ADVOCATING FOR MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA

Experiences and strategies

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

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APMLWG	Asia Pacific Multi Lingual Working Group
AOP	Annual Operation Plan
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development, now DFAT
CC	Commune Council
CCWC	Committee for Women and Children
CDD	Curriculum Development Department
CFS	Child Friendly Schools
CIES	Comparative International Education Society
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DOE	District Office of Education
ECED	Early Childhood Education Department
EFA	Education For All
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
ICC	International Cooperation Cambodia
MENAP	Multilingual Education National Action Plan
MLE	Multilingual Education
MOEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
NEP	NGO Education Partnership
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PED	Primary Education Department
POE	Provincial Office of Education
SEO	Special Education Office
SEAMEO	South-East Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics
TTD	Teacher Training Department
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CARE Cambodia has been actively advocating for improvement of education services and access for ethnic minority children in the north-east of Cambodia for over a decade. CARE has been very successful in developing a sustainable model, which has in large part been taken ownership of by the Royal Government of Cambodia, ensuring that future generations of ethnic minority children have access to and can succeed in school.

CARE developed an innovative model based on best practices in bilingual or multilingual education.[1] Multilingual Education (MLE) provides opportunities for children to start their education in their home language, which then acts as a bridge to and facilitates the learning of the national language. It can be defined as the planned and systematic use of two languages in a program of instruction for children. MLE programs focus on helping students build a strong educational foundation in their home language and use this as a bridge to the national language.

Starting from the pilot program in 2003 through to the technical support of the development of a national action plan on multilingual education in recent years, advocacy has played a central role in CARE's approach. CARE's advocacy was deliberately aimed at bringing about policy change, following a four-stage process, as in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Process of advocacy for influencing policy

Identify issue or problem	→	**Gather evidence**	→	**Build consensus**	→	**Influence policy**
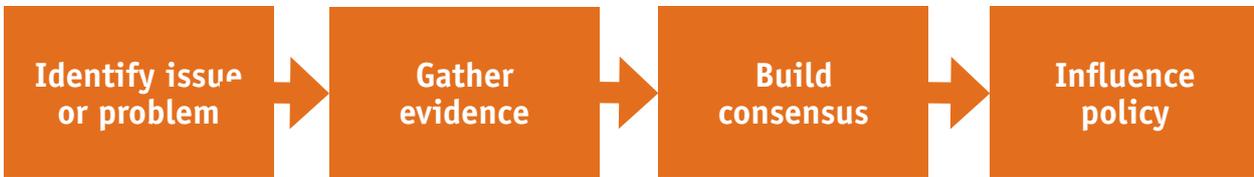
In the first stage, the problem or issue is clearly identified and explored. This is followed by gathering evidence both on the issue and its potential solutions, for example through the implementation of a pilot or long-term research. Consensus is then built with government counterparts and strategic partners, with the aim to influence policy in the final step. Examples of how this process was followed are illustrated at several key points in this report.

CARE'S ADVOCACY WORK ON MLE IN CAMBODIA IS ON-GOING, CURRENTLY SHIFTING FROM THE ROLE OF AN IMPLEMENTER TO AN ADVISOR, BUT ITS LONG HISTORY OF ENGAGEMENT PROVIDES NUMEROUS LESSONS:

- **Keep government officials informed in the early stages and move towards deeper involvement as the results of the project become available, allowing them to observe first-hand, engage with the issues and observe the results. This can transform opponents into supporters.**
- **Be a supportive, responsive partner in order to built strong, trusting relationships with government.**
- **Learn to work with and within the communication protocols of various government departments and understand their structures and functioning.**
- **Train staff at all levels on responsive advocacy strategies and develop creative approaches to working with government.**
- **Build the capacity of government to be able to take ownership.**
- **Find champions within the government who can advocate for acceptance and understanding at high levels.**
- **Underpin advocacy efforts with a strong evidence base, involving renowned institutions, applying rigor to results and produce research that can be held up to scrutiny by international experts.**
- **Work with strategically positioned partners and through a broad-based network to maximize advocacy through supportive coalitions.**
- **Be involved in important forums that set standards and best practices and invite high level government officials to participate.**
- **Develop a strategic advocacy plan while remaining responsive to the reality on the ground.**

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1. Bilingual refers to a context in which two languages are used. As there are numerous languages in Cambodia, it is preferable to refer to multilingual education, although in some schools/areas bilingual is more accurate. This report applies the term multilingual education (MLE) except in cases where bilingual is a more accurate description such as at the school level.

