MTB MLE RESOURCE KIT
Including the Excluded: Promoting Multilingual Education

Booklet for Programme Implementers
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Introduction

This is the third of five booklets in the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE) Resource Kit. The first booklet provides an overview of the major issues relating to MTB MLE from an international perspective. The second one identifies the role of policy makers whose support is essential if MTB MLE is to be implemented and sustained within formal education systems. This third booklet presents insights for the people who will be responsible for implementing MTB MLE programmes. It describes the essential features of strong programmes in which students’ mother tongue (MT) is the foundation for learning the official school language(s) and other subjects in school. The fourth booklet describes the actions that community members can take to ensure that the local programme affirms their heritage language and culture and provides a good education for their children. The fifth booklet presents case studies of MTB MLE programs in five Asian countries.

Questions that people often ask about MTB MLE are used as headings for each section of this booklet. Answers to the questions are based on lessons learned from MTB MLE programmes around the world. Examples from a variety of programmes demonstrate the creative ways that people are working together to plan, implement and sustain MTB MLE programmes that help students learn successfully and achieve their educational goals.

Q1 Why is MTB MLE needed? What problem is it meant to solve?

The purpose of education is to help children gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes they will need to be productive members of their community and responsible citizens of their country. To be successful in school, students must achieve the learning competencies prescribed in the government curriculum for each subject and each grade. But students cannot achieve those competencies if they cannot understand the language their teachers use in the classroom.

For students who do not learn or use the official school language at home, school is frightening at first, then frustrating, and finally discouraging. This explains why so many children in minority language communities are not in school. In 2005, the World Bank reported that, “Fifty percent of the world’s out-of-school children live in communities where the language of schooling is rarely, if ever, used at home” (World Bank, 2005, p. 1). That percentage has not decreased and, in fact, has grown, in spite of efforts by UNESCO, UNICEF, other international agencies and organizations, some governments and many minority language communities to improve the situation.
Many parents, educators, and researchers are aware of the problems that students experience when they are not allowed to use their home language in school. Let’s look briefly at several of the problems and then at the way that MTB MLE provides the solution for each one:

**Problem:** Students are expected to understand and use the official school language for learning from the first day of school, even though they do not use it at home. Eventually, students may learn to copy, repeat and even memorize their teacher’s words and sentences. But without understanding, they are not able to use the words and sentences to build new knowledge. A researcher in India described this kind of situation 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 (Jinghnan, 2005, p. 1).

**MTB MLE solution:** In strong MTB MLE programmes, teachers use their students’ MT as one of the languages of instruction to the end of primary school. UNESCO explains why that is beneficial:

>The language used in teaching is of central importance for enhancing learning. It is necessary to bridge home and school experiences by using the children’s mother tongue(s) as the medium of learning and teaching in the school. This helps children to develop necessary tools and literacy skills in order to move forward and acquire another language. (UNESCO, 2007, p. 19).

**Problem:** Lessons and textbooks focus on the dominant culture and ignore the knowledge and skills that ethnic minority students have learned at home and in their community. As a result, young students cannot use what they already know to help them understand what they are expected to learn in school.

**MTB MLE solution:** Teachers are fluent in the students’ MT and share their cultural background. They use examples from everyday life to help young students understand new concepts. When their teachers encourage them to talk about and apply new ideas and skills, students gain confidence in their ability to learn successfully. Also, when the community language is used in school, parents and other community members are more likely to become involved in classroom activities and help to link the school curriculum to community knowledge and practice.
Sawdo Japakiya is the parent of a kindergarten student attending Ban Prachan School in the Patani Malay MTB Bilingual Education programme in Thailand. He described his child’s development in speaking and reading the MT and Thai since starting school:

*In observing my child, I have found that he enjoys his study. When he gets back from school, he follows all of his teacher’s instructions, such as doing homework and drawing. Nowadays, when going shopping at the market, he often asks me to buy him books or drawing notebooks on which he can write for fun. He enjoys studying.*

**Problem:** Students are expected to learn to read and write in the official school language before they have learned to understand and speak it.

**MTB MLE solution:** Students learn to read and write in their MT. At the same time, they begin learning to understand and speak the official school language. When they have developed confidence in reading and writing their MT and can understand and speak the official language, teachers help them transfer their literacy skills to their new language. The Asian Development Bank tells us why that process is successful:

*A large body of evidence from different countries, as well as advances in the field of cognitive neuroscience, show that children who have access to mother tongue based multilingual education (MTB MLE) develop better language skills in their mother tongues as well as national languages* (ACDP Indonesia, 2014, p. 3).

To summarize, strong MTB MLE programmes that are planned and implemented carefully result in students who are

**Multilingual.** They are confident in using two or more languages for learning in school and for interacting with people within and outside their home community.

**Multi-literate.** They read and write with understanding in both or all of their languages.

**Multicultural.** They maintain their love and respect for their home culture and community and interact confidently and respectfully with people who look, talk and believe differently than they do.

**Successful learners.** They achieve their educational goals and develop a life-long love of learning.

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Q2 How do MTB MLE students learn to read and write their own language and one or more additional languages in school?

All children begin school with knowledge and skills that they have learned from parents and others in their home and community. Among the skills they bring to school is their ability to communicate and learn in their MT. Their language is an essential resource for learning other languages and for learning math, science and other school subjects. Because they already know their MT, it is the best language for them to use in learning to read and write. When students gain confidence in reading and writing their MT and achieve a basic level of oral fluency in the official school language, they are ready to begin reading and writing that language.

The diagram below displays the MTB MLE process for helping students gain fluency and confidence in speaking, reading and writing their MT, then the official school language and then other languages as required in the curriculum. As you read the diagram, starting at the bottom and moving towards the top, you will see that each step in the learning process becomes the foundation for the next step.

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2 Adapted from S. Malone, 2010.
This diagram does not assign a specific grade to each step because the rate of progression depends on several factors, including the number of languages that students need to learn in primary school. The main point is that students should achieve success at each step in the language learning process so they build confidence in their ability to understand, speak, read and write both or all their school languages.

