from local materials and the teachers talk to them only in their mother tongue. They sing songs in local melodies. Even the snack is local food. Everything is so familiar to the students.

You can hear their laughter from far away. You can see their smiling faces all the time. They are happy. They love learning. They are not going to an alien place to study. School is just like their ‘home’.

Students and their parents are the most important stakeholders in MTB MLE programmes. Parents know that if their children are not doing well in their classes, the children will drop out of school. Therefore, they are very happy when they see that their children are excited about learning and love going to school. This is what people in the Benishangul Gumuz region of Ethiopia said about their MTB MLE programme:

Before, when our children went to school and everything was taught in Amharic, we saw how they were suffering and how disappointed they were. It was a very negative experience. Children dropping out of school—it was a normal occurrence. As parents, we were reluctant to bother sending them to school. But now they are learning in our own language… and they are excelling - not just in the mother tongue class, but in ALL their other classes too. They have become very clever!

Now we understand that our language is just as good as every other language. Before we thought it was inferior because our children were not learning in school. This gives us equal status with all other language groups.

Since our children now get a better education, our own interest in school is high. We now participate in all kinds of school-related activities: we help to take care of the school, and we meet to discuss the well-being of our children. This kind of thing never happened before (Blacksten, 2014, pp. 4-5).
Finally, UNESCO points out the benefits of MTB MLE to individual nations, and to the world:

*Education has a vital role to play in building resilience against violent conflict. Schools in the twenty-first century need above all to teach children what is arguably the single most vital skill for a flourishing multi-cultural society – the skill of living peacefully with other people.*

*Awareness of religious, ethnic, linguistic and racial diversity should not be banished from the classroom. On the contrary, diversity should be recognized and celebrated* (UNESCO, 2010, p. 36).

Language communities cannot develop and sustain good MTB MLE programmes without support from the government and other external partners. But governments cannot develop and sustain MTB MLE without the full participation of MT speakers in the language communities. Only when all partners work together in planning, implementing and supporting MTB MLE will “Education for Some” become “Education for All.”

### References