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INTRODUCTION

Cambodia, a small south-east Asian nation with a population of approximately 16.9 million people is most often discussed for a dark chapter in its modern history, that of the Khmer Rouge Era during which up to an estimated quarter of its population perished and infrastructure, institutions and society were destroyed. While the shadow of this period remains, Cambodia is making progress on many fronts with an average seven per cent annual growth in GDP, a nearly two decade period of relative peace and stability and continued improvement in human development indicators such as maternal-child health

> **Bilingual or multilingual education can be defined as the planned and systematic use of two languages in a program of instruction for children.**

and mortality, literacy rates and access to education and health services. However, according to the World Bank nearly 18 per cent of the population still live below the poverty line while another 48 per cent are just above the poverty line. Management of land and natural resources, environmental sustainability and corruption remain major challenges.

Cambodia is home to an estimated 23 language groups in addition to the majority Khmer speakers, who make up 90 per cent of the population. Most of the speakers of indigenous ethnic minority language groups live in the five remote, north-eastern provinces of Ratanak Kiri, Mondul Kiri, Stung Treng, Kratie and Preah Vihear. Ethnic minorities make up the majority of the population in Ratanak Kiri and Mondul Kiri. The numbers of indigenous ethnic minority speakers are relatively small compared to the population of Cambodia, with estimates of between 1.2 and 1.4 per cent of the total population.

Educational outcomes for these provinces and specifically in ethnic minority communities are well below the national average. Ethnic minority children in these communities face a myriad of obstacles in educational access such as the lack of a school in or nearby their village, education in a language they do not understand, teacher shortages and high levels of absenteeism, teachers with no training on working in ethnic minority communities and the use of a curriculum that is culturally irrelevant.

For ethnic minority children, the majority of whom have limited or no exposure to Khmer[2] language or society, school can be an alien place teaching unfamiliar concepts in an unknown language. Many children feel frightened, quickly lose any confidence they may have started with and drop out of school. For those who continue, there is a real risk of them losing or ignoring the value of their own culture, language or community as national language only schooling can serve to devalue their own experiences. Multilingual education (MLE) provides opportunities for children to start their education in their home language, which then acts as a bridge to and facilitates the learning of the national language.

It is important to differentiate between social language skills and academic language skills. Although some ethnic minority children may be able to understand and converse in the national language before they begin formal schooling, they may not be proficient enough to use this language to learn more abstract or new concepts. Social language depends on context in the environment or provided by the speaker but in an academic setting, especially at higher grades, this context is often absent. Children, whose home language is not Khmer need to first 'catch up' in their Khmer language skills, before they are able to utilize the national language to learn academic concepts.

Bilingual or multilingual education can be defined as the planned and systematic use of two languages in a program of instruction for children. Children learn best when they use what they already know (their knowledge and experience, their own language) to learn what is new (new facts, new concepts, new languages). Children with a solid foundation in their home language will develop stronger literacy abilities in the national language. Multilingual education programs focus on helping students build a strong educational foundation in their first language and use this as a bridge to the new language. Multilingual education is widely accepted to increase enrollment, retention and achievement of minority language speakers in the formal schools system.[3]

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2. Khmer is the national language of Cambodia.
3. UNESCO Advocacy Toolkit for Promoting Multilingual Education, 2007.

For more than a decade, CARE has been developing multilingual education programs in formal education in the north-eastern provinces of Cambodia and working with communities and government at all levels in order to address the education needs of ethnic minority children. From the earliest days of its pilot program, which was supported by funding from the Australian Government, advocacy has played a central role in CARE's approach, aiming for scaling up of multilingual education by the government and multiplying its impact to reach greater numbers of ethnic minority children and to remove the structural barriers they face. With significant portions of the program already or in the process of being handed over to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), extensive capacity building of key Ministry staff and the government's demonstrated commitment to multilingual education through the development of a national action plan, ownership is firmly in the hands of the national government.

CARE's advocacy work has given multilingual education a secure foothold in the education system of Cambodia, ensuring that future generations of ethnic minority children will not only have access to education in their home language, but also that ethnic minority communities can preserve their mother tongue, and maintain and develop their culture. Cultural and language diversity has the potential to be an intangible resource, benefitting the nation as a whole.

This report outlines some of the key stages in CARE's work to pilot multilingual education programs, and promote and push for the institutionalization of multilingual education in the Cambodian education sector through its advocacy work. At each stage, key lessons learned for advocacy efforts and strategy are given.