Following is a short description of the main features (in blue) of each step in the diagram, starting with the bottom step.

**Students expand their MT vocabulary and develop confidence in using the MT in school.** Young children use their MT to communicate with friends and family long before they begin their formal education. Their first language-learning task in school is to expand their MT vocabulary so they can use it correctly and confidently in a variety of situations within and outside the classroom.

Teachers help students build oral fluency when they read MT stories to the students and then ask questions that require the students to think and talk about what they heard. They assign projects in which students work and talk together in teams to solve problems and then report on what they did and learned. Teachers encourage students to ask questions and then they provide clear answers so that students understand. They introduce new MT vocabulary terms so that students understand the meaning of the new terms and can use them for further learning.

Here is what researchers tell us about the importance of encouraging young students to use their home language in the classroom:

*Research suggests that young children’s ability to use language and to listen to and understand the meaning of spoken and written words is related to their later literacy achievement in reading, writing, and spelling* (National Early Literacy Panel, 2009, p. 2).
Students learn to read and write in their MT. Teachers introduce students to reading and writing in their MT—the language they know best—because

... the purpose of reading is understanding. And understanding is achieved when children make connections between what they read and the knowledge that they already have acquired. Children who have no access to reading materials that build on what they already have acquired, whether language, culture, or geography, are seriously disadvantaged (Prouty, 2009, pp. 17-18).

MTB MLE teachers use a “dual approach” to help their students learn to read and write in their MT. Students learn the letters of their alphabet and the language sounds associated with each letter. They use that knowledge as they practice reading words and sentences correctly. They also practice writing letters, words and sentences correctly and neatly.

As students learn to sound out words and write sentences correctly, teachers also help them understand that reading and writing are meaningful activities. They give students simple stories in their MT about familiar people, places and activities and encourage them to use the pictures on each page to “read” the stories to each other. They also encourage students to write their own stories—using their own invented spelling systems—and share the stories with a partner. Teachers continue to use this “dual approach”, focusing equally on accuracy and meaning, to help students gain fluency and confidence in reading and writing their MT. Here is what educators said about this dual approach at an MTB MLE curriculum development workshop in Ethiopia:

We are trying to focus more on meaning and not just on accuracy in the new materials we are preparing. Many times our children don’t manage all four skills [hearing, speaking, reading, writing] because this one—the focus on meaning—is missing. ... We have to strengthen speaking and thinking skills and free writing that will make them strong.

The coordinator of an MTB MLE programme that uses the dual approach in northwestern Pakistan said this about their students after just two years of MTB MLE:

Students from our MTB MLE schools can read and write after completing two years of preschool while those from government schools cannot read and write, not even in Grade 5.

Students begin learning the official school language. Students begin learning the school language through “hear-see-do” activities that help them develop their oral vocabulary. At first, teachers call out simple commands such as “Stand up” or “Point to the door.” Students listen and observe the teacher say the commands and do the actions several times. Then they listen again and they do the actions. The teacher adds new words and phrases each day according to a carefully constructed lesson plan.
Teachers often report that after three to five weeks, they observe students giving commands to each other on the school grounds during recess. At that point, teachers begin asking questions that students can answer in one or two words. The questions gradually require longer responses and soon students are able to use their growing vocabulary to talk about a variety of topics that are very familiar to them. Teachers also use meaningful question-and-answer times to help students develop an understanding of the basic grammatical features of their new language.
Students begin reading and writing the official school language. When they have learned to read and write their MT and when they are able to understand and use the official school language for “everyday” communication, students are ready to begin reading and writing in that language. Teachers help students learn the official language alphabet and the sounds associated with each letter. They encourage students to think about the way they learned to read and write their MT and apply that knowledge to reading and writing their new language. Teachers, education officials and especially parents are happy when they see how quickly students gain literacy skills in the official school language when teachers follow this process.

Students learn additional languages as required in the curriculum. Students in many MTB MLE programmes learn three or more languages by the end of primary school. The process for learning each new language follows the same basic steps described above for learning the official school language.

Using languages for instruction in MTB MLE programmes

MTB MLE teachers also follow a step-by-step approach to using languages for instruction in primary school.

Teachers use only the students’ MT for instruction in early grades (pre-primary and/or Grade 1, at least to the end of Grade 2). Since they already know their MT, teachers use that as the language of instruction for math, science and social studies. Having learned to read and write their MT in early grades, MTB MLE students have a good foundation for learning to read and write the official school language, once they have developed a basic oral vocabulary in that language.
Teachers use the MT and the official school language for instruction in middle primary.

Students in middle primary grades should have developed confidence in using the official school language to talk about familiar topics. They should also be confident in their ability to use their MT for learning math, science and other school subjects. Having achieved success to this point, they should be ready for the next challenge—using the official school language with the mother tongue for learning.

To support students in using both languages for learning, teachers help them build their academic vocabulary relating to each school subject. They do this by following the basic educational principle of using what students already know to help them understand what is new. Here are the steps that teachers can use to help students learn new concepts in the MT and then the related academic terms in the school language:

1. Use the MT to introduce and teach a new concept (example for Math: multiplication). Assign activities in which students use the concept to solve a problem and/or complete a task. Encourage them to talk together in the MT and help each other. Ask thoughtful questions that encourage them to summarize what they have learned.

2. Review the academic term in the MT and then introduce the term in the official school language. (Example for Math: “In the MT we call this ‘multiplication.’ In ___ [official school language] we call it ___.”)

3. Write the MT and official language terms on the chalkboard and students write them in their exercise books.

4. Follow the same pattern to teach one or two more official language terms relating to the new concept, then review and students write each one.

5. Briefly review the essential parts of the lesson, this time using the official school language. Speak slowly and carefully, stopping to check that students understand. Use the new terms frequently so students hear them in context. Provide another short activity and this time encourage students to use the official school language as they work together. Encourage and help them if they have trouble communicating in the school language.