1. EARLY DAYS: PILOT MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IN SIX COMMUNITIES

Multilingual education for ethnic minorities in north-eastern Cambodia began in the late 1990s. The International Cooperation Cambodia (ICC) together with UNESCO piloted non-formal education programs in 1997 in Ratanak Kiri and Mondul Kiri. Basic literacy classes were held in villages, usually in the evenings. Materials and instructions were in the vernacular languages with the goal being to develop literacy in both the home language and the national language (Wright, Boun, 2015).

Linguists working with ICC started developing orthographies for five ethnic minority languages—Kreung, Tampuen, Brav, Kavet and Bunong—in the 1990s and these were approved for official use in 2003 by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. Initially, ICC had suggested Romanized scripts, but these were rejected by the Ministry, which insisted on the use of the Khmer script. This decision was political rather than linguistic, but also based on an interest to facilitate and speed up transition from literacy in the minority languages to literacy in the national language. As this was the first time the Khmer alphabet was used for another language, it presented some challenges. Some sounds which exist in the minority languages do not exist in the Khmer language. An interesting and innovative solution was suggested by the Royal Academy: to select and utilize ancient and out of use Khmer letters to represent these sounds. ICC's work in developing orthographies and working to have them officially recognized laid the foundation for all subsequent multilingual education programs.

In 2002, CARE initiated a pilot of multilingual education in six community primary schools in Ratanak Kiri. The main aim of the project was *"to address the needs of disadvantaged ethnic minority groups through the establishment of community schools targeting girls and boys who have never enrolled or who have dropped out of the formal system"* and to provide the Ministry *"with a model for the delivery of basic education in remote areas of Cambodia to highland minority peoples"*.

The program had four key components: **establishment of community school boards**[4], **creation of community schools**, **development of a multilingual education curriculum**, and **recruitment, training and support of community teachers**.

This pilot project applied a transitional multilingual education model in which children are predominantly taught in their home language in Grade 1 with Khmer introduced as an oral subject. In Grades 2 and 3, the amount of Khmer language used is gradually increased while the use of the home language concurrently decreases. From Grade 4 onwards, instruction takes place in Khmer although home language support can be provided as needed, provided the teacher is able to speak the home language of the children. While cited as an early exit model in international literature, the three-year transitional model is considered by experts as a 'foot-in-the door' strategy through which continued evidence and success of multilingual education projects can lead to expanded and longer-term programs[5] which produce higher academic achievements.

At each of the six schools a School Support Committee[6] was established by community members and oversaw construction and maintenance of school buildings, selected and supervised community teachers, oversaw enrollment of community children, managed school finances and coordinated with CARE's project teams and with local and provincial educational authorities. Curriculum materials (*See Box 1*) were developed in order to provide teaching and learning materials that were culturally relevant to the students but also in line

> **LESSON LEARNED**
> **Keep government officials informed in the early stages and move towards deeper involvement as the results of the project become available, allowing them to observe first-hand, engage with the issues and observe the results. This can transform opponents into supporters.**

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4. Now commonly referred to as School Support Committees (SSCs).
5. Benson, 2015; Wright&Boun, 2015.
6. Previously referred to as School Boards.

with the national standards. The school year was aligned with the planting and harvesting seasons to ensure children were able to help their families during critical farming times without missing school and also to facilitate attendance rates by operating the school when children were free to attend.

In addition to generating high levels of community ownership, CARE deliberately set out to involve the Ministry and education officials at the Provincial Office of Education (POE). In the first stages of the project various strategies were used to keep the government officials informed: detailed written reports, frequent meetings, workshops and presentations to the Ministry and the Provincial Office of Education. In the early days of the project, experimentation and innovation were key to developing a model that would be successful. This included elements such as the decentralized calendar, which would likely have been considered unorthodox if introduced to the government without evidence of its importance for student and teacher attendance. CARE first needed to build up evidence to prove its program was an effective one before inviting the government into closer collaboration.

As the pilot progressed successfully and the impact became more apparent through the results of student tracking such as attendance and promotion rates, which were higher than the provincial averages, CARE opened the project to more scrutiny by officials, arranging for monitoring and field trips to visit the schools and communities. Once Ministry and Provincial Office of Education officials were able to see for themselves how well the schools were functioning and how much progress the students were making while learning in a non-traditional, community-run, multilingual education school, they were not only convinced by the program components and structure but slowly grew to become staunch supporters.

CASE STUDY: RAVE SOPHEA

When Rave Sophea was born, there was no school in her village and it was unlikely she would ever learn to read, write or understand basic numeracy. It was also unlikely she would become proficient in the national language, Khmer. This is not only because the nearest school was too far away—her family too poor to support her to study at a distant school—but also because it was expected that girls stay at home and help with housework, and did not require an education.

When she was seven years old, CARE opened one of its first six community primary schools offering multilingual education in her village of Krala. Project staff especially encouraged parents to send girls to school and as a result, Sophea started on her learning journey. She was able to study in her home language, learning to first read in Kreung and then in Khmer with support from teachers she understood and who understood her. Sophea's educational journey is in parallel to CARE's progression of supporting ethnic minority children through primary education, then secondary education and finally onto higher education. After completing primary school in her village, Sophea received support in the form of a CARE scholarship to continue her studies at lower secondary school and then at the Teacher Training College in Stung Treng. Upon graduating from Teacher's Training College, she participated in CARE's fast track MLE course and is now a Grade 5 teacher at the very same primary school where she first learned to read and write.

> "I'm very happy to be able to teach at the school in my village and so proud to have become a state school teacher. It's easy to explain new things to my students in Kreung."

In order to develop a curriculum that was appropriate, culturally relevant and in line with the national curriculum, CARE established a Resource Production Unit and hired curriculum professionals to write a three-year program for use in its multilingual education schools. Teaching materials were prepared in ethnic minority languages with topics suggested by community elders such as tapping trees for resin, making gourds for carrying water and looking after animals. While the topics were selected by communities, the learning outcomes were the same as those in the national curriculum, so students learned the same skills, only through different topics and in their home language.

The Resource Production team developed a strict quality control process through which all materials were first trialled in the classroom and then underwent several checks by ICC, CARE staff, language committees, school support committees and elders to ensure they were linguistically and culturally correct. The final step in the process was a review from a Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport committee, which gives all materials used in multilingual education classrooms the stamp of approval from the very highest level.

By 2015 CARE has produced 99 book titles—64 of which have been translated into Tampuen, Kreung, Bunong and Kavet—bilingual picture dictionaries and other resources, along with teachers' guides with detailed lessons for the use of these materials in the classroom.

2. SUPPORTING PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT TO PILOT THEIR OWN MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

In 2007, following the success of CARE's pilot, the Ministry decided to implement its own pilot community multilingual education schools. With financial support from UNICEF and technical support from CARE, six Provincial Office of Education-administered multilingual education primary schools were opened in Ratanak Kiri Province. These were community schools, very closely following the CARE model and implemented with direct support from CARE's Ratanak Kiri office.

That the Ministry was able to scale up CARE's community school multilingual education program is testament to the 'do-ability' of CARE's approach in the provision of multilingual education to ethnic minority children as well as the result of its capacity and relationship building with the government. Through its mutually supportive and pro-active relationship with the government, CARE was able to progressively build its capacity to assume ownership of the multilingual education program. Part of this process was the secondment[7] of a senior level officer from the Provincial Office of Education to the project office several days a week, which not only facilitated the flow of information between CARE and the Provincial Office of Education, but also allowed the officer to make his own observations on the implementation of multilingual education.

Importantly, the willingness of the Ministry and the Provincial Office of Education to accept direct support for its implementation of multilingual education and to work closely with an NGO was the result of CARE's ability to develop solid relationships with government based on mutual trust. This often required a patient and sensitive approach. Initially, the program had been met with suspicion and caution on the part of government officials, who were wary of NGOs and multilingual education. CARE's approach was to remain open and positive about its interactions with government officials, focusing on the possibilities for change rather than initial mindsets and suspicions. In order to facilitate this, CARE's unwritten communication policy was to respond to queries from government officials with genuine rather than perfunctory replies. The officer interviewed spoke very positively of the cooperation and partnership between CARE and his department, stating that CARE staff had good facilitation and coordination skills.

LESSON LEARNED
Be a supportive, responsive partner in order to built strong, trusting relationships with government.

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7. Seconding or secondment is the process by which a government office or institution 'seconds' one of its staff members to an NGO project or office in order to build up the capacity of the officer as well as provide government input.