6. Finish the lesson with a short review in the MT of the main concept and ask questions to make sure students understand.
Teachers use the MT to support the official school language in Grade 6 or the final year of the programme. Grade 6 teachers use the official school language with support from the MT following these steps:

1. Use the official school language carefully to introduce 1-3 new academic terms and tell students to listen for the terms and think about how they are used in the lesson.

2. Introduce the new concept, using language that challenges the students but does not stop them from understanding what they need to learn. Emphasize the new academic terms (#1, above) and ensure that students understand and can use the terms correctly.

3. Assign team activities and encourage students to use the official language as they talk together about what they have learned and help each other.

4. To conclude the lesson, ask questions in the MT to check for comprehension.

An essential feature of MTB MLE—and one of the reasons why MTB MLE students succeed in school—is that curriculum writers and teachers recognize the difference between concept learning and language learning in early and mid-primary grades. When students are just beginning to learn the official school language, teachers keep these two kinds of learning separate. As students build confidence in using the official school language in middle primary, teachers begin to bring the two processes together. By the end of primary school, students should be prepared to continue building fluency in the official school language as they use it to learn new concepts.
Q3 What is involved in implementing effective MTB MLE programmes?

Studies of MTB MLE in different countries have found that successful programmes share many of the same general features. The circle diagram below identifies the components of MTB MLE programmes that seem to be essential for success and sustainability.

Note that these components are placed in a circle to show that many of them will take place at the same time. Also, most of the activities will continue, in cycles, as the programme is implemented and expands. Programme implementers may not be responsible for all of these components. For example, they may not be responsible for establishing supportive policies or securing funds to support MTB MLE at national, provincial or local levels. However, they will be responsible for most of the other components. The sections below present a brief overview of the activities relating to each one.

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Preliminary research. Preliminary research should provide the information that is required for developing realistic implementation plans. Below are examples of questions to ask at national and provincial levels and also in each language community.

At national and provincial levels,

- What existing policies might provide support for MTB MLE? Can those be strengthened? Are there policies that are opposed to developing and using minority languages in school? Can those be changed?
- Which government agencies and institutions and which non-government organizations can be mobilized to support the programme?
- What national, provincial and local resources might be available for the programme? Examples of local resources include people, buildings, equipment, materials, cultural knowledge, and background information about the community language. Once the resources are identified, what strategies will be used to mobilize them?
- What factors might hinder implementation and sustainability? Examples might include difficulty in getting to some locations because of weather or lack of resources for printing, distribution and storing materials. How can those problems be averted or overcome?

Within language communities:

- How do people describe their children’s educational situation?
- What language(s) do students in each school understand and use at home?
- What is the status of the community’s MT? Is it in written form? Is the writing system acceptable to MT speakers and to relevant government agencies?
- Do community members understand the purpose and benefits of MTB MLE? If so, do they want it for their children? If not, what kind of advocacy is needed to help them understand why it would be good for their children?
- What existing groups (especially including women) can be mobilized to support the programme?
- What other resources (cultural experts, language experts, retired teachers, existing buildings and/or equipment) might be available for the programme?
- What factors might delay or hinder programme implementation and sustainability? Do community members suggest possible solutions to problems?
**Example from Viet Nam**

**Preliminary Research: Classroom Language Mapping in Lao Cai Province**

In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in Viet Nam, with support from UNICEF, implemented a Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education Action Research project in three provinces. In Lao Cai Province the programme was established in the Mong language community. Lao Cai education officials recognized the value of the programme for the Mong children and wanted to expand the programme to additional schools.

The Lao Cai Department of Education and Training, the Ministry of Education and Training’s Primary Education Department, SIL International and UNICEF worked together to implement a “Classroom Language Mapping Project” in Lao Cai Province. The purpose was to identify the languages used by students in primary grade classrooms.

To help the Lao Cai government plan for MTB BE expansion, the Language Mapping team needed to get information relating to these questions:

- Are there classrooms and schools in which all or most of the students speak the same MT? What is the academic performance of students in those classrooms?
- Where are the classes and schools in which students do not share a common language?
- What is the ethnic background of teachers in each school and what languages do they speak and understand?

The results of the Classroom mapping are shown in the two diagrams below.

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4 See http://www.unicef.org/vietnam/Lao_Cai_mapping_profile_set.pdf

5 Adapted from a presentation by J. Owen at the 4th International Conference on Language and Education, Bangkok, Thailand, 2013.
In the map on the left, each small square represents a school in which students speak the same MT. The colors denote different language groups. The second diagram shows the percentage of students in three situations:

- In 51% of the classrooms, all the students speak the same minority language as their MT.
- In 13% of the classrooms, students speak Vietnamese (Kinh), the official school language as their MT.
- In 36% of the classrooms, students speak two or more different minority languages as their MT.

This jointly sponsored research helped the Lao Cai provincial government to identify schools where MTBBE could be effectively applied. It also identified the teachers who speak one of the three MTs, the schools in which students are doing well academically and the schools in which students are not doing well.

The methodology used in the Classroom Mapping Project in Lao Cai has been applied to other provinces in Viet Nam and is now used in other countries.

**Realistic implementation plan.** A clear and realistic implementation plan is essential for developing a programme that achieves the goals of its stakeholders. An implementation plan for MTB MLE should include a section for each component in the diagram of essential components above, with a suggested time frame for the specific activities that fit under each component. Flexibility is essential with respect to the time frame because many things can happen that can change the schedule. A good plan also includes regular evaluations to identify the parts of the programme that need to be changed and provides time to make the changes.