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3. MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IN STATE SCHOOLS

In 2008, another significant step towards scaling up multilingual education was the introduction of this into state schools in Ratanak Kiri province. With the inclusion of multilingual education classes in six state schools, multilingual education was no longer a radical idea, acceptable only in community schools assisted by NGOs, but one that the government was willing to trial in the mainstream education system. Cambodia was the first country in the region to implement such multilingual education programs in the state system. In Ratanak Kiri, CARE and the Provincial Office of Education set up a 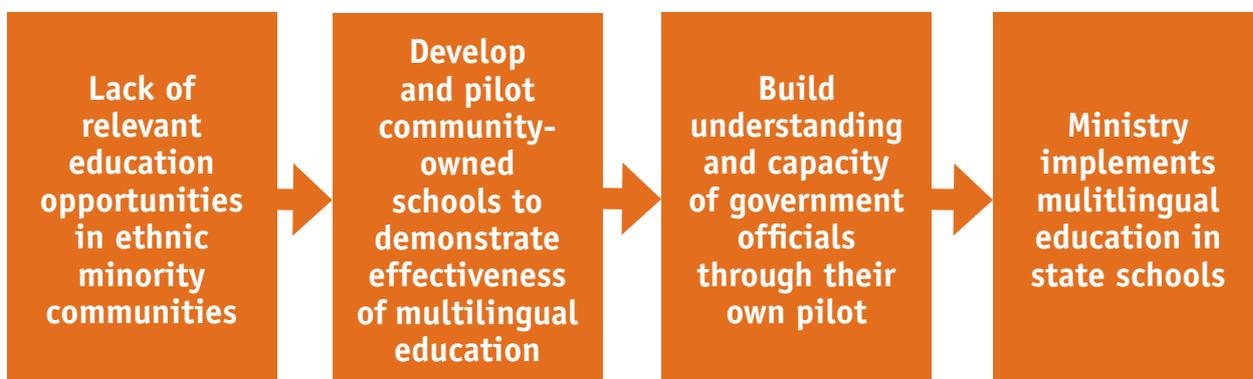special working group to coordinate and plan activities together. In addition to this planning work, the meetings of the working group also became an informal advocacy forum where a wide range of issues could be discussed. Not surprisingly, working closer with the Provincial Office of Education also led to some tensions and contradictions, most of which were inevitable as two different systems of organization, accountability, communication and reporting requirements learned to work together.

> **LESSON LEARNED**
> **Learn to work with and within the communication protocols of various government departments and understand their structures and functioning.**

Part of CARE's approach throughout has been to ensure timely, effective communication with various government departments at the sub-national and national levels. This did not simply mean providing reports to the Provincial Office of Education and the Ministry, but also learning and following their sometimes labyrinthine processes and protocols for communication with and within the government. It was not enough to deliver a report to the correct office, but more importantly, to ensure the correct individuals or offices received it through the correct channels. Additionally, it was discovered that sections within the government did not always share information with one another, so it was vital to know to whom to direct what type of report or information and in some cases, submit the same communication to multiple departments.

CARE made it a practice to always respond to government requests with courtesy, respect and openness. Last minute requests for meetings, attendance at official events or official visits, were respected as much as possible. Whether working with the Provincial Office of Education multilingual education working group or with other departments at the national level, CARE made consistent efforts to engage professionally, enthusiastically and respectfully with its counterparts.

Figure 2: Building capacity of government on multilingual education

| Lack of relevant education opportunities in ethnic minority communities | → | Develop and pilot community-owned schools to demonstrate effectiveness of multilingual education | → | Build understanding and capacity of government officials through their own pilot | → | Ministry implements mulitlingual education in state schools |

4. MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

DEVELOPING A MODEL OF MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

CARE initiated a pilot of multilingual education at the pre-school level in 2009, establishing Play Groups in seven ethnic minority communities. The curriculum for this program was developed together with Village Women's Committees through a series of workshops using an action research cycle. This was to ensure that the curriculum was culturally relevant and appropriate. Like the community primary schools pilot, the early childhood development program attracted the attention of the Ministry, specifically from the Early Childhood Education Department (ECED). In 2011, the Ministry initiated its own pilot of multilingual education community pre-schools in 20 ethnic minority communities in five provinces in the north-east, adapting the CARE model and curriculum so that it was in line with the Ministry requirements.

At the time, it was decided to bring the CARE early childhood development playgroups in line with the Ministry standards in order to be able to scale up and receive recognition as community-based pre-schools[8]. The playgroups were renamed and the schedule restructured in order to follow guidelines of the Ministry. In 2013, the CARE community pre-schools were successfully handed over to the government.

A policy framework, called the Guidelines for Bilingual Education (*See Box 2*), was developed by the Ministry with assistance from CARE and included the implementation of multilingual education into pre-schools. CARE provided technical support to this process not only through the development of a suitable model of multilingual education for pre-schools but also writing a training module on multilingual education for pre-school teachers, academic upgrading workshops for ethnic minority pre-school teachers, tools for monitoring of pre-schools, and two years of Training of Trainers modules for Core Trainers from the Ministry. Although this technical assistance carried on for several years, the renewal of the contract with the ECED was not always a smooth process as timelines were reassessed and adjusted. Again, CARE's approach to this process was one of patience and conciliation, supporting the department in preparation of the contract together with UNICEF, and maintaining a positive, forward-thinking attitude.