The example below is an excerpt from the first implementation plan developed by LIBTRALO, a national NGO in Liberia, for their Liberian Languages and English Multilingual Education (LLEME) programme in 15 Liberian language communities. The LLEME plan was revised many times because the programme began shortly after a long civil war and many parts of the plan had to be adapted to fit the changing situation. The boxes with Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4 for each year show which activities were supposed to take place in each of the four quarters of each year—January to March (Q1), April to June (Q2), July to September (Q3) and October to December (Q4). In this plan, classes would start in year 3, giving plenty of time for preliminary activities.
LLEME implementation plan

Research

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<tr>
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<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q1  Q2</td>
<td>Q3  Q4</td>
<td>Q1  Q2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify education officials</td>
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<td>Identify possible supporting partners</td>
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<td>Identify possible funding agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare preliminary research materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Train community researchers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collect and document baseline information</td>
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Awareness raising & mobilization

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<th>Year 1</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q1  Q2</td>
<td>Q3  Q4</td>
<td>Q1  Q2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop advocacy materials</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do advocacy in district and province</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do advocacy in communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobilize communities</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meet with district officials, principals &amp; teachers of selected schools</td>
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(See https://libtralo.wordpress.com/literacy/. For an updated LLEME plan see http://www.sil.org/sites/default/files/files/lleme_implementation_plan_updated.pdf)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum and instructional materials</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>Q3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish educational goals for K1 &amp; K2 (with MOE)</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop curriculum for K1 and K2 based on MOE competencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify cultural themes for each week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop &amp; test primers [to introduce letter-sound relationship in the MTs]</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop Oral English lessons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Get MOE approval for K1 and K2 curriculum and teaching materials</td>
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LIBTRALO members from fifteen languages communities, after working together to develop the Implementation Plan for their “Liberian Languages and English Multilingual Education” (LLEME) Programme. (Liberia)

© Liberian Translation and Literacy Organization, Liberia
**Awareness raising and mobilization.** The goal of awareness raising and mobilization is that stakeholders at all levels of implementation will have the information, encouragement and support they need to develop and sustain a strong MTB MLE programme.

Here are examples of goals for awareness raising and mobilization in language communities:

- Parents will understand the purpose and benefits of MTB MLE and feel confident that it will help their children.
- Community leaders and community members will support MT teachers and officials in their primary school.
- MT speakers will write, illustrate and edit the variety of graded reading materials in their language that students will read as they advance through primary grades.
- All community members will share their knowledge, experience and creativity to make their programme appropriate for their community.

Examples of activities:

- Invite community leaders, business leaders and other influential people to visit teacher training events, classrooms and special “community days”.
- Conduct creative writing workshops with prizes for the best MT stories.
- Sell MT storybooks at the community market.
- Make posters about the programme and display them in public places.
- Encourage community leaders—women and men—to establish an MTB MLE guidance committee that will take responsibility for their programme, and especially their local teachers. Encourage the committee to get registered as a local NGO.

MTB MLE mobilization meeting, Seereer community, (Senegal) © SIL International, Senegal
Goal of awareness raising and mobilization in **provinces and districts:**

- Education officials will understand the purpose and benefits of *strong* MTB MLE programmes and they will support schools, principals, teachers and community members in following best practices that assure success and sustainability.
- District officials will work closely with local communities, supporting local schools and encouraging teachers.

Examples of activities:

- Invite education officials and others to visit MTB MLE training workshops and classrooms.
- Establish MTB MLE support committees in each region, province and district that has or will have MTB MLE schools. Conduct regular meetings and publicize outcomes.
- Hold cultural events that celebrate cultural diversity.

Goals for awareness raising and mobilization are needed at the **national level:**

- Policy makers will establish a policy that supports a strong MTB MLE programme. They will ensure that there is adequate financial support for the pilot project and later, for expanding and maintaining the programme.
- National education officials will support and facilitate integration of MTB MLE into the formal education system.
- Policy makers will assign responsibility for implementing and supporting the programme.
• MTB MLE-specific teacher training will be incorporated into regular teacher education programmes in established institutions.

• Universities, NGOs and other organizations will work together with the government and with local communities to implement and support MTB MLE.

Examples of activities:

• Host national and international MTB MLE meetings / conferences that include presentations and discussions with technical experts, policy makers, people from language communities and others.

• Invite government officials to attend training workshops.

• Publish newspaper articles and other materials about MTB MLE.

• Establish networks and partnerships to publicize and support programmes.

• Hold cultural events that celebrate the nation’s cultural diversity.

To summarize: Awareness-raising and mobilization for MTB MLE is one of the programme components that must be ongoing because ongoing support at all levels is essential if the programme is to be implemented successfully and sustained within the formal education system.
Example from Afghanistan: Awareness raising and mobilization at national level

In March, 2010, a “Workshop on Multilingual Education in Afghanistan” was held in Kabul. Workshop sponsors were UNESCO, SIL International, Afghanistan Medical Consultants, Samar, World Vision and Save the Children. The workshop brought together educators, linguists, policy makers and MT speakers of Afghanistan’s ethnic languages to discuss the following question: “What can be done to provide quality education for girls and boys from all of Afghanistan’s language communities?”

Workshop participants learned about research studies and experiences in other countries that have demonstrated the educational, social, and cultural benefits of helping children build a strong educational foundation in their MT and a good bridge to the official school language.

Following each presentation, participants broke into groups to apply new information to their own contexts and make recommendations for action. On the third day, participants divided into new groups based on their specialty areas (e.g., language planning, language and education policy, curriculum, etc.). Each group summarized the recommendations relating to their specific topic, revised them as needed, and presented them at a final plenary session.

Participants called for mother tongue-based education programmes in their country that will enable students to use their mother tongue as one of the languages of learning in formal and non-formal education. Following are specific recommendations relating to language development in Afghanistan that came from this event:

- Establish a research center for Afghan languages and cultures;
- Support university departments that engage in linguistic and sociolinguistic research;
- Analyze and record grammar and sound systems for all the languages; develop alphabets for all languages that do not have them, focusing first on endangered languages;
- Conduct research on the customs and cultures of each ethnic group;
- Identify and support language communities that want to strengthen and preserve their language and culture;
- Develop educational materials in the languages;
- Establish education programmes for adults and children that start in their home language and then help them learn one of the national languages; use the home languages for early education; teach the national languages as subjects and use them for later primary and higher education;
• Include courses on Afghan languages in teacher training institutions;
• Use radio and television to raise awareness and gather information about languages and cultures;
• Encourage speakers of Afghan languages to collect traditional literature and write poetry, stories and dramas in their mother tongue.

**Alphabet development.** Most ethnic minority languages have been used for oral communication for hundreds, even thousands of years. Some have had their own writing systems for centuries but others have never been put into written form. Linguists who analyze unwritten languages are often impressed with the beauty of their grammars and sound systems. But until a language is put into writing, it will be difficult to use it as one of the languages of instruction in the formal education system.

In some places, a language may already have an alphabet but if the alphabet is unacceptable to MT speakers and /or to the government it will be difficult to use it as a school language. A basic statement about this issue is that minority language communities need an acceptable alphabet if their language is to be acceptable for use in the formal education system.

Alphabet development has two goals: The first is that MT speakers will accept the new (or revised) alphabet and use it consistently. The second and equally important goal for MTB MLE is that the alphabet will be acceptable to the relevant government officials.

The process of developing a new or revised alphabet usually includes the following activities in this general order:

1. **Language survey:** Collect information about the language—number of speakers, number of dialects, attitudes of MT speakers towards the language; locations in which it is used and the social, economic, political, religious and cultural domains in which it is used.

2. **Language analysis:** Identify the parts of the language that need to be represented by letters or symbols.

3. **Trial alphabet:** Conduct an alphabet workshop in which mother tongue speakers of the language, with help from linguists, as necessary, identify the letters or symbols that will represent their language. Produce a tentative or trial alphabet.

4. **Testing:** Test the trial alphabet both formally (through observing people’s use of the written language and noting problems) and informally (by encouraging as many people as possible to use it as much as possible and then provide their feedback.)

5. **Revision:** Identify alternative letters or symbols that can be used if problems are discovered with earlier selections.
6. **Approval:** Conduct a second alphabet workshop to present the revised alphabet to mother tongue speakers for their approval. Request approval from relevant government agencies for the final alphabet.

Ideally, when people develop an alphabet for their language, they follow a process like the one above. However, community members may want to begin their MTB MLE programme quickly and do not have time to analyze their language first. Working together, and with support from language experts, they can develop an initial alphabet for their language, which they can test, and then revise as needed, as MT speakers use it inside and outside of school.

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**Examples from many countries:**

**Developing alphabets for minority languages**

People with experience in developing or revising alphabets for minority languages have identified factors that will help or hinder acceptance of new alphabets. Here are some of the important questions that MT speakers can ask:

**Political factors:**

- Does the national government have a policy on minority language alphabets or scripts? If so, how will this affect decisions about our alphabet?
- If our language has several or many dialects, will the alphabet give preference to any one dialect over the others? If yes, will that be acceptable to all groups?

**Linguistic factors:**

- What kind of writing system is best for our language (e.g., phonemic, syllabic, morphophonemic, morphemic)?
- Do the letters or symbols we want to use represent the important parts of our language (consonants, vowels and semi-vowels, stress, tone, etc.) consistently and clearly?

**Sociolinguistic factors:**

- Will different groups of people in our language community (examples: well educated, less educated, children, political leaders, teachers) agree that this alphabet represents our language well?
- In addition to MT speakers, which people or groups of people will be concerned about the way this language is written? (Examples: government officials, politicians, linguists, religious leaders) Can representatives of some or all of those groups have a part in developing the alphabet?

**Educational factors**

- Will the alphabet help MT students in early primary grades to learn to read and write the language?
- Will it help students when they are ready to transfer to the official school language?
**Curriculum and instructional materials.** All strong and successful MTB MLE programmes have the same basic goals for their students:

**Language goals.** Students will develop fluency and confidence in understanding, speaking, reading and writing their MT plus one or more official school languages for communication and for life-long learning.

**Academic goals.** Students will achieve the learning competencies established for each subject and each grade of primary school and will be prepared to continue learning in secondary school and beyond.

**Socio-cultural goals.** Students will love and respect their heritage language and culture and will respect and appreciate the languages, cultures and beliefs of people outside their community.

MTB MLE curriculum is based directly on learning competencies established by the government for “mainstream” schools (i.e., schools for children who speak the official language as their MT) but adapted so it is appropriate for students who do not speak the official school language at home. Here are the main features of MTB MLE curriculum:

- Competencies for math, science, social studies and other academic subjects are the same as for mainstream schools. This is because both MT and mainstream students use a language they understand to learn those subjects.

- MTB MLE students’ MT is taught as a subject from the beginning to the end of primary school. Competencies focus first on helping students build listening and speaking skills and then on introducing and helping them build fluency in reading and writing their language.

- The official school language is also taught as a subject from the beginning to the end of primary school. Competencies are based on the recognition that students must learn to understand and speak the official school language before they can read and write it. So curriculum for early primary focuses on helping students build oral vocabulary and an understanding of the school language grammar. Curriculum for middle primary (often Grades 2-3 or 2-4) helps them “bridge” between reading and writing their MT and reading and writing the school language. Curriculum for later primary prepares them for further education by expanding their “everyday” and abstract oral language and helping them develop fluency in reading and writing longer and more complex texts.

- MTB MLE curriculum includes additional languages as mandated in the mainstream curriculum. However, strong MTB MLE programs delay introducing the additional languages so students have time to build a strong foundation in their MT and then the official school language before introducing the additional languages.

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7 Students in this programme are expected to learn to speak, read and write five languages: Patani Malay, Thai, English, Jawi Malay and standard Malay.
The goal throughout this process is that teachers will have the strong curriculum and good teaching materials they will need to help students build competence and confidence in hearing, speaking, reading and writing all their school languages and achieve success in all their subjects.

Example from Thailand:
Curriculum development for the Patani Malay-Thai MTB BE programme

Patani Malay and Thai educators developed the curriculum for the Patani Malay-Thai MTB BE programme. This is an eight-year programme that begins with two years of kindergarten (KG) and continues to the end of Grade 6. The programme teaches Patani Malay (PM) as a subject and uses it as language of instruction in early grades. Standard Thai, the official language, is taught as a subject each year. The goal is that students will achieve government standards for each grade while acquiring standard Thai as a second language. The MTB BE curriculum for each grade is based directly on the Ministry of Education curriculum for mainstream Thai schools. It uses a learner-centred approach that enables students to “build bridges” between what they already know and the new concepts they need to learn.