ADVOCATING FOR ECD AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

Under the Organic Law, which aims for decentralization and deconcentration (D&D), community pre-schools became the responsibility of the Commune Councils, which are required to establish a Committee for Women and Children (CCWC). This committee is then responsible for overseeing community pre-schools in its commune, including the financing of early childhood development. In rural and remote areas especially, the Commune Councils are overwhelmed with their new responsibilities as a result of D&D and the requirement to budget for and oversee community pre-schools is often sidelined by other tasks.

CARE field staff actively engaged with the Commune Council Consultative Working Group (CCCWG) at the provincial level and the Commune Committees for Women and Children at the Commune level in order to push them to include planning for teachers' salaries in their Annual Operation Plans and budgets. Initially Commune Councillors did not understand or want to include pre-school teacher salaries in their budgets, but with CARE staff engagement, support and technical capacity building, they were able to develop their understanding of their role in the provision, planning and budgeting for early childhood development in their communities and take ownership of this role. As advocacy does not only take place at high levels of government it is vital to have national staff who can clearly understand and represent project goals at the sub-national level. Importantly, they need to be able to be responsive to on the ground realities and politics. From the early days of the program, CARE promoted and supported an internal dialogue with staff on 'working with the government'. This was as much as to ensure staff were well prepared to work effectively with government officials as it was to tap into staff insights on effective strategies for overcoming obstacles.

> **LESSON LEARNED**
> Train staff at all levels on responsive advocacy strategies and develop creative approaches to working with government.

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8. There are three types of early childhood education recognized by the ECED: formal pre-schools, community pre-schools and parent groups.

The **2007 Education Law** states that Khmer language is the principle language of instruction but that language use for Cambodians from ethnic minority groups shall be determined by the proclamation of the Ministry in charge of education. This proclamation was released in 2013 (see Prakas below).

The **Guidelines for Bilingual Education**, signed into effect in 2011, were the first step in the Ministry officially recognizing and mainstreaming multilingual education. The Guidelines outline the manner in which community-run multilingual education schools are to be established and operated, including the location and types of schools permitted, student and teacher selection and a breakdown of the curriculum per language. Importantly these Guidelines allow for a decentralized school calendar.

The **Prakas (Proclamation) on Identification of Language for National Learners Who are Indigenous People** were promulgated into effect in 2013. This high level document firmly anchored multilingual education in the MoEYS policies and strategic plans and iterated the government's stance in providing give sufficient educational opportunities through MLE for ethnic minority children.

Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2014-2018 mentions the strengthening and expansion of multilingual education clearly in several sections. However, it does not give clear guidelines for budgeting and planning of multilingual education at the sub-national level.

The **Multilingual Education National Action Plan (MENAP)** is currently in the process of receiving final approval and is expected to be launched in 2015. The MENAP clearly states that children have the right to access education in their home language in the early stages. It also outlines a clear plan on the scale up of multilingual education, ensuring that budgeting for multilingual education programs is included in provincial level AOPs.

5. HANDING OVER PILOT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS TO THE PROVINCIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION

In June 2013 a ceremony was held to celebrate a decade of CARE's work with School Support Committees who from then on would engage with the provincial authorities directly. The handover was the first component of the bilingual program to be completely exited by CARE.