Language development. The MTB BE curriculum follows the step-by-step model described earlier in this booklet. In early KG1, students build confidence in using “everyday MT” to listen and talk about familiar topics. Later in KG1 they begin pre-reading and pre-writing activities in PM. In KG2 they begin reading and writing PM. Students continue studying PM as a subject through Grade 4 but as more languages are added, the amount of time for studying PM in Grades 5-6 decreases significantly.

The curriculum introduces oral Thai in KG1, semester 2. Students begin bridging to written Thai early in Grade 1 and continue to build oral and written Thai to the end of primary school. They begin learning oral English, the second official school language, in Grade 2 and in Grade 3 they begin studying Jawi Melayu (Arabic script) and standard Malay (roman script).
**Academic development.** As noted above, the curriculum for each subject follows the standards established by the Ministry of Education for each grade. PM is the only language of instruction in Kindergarten 1 and Kindergarten 2. In Grade 1 and Grade 2, teachers use PM to teach concepts and introduce academic terms in Thai relating to each concept. In Grades 3 and 4, teachers use both PM and Thai for teaching. In grades 5 and 6, students use Thai textbooks but if possible, teachers (or PM teaching assistants) use PM to help them understand, as needed.

The MTB BE curriculum emphasizes meaning as well as accuracy in all learning activities for all subjects in all grades. It also emphasizes higher level thinking from KG 1 to the end of Grade 6.

**Socio-cultural development.** Suwilai Premsirirat and Uniansasmita Samoh (2012) describe the place of socio-cultural development in this MTB BE curriculum:

> ... the program honors students’ home culture and social background and recognizes them as a resource for the nation as a whole. It also teaches them about their rights and responsibilities as citizens of the larger society. Teaching and learning activities and materials reflect the values and goals of their parents and the community. For example, the children should be able to Salam (Muslim way of greeting) to their parents and others as well as to be able to wai (Thai way of greeting). And to best take advantage of their situation, the children should be able to speak, read and write well in both Patani Malay and Thai. Moreover, the children should be able to keep their identity at the local level and also have a sense of Thai identity at the national level. Through this cultural bridging, they can live with dignity in the wider Thai society to foster true and lasting national reconciliation (Suwilai Premsirirat and Uniansasmita Samoh, 2012, p. 93).

Teachers gave the project grades ranging from 80-90%, noting that, while the students in the project exhibited much more creativity, confidence, and enthusiasm than students in traditional monolingual Thai classes, the MTB BE approach is very demanding of the teachers.
Patani Malay teachers and supervisors use the MTB MLE curriculum to develop lesson plans for their programme. (Thailand)
© Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand

Reading and learning materials. When MTB MLE students learn to read, they want many books! Implementers of successful MTB MLE programmes make materials development a priority from the beginning. They recruit and build the capacity of fluent MT speakers to write, illustrate and edit reading and other learning materials that the students will use as they progress through each grade.

Experiences in many MLE programmes have shown that students do not require expensive MT reading materials. Neatly printed booklets with simple line drawings are acceptable, especially in early grades.  

Graded reading materials for the Gawri MTB MLE program (Pakistan)
© Forum for Language Initiatives, Pakistan

8 A resource for developing MT graded reading materials can be found at http://bloomlibrary.org/landing.
The most important characteristics of reading materials in any language are that: (1) the content is interesting, (2) the language is clear and understandable, (3) illustrations are related to the text and appropriate to the local culture, and (4) the materials are graded from very short and simple (pre-primary and Grade 1) to longer and more complex as students move into upper primary grades and beyond.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of reading materials for successful MTB MLE&lt;sup&gt;9&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience:</strong> New readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose:</strong> Learn that written text communicates meaning; gain confidence in reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length / content:</strong> Short and simple, about familiar topics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the benefits these materials provide for students in each MTB MLE programme, books in many languages that present the diversity of a nation’s cultures and histories adds to the richness of the national heritage.

**Teacher recruitment and training.** Good education programmes require good teachers. Students cannot become successful learners if their teachers are not motivated and/or do not receive the training and ongoing support they need to be effective. And of course students cannot do well in school if their teacher does not speak or understand their language.

One of the challenges faced by many MTB MLE programmes is that there are too few MT speakers with formal teaching credentials. One reason for the lack of qualified MT teachers is that many ethnic minority children are not able to use their MT for learning in school. As a result, many of them do poorly in the formal education system and lacked the qualifications needed to gain acceptance to teacher training institutions.

Over time, as effective MTB MLE programmes are established and supported within the formal education system, this situation should change. An important long-term need will be for an

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<sup>9</sup> Adapted from S. Malone 2013.
MTB MLE teacher-training component that can be incorporated into regular teacher education programmes in established institutions.10

Until a formal training programme is in place, other options are available and have been proven successful in many parts of the world. Respected individuals who are fluent in the students’ MT can become excellent MTB MLE teachers if they have good teaching and learning materials, good pre-service and in-service training and regular, supportive supervision.

Lessons learned regarding MTB MLE teacher recruitment:

- People recruited as MTB MLE teachers must be fluent speakers of their MT and the official school language.
- They must have a legible handwriting, on paper and on the chalkboard.
- They must be trusted and respected in their community.

Pre-training assessment and practice

- New trainees are tested on their ability to read and write the MT. If necessary, they should have time to (1) learn their alphabet and spelling system, (2) practice writing words and sentences neatly and fluently on paper and on the chalkboard, (3) practice reading stories and other classroom materials aloud and fluently, and (4) practice using the MT for teaching.
- New trainees are also tested on their ability to understand, speak, read and write the official school language. They need time to practice speaking, reading and writing that language to ensure that they can use it fluently, correctly, and effectively in the classroom.

Essential components of pre-service teacher training

- Trainees learn about the MTB MLE curriculum and the importance of helping students achieve the learning outcomes for each subject, each grade.
- They discuss and practice using theories that underlie effective child-centred teaching.11
- They learn about and practice the dual focus in language education: helping students learn to speak, read and write accurately and to speak, read and write meaningfully—to communicate and learn.

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10 A resource for institutionalizing teacher training can be seen at http://www.sil.org/sites/default/files/files/institutionalizing_teacher_training_for_mtb_mle_12-2011.pdf (Note that you must have Adobe Reader to view this document.)

11 Especially important for teachers: Jean Piaget’s developmental theory, Richard C. Anderson’s schema theory, Albert Bandura’s social learning theory and Lev Vygotsky’s socio-cultural learning theory.
They learn about the “levels of thinking and learning”\textsuperscript{12} and practice classroom activities that encourage their students to develop and use higher level thinking skills.

They learn to use teaching resources for each subject and they practice creating their own activities and resources.

\textsuperscript{12} See http://unex.uci.edu/pdfs/instructor/blooms_taxonomy.pdf for more about the levels of thinking and learning adapted from “Bloom’s Taxonomy”.

\begin{itemize}
\item Patani Malay teacher uses a Big Book to teach students that reading is a meaningful activity. (Thailand) © Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand.
\item Dai teacher helps a student learn the parts of his language—focus on accuracy. (China) © SIL International, China.
\end{itemize}
• They learn how to assess their students’ progress through informal assessments and through testing.
• They learn and practice classroom management skills.

Teachers who will be assigned to schools with very large classes will need special help in preparing effective strategies for those situations and plenty of ongoing support and encouragement from supervisors.

**Essential components of in-service teacher training**

Regular in-service training, based on supervisors’ classroom assessments, is essential for quality education in MTB MLE (and mainstream) schools.

In their regular classroom visits, supervisors identify strengths and weaknesses in teachers’ pedagogy and classroom management. Each in-service training workshop gives time to both—building on the teachers’ strengths and helping them to overcome their weaknesses.

• Supervisors ask strong teachers to demonstrate pedagogical or classroom management activities and encourage other teachers to discuss and then practice what they have learned.
• Teachers share positives (good things) and negatives (problems) relating to their classroom situations and then think creatively together and share ideas for building on the positives and reducing the negatives.

**MTB MLE teacher assignment and support**

• MTB MLE teachers are assigned to schools in their MT language area. If their language has dialects that are distinctly different, teachers are assigned to their home dialect.

• Although schools are included in the MTB MLE programme only if the community commits to supporting their school and teachers, supervisors still check regularly with teachers to ensure they are receiving that support. If necessary, they meet with local support committees to remind them of their obligations to the teachers.

• MTB MLE teachers who have completed formal teacher training receive the same salary and other support as teachers in mainstream schools.
Mon MTB MLE teacher. (Thailand)
© Foundation for Applied Linguistics, Thailand

Kaachi MTB MLE teacher. (Pakistan)
© Sindh Literacy and Development Program, Pakistan

Seereer MTB MLE teacher. (Senegal)
© SIL International, Senegal
As MTB MLE programmes move beyond the pilot phase and begin to expand, MTB MLE teacher training should be incorporated into established teacher training programmes. Thailand provides an excellent example of the way this can be done.

### Example from Thailand: Establishing MTB MLE teacher training in accredited institutions

In 2007, the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, initiated a Patani Malay-Thai MTB Bilingual Education pilot in Thailand’s Deep South. The project was supported by Mahidol University, UNICEF (Thailand) and the Thailand Research Fund (TRF).

Because of civil unrest in the area, the pilot project was initiated in just four schools in 2008. Although the project was small, the impact on Patani Malay students was impressive and in recent years twelve more schools have been added. As the programme expanded, it was clear that a teacher education programme was needed to prepare Patani Malay speakers to teach in the MTB MLE schools. The Faculty of Education at Yala Rajabhat University (YRU), a major centre for training in the Deep South, recognized the value of MTB BE and the need for a formal MTB BE teacher training programme.

In 2012, with funding from the European Union, YRU and Mahidol University signed a Memorandum of Understanding to cooperate in a research project for institutionalizing MTB BE teacher training. The project goal was that YRU would become a centre for MTB MLE teacher education in southern Thailand. The university now provides MTB MLE and related classes for undergraduate and graduate education students. Continuing education classes are also available for teachers and administrators. YRU has established an MTB BE Centre to provide technical knowledge to students, teachers, administrators, academics and others in southern Thailand.13

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13 [http://www.op.mahidol.ac.th/orra/research_highlight/2556/2556_09_LC.pdf](http://www.op.mahidol.ac.th/orra/research_highlight/2556/2556_09_LC.pdf)
Patani Malay students in the MTB BE teacher education programme at Yala Rajabhat University, (Thailand)
© Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand

Monitoring and evaluation. In Papua New Guinea, a group of people involved in development programmes once described the importance of “starting small and growing slowly”. They had seen what happens when implementers move too quickly and fail to evaluate progress frequently. Programmes that started with great excitement soon ran into trouble and then failed. A Papua New Guinean who had observed that problem commented that, “When programmes are started and then fail, it leaves the local community very discouraged. It would be better not to start at all.”

The same is true for MTB MLE programmes. Wise implementers build monitoring and evaluation into every part of the programme and use what they learn to strengthen and sustain it.

Part Two of the Policy Makers’ booklet describes evaluation results from several MTB MLE programs in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Those evaluations focus on students’ progress in learning. Student assessments are essential, of course, but monitoring and evaluation of other parts of the programme are also necessary for sustainability.

In successful MTB MLE programmes initial planning is followed by initial implementation and then an evaluation of the programme to that point—sometimes called “process” or “formative” evaluations. Programme plans are adapted to build on the strengths and overcome the problems that are identified in the evaluation. This cycle continues as the programme expands to higher grades in each school, to additional schools in the same language community and then to additional languages.

Following are examples of evaluation questions that can help guide the monitoring and evaluation process.
**Curriculum/teaching method.** Are learning outcomes clear? Do the teachers feel comfortable with the teaching methods? Do lesson content and class activities affirm the students’ heritage culture? Does each year of primary school begin by building on what the students learned the year before? How can the curriculum be improved?