Like all the work of CARE in multilingual education, the process leading to the handover was well planned and an example of CARE acting as a bridge between communities and authorities. In the first stage of handover it was vital that the schools received recognition by the Ministry. This took place when the schools were registered in the official Ministry database as annex schools and were registered with the land titles office as land for education purposes. In the next stage, the schools began to receive a program-based budget from the Provincial Office of Education for the purchase of school materials and school improvements. The final stage of handover was the transfer of the responsibility of payment of community teacher salaries to the Provincial Office of Education.
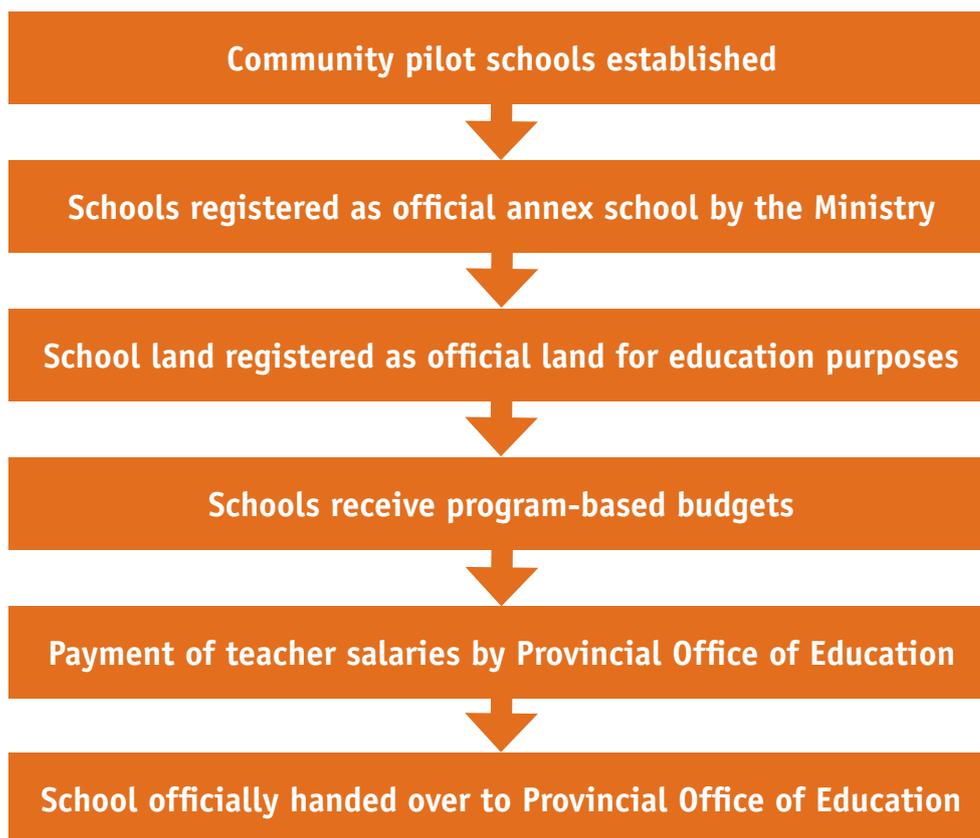
The handover was especially challenging because of the unique management structure by the School Support Committees. There had already been the experience of state appointed teachers reorganizing the schools without community consultation, thus undermining the ownership and authority of the community. The handover required close consultation with the community members and government officials. Although the Ministry was keen to take over these schools, they at the time felt that officials in the districts lacked the capacity to do so. For this reason the Ministry requested CARE to continue capacity building of staff from the Provincial Office of Education. CARE's technical assistance work with the Ministry and Provincial Office of Education was ongoing for many years.

LESSON LEARNED
Build the capacity of government to be able to take ownership.

Figure 3: Process of handover of community schools to the Ministry

Community pilot schools established

⬇

Schools registered as official annex school by the Ministry

⬇

School land registered as official land for education purposes

⬇

Schools receive program-based budgets

⬇

Payment of teacher salaries by Provincial Office of Education

⬇

School officially handed over to Provincial Office of Education

6. TRAINING AND PROMOTING COMMUNITY TEACHERS

TEACHER TRAINING

Throughout CARE's efforts to introduce multilingual education into the mainstream education system in Cambodia—from the original pilot, to multilingual education in pre-schools to supporting the government for scale up—teacher training was a central component. It is well established through research and experience that individuals from communities are often the best suited for teaching in multilingual education classrooms where professional, accredited teachers are not available. With easy to implement curriculum materials, pre and in-service training and supportive supervision, community teachers, even those with limited formal education, can be effective educators in multilingual education classrooms. Additionally, as community teachers are usually from the villages in which they teach or nearby, parents are confident to send their children to school and communication between parents and teachers is easily achieved, helping to ensure that schools respond to community needs and values. Female community teachers provide the additional benefit of acting as role models for girls in their communities, encouraging and motivating them to stay in school.

During the pilot phase, CARE provided training for community teachers from six community schools in the form of a six-month pre-service training and ongoing in-service training and academic upgrading. When the Provincial Offices of Education in the north-eastern provinces began to implement multilingual education programs, CARE also provided pre and in-service training to those teachers. When ethnic minority students, some of whom had studied at the original CARE pilot schools, graduated from Teacher Training College, CARE developed a fast-track multilingual education training module to ensure those teachers were well prepared to work in multilingual education schools. In addition to training ethnic minority community and state school teachers, CARE also trained Khmer state school teachers, assigned to multilingual education schools. Although these teachers were not teaching in multiple languages as they were assigned to Grades 4 and above, they were stationed in multilingual education schools and it was important they be knowledgeable and supportive of activities and programs in their schools.