**Teachers and other staff.** Do teachers treat their students with respect? Do supervisors visit classrooms according to schedule? Do they encourage and support the teachers? What can be done to help staff at all levels build competence, confidence and creativity in carrying out their tasks?

**Training.** Do teachers demonstrate that they understand the teaching method? Do they have regular opportunities for in-service training? Does in-service training help teachers with issues that they have identified? Do training events encourage personnel to work together to solve problems and teach each other new skills? How can training be improved?

**Materials.** Are teaching materials clear and easy to use? Do parents and other community members approve of the reading materials in their school? Can the students read them? Do they enjoy them? Is the system for producing reading materials as efficient as it needs to be? Is the distribution system effective and reliable? What parts can be improved?

**Student progress.** Do the students demonstrate that they are achieving the learning outcomes established for their grade level? Are they progressing successfully from one grade to the next? Are the students and their parents satisfied with their progress? What can be done to help students be more successful? Has the programme had an effect on student attendance and completion?

**Community support.** Is there a community committee that supports the teachers, takes care of the school and is responsible for the programme in general? Do the teachers find the committee effective? How can it be improved? Is there resistance to the programme in the community? If so, what is the reason for resistance and what can be done to overcome it?

**Programme growth and quality.** Is the programme growing as planned? Are people in the language community satisfied with the way it is growing? What can be done to ensure that the quality of the programme is maintained as it expands to new schools and then to new languages?

**Cost effectiveness.** Are stakeholders satisfied that benefits to MT students are worth the cost of maintaining the programme? If the programme is relatively new, are there ways to be more cost effective without sacrificing programme quality?

**Long-term impact (“impact” or “summative” evaluations).** What intended and unintended changes have come about as a result of the programme for the minority language communities and for the wider society? Have students successfully transferred their literacy skills from the MT to the official school language?
To summarize: Monitoring and evaluation at all stages of an MTB MLE programme are essential for identifying and building on the programme’s strengths and identifying problems that need to be solved. Monitoring and evaluation also provide information for reporting to government authorities and other partners. Most importantly, regular monitoring and evaluation help to ensure that the programme meets the goals and expectations of the minority language communities and of education officials.

Supportive partnerships. Minority language communities, even with help from non-government organizations (NGOs), cannot sustain their programmes without governmental support at all levels. Governments alone cannot plan and implement strong and sustained MTB MLE programmes without participation and support from local communities. At national and international levels, governments need input from international agencies and non-government organizations and sometimes from other governments.

Strong and sustainable MLE programmes require cooperation and support from multiple agencies – government, universities, research institutes, NGOs and others – working with language communities to plan, implement, evaluate and support their programmes. Building supportive partnerships—locally, sub-nationally, nationally and internationally—makes the best use of resources and helps to ensure that MTB MLE programmes are strong, successful and sustained.

Q4 What about parents and other people in the minority language communities? Will they support MTB MLE?

The best people to answer this question are government and community leaders, teachers and parents of children in MTB MLE schools. Here is what they say:

From the Director of the Gawri MTB MLE Programme, Pakistan: Shakir Ali is a 6-year-old child from one of the MLE schools. He never attended any school before. In 2010 he had completed two years of preschool. One day, he was sitting with his elder brother and father and started to read the headlines of the Urdu newspaper that his father was reading. This surprised the father because Shakir Ali’s older brother was a Grade 7 student at a government school. The older boy had begun his education in Urdu was still unable to read an Urdu headline. Shakir Ali had gained confidence and understanding from the mother tongue-based school, to read the Urdu words. (Information provided by Muhammad Zaman Sagar, Executive Director of Gawri Project and Language Development Consultant for FLI, Pakistan.)
From Yu Nankai, kindergarten teacher/training supervisor, Dai Han Bilingual Education Project in China: When we first started teaching students in this BE project [in 2007], all the primary school teachers at our school believed our students would be the least prepared for primary school because they had started their schooling in Dai [rather than the national language, Mandarin Chinese]. Nobody wanted to have our kids in their first grade classes after they finished kindergarten. Almost ten years later, students coming out of our project classes are the ones that those same teachers want to have in their classes. They no longer avoid our students, but instead compete to get them in their classes! Why? Because they have found them to be the best prepared, the most cognitively developed among their peers. This project is worth it. Starting these kids’ education in their mother tongue works. (Translation by Heidi Cobbey, SIL International, Dai-Han BE Project facilitator.)

From the school principal, Khmer-Kinh Bilingual Education school, Trà Vinh Province, Viet Nam: MTB BE students are able to know and understand more about their language and culture than those of non-MTB BE programme, though they are all Khmer students. I can express the difference between the two groups of students as follows: Non-MTB BE students have good achievement as well, but MTB BE students have more understanding. MTB BE students are more confident in daily life than the other group of students. Non-MTB BE students sometimes are quite timid, for instance, a Grade 1 student may not understand the command “sit down”. Obviously, the main differences between the two group of students is that MTB BE students learn in their mother tongue, and when they transit to Vietnamese, they are more active and more confident in taking part in learning activities, even in their daily life as well. Students like to take part in the MTB BE programme very much. But also some non-MTB BE students have asked me “Why could we not attend the MTB BE programme?” This question shows that these students perceived that by engaging to this programme, student can learn in Khmer, and have more opportunity to sing, play and dance in Khmer. (Translation by Dinh Phuong Thao, Education Specialist, UNICEF, Viet Nam.)

From parents of students in MTB MLE schools, Benishangul Gumuz region, Ethiopia: Before, when our children went to school and everything was taught in Amharic [the national language of Ethiopia], we saw how they were suffering and how disappointed they were. It was a very negative experience. Children dropping out of school was a normal occurrence. As parents, we were reluctant to bother sending them to school. But now they are learning in our own language, the mother tongue as medium of instruction, and they are excellling—not just in the mother tongue class, but in ALL their other classes too. They have become very clever!
We are amazed to hear our children reading to us.

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 wellbeing of our children. This kind of thing never happened before (Blacksten, 2014, p. 4.)
References


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