Preparations have been made to hand over the teacher training component to the Ministry to give them full ownership of the program.

ADVOCATING FOR RECOGNITION OF COMMUNITY TEACHERS

As the skill levels and experience of community teachers increased, it became important to seek the official recognition of those teachers. CARE worked with several allies and through the NGO Education Partnership (NEP), which is a well-established and valued partner at the national level Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) and Joint Technical Working Group on Education (JTWG-E). Through NEP, CARE was able to influence policy development, specifically drawing attention to

LESSON LEARNED
Find champions within the government who can advocate for acceptance and understanding at high levels.

the situation of ethnic minority teachers during the drafting of the Teacher Policy. UNICEF, with its unique position as high level advisor to the Ministry, was able to strongly advocate for community teacher recognition while Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), another organization respected and trusted by the Ministry, had additional influence at high levels especially as related to teacher training. CARE formed a strategic partnership with VSO and UNICEF in order to further leverage its advocacy efforts.
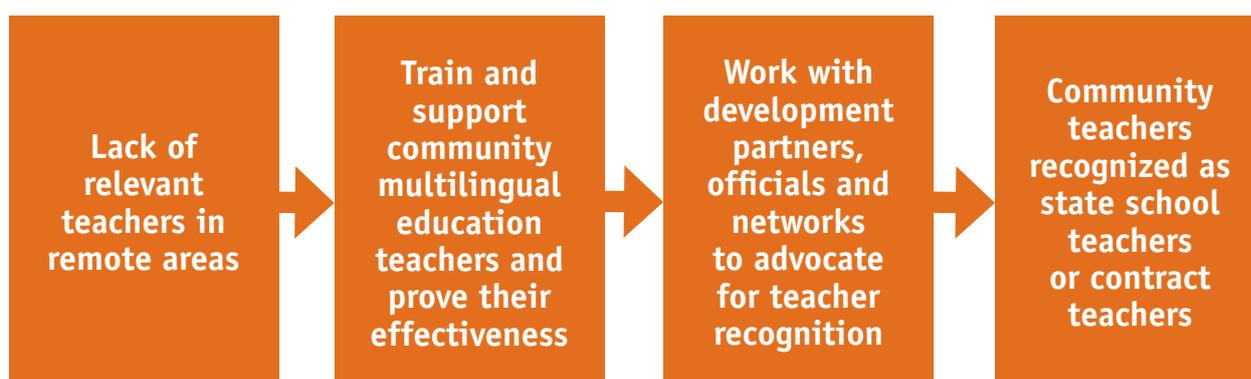
CARE and its partners were not alone in their advocacy on this issue; the Provincial Office of Education in Ratanak Kiri started the recognition process at the provincial level, also with support from CARE. CARE provided portfolios for each trained community teacher to ascertain their prior learning and the academic levels they had reached. A petition was prepared for the Ministry, supported by endorsement letters from the governor and provincial council. UNICEF and CARE worked with other provinces to start a similar process. Simultaneously, CARE and UNICEF worked with Under Secretary of State H.E. Ton Sa Im, who oversees multilingual education in the Ministry (*see case study*) to prepare an explanatory note of the need to recognize these multilingual education teachers as state school teachers.

This two-pronged process seeking the official recognition of community teachers demonstrates the value of working with well-positioned allies by strengthening advocacy efforts. As of writing, the Ministry has unofficially stated that community teachers who have reached at least a Grade 9 academic level and have received at least two years of pre and in-service training from CARE, will be given full status as state school teachers. All other community teachers will be recognized as and remunerated as government contract teachers. This is a rare instance in which the government has recognized the training programs of an NGO.

Figure 4: Process of seeking recognition for community teachers

Lack of relevant teachers in remote areas	Train and support community multilingual education teachers and prove their effectiveness	Work with development partners, officials and networks to advocate for teacher recognition	Community teachers recognized as state school teachers or contract teachers

CASE STUDY: H. E. MADAME TON SA IM

One of the most committed champions of multilingual education in the Cambodian government is H.E. Mme Ton Sa Im.

Over the years, she has stood by the CARE multilingual education program and promoted multilingual education for ethnic minority children, speaking at international conferences and advocating for multilingual education inclusion in Ministry planning and policies. She has also been instrumental in advocating for official recognition of community teachers and in the development of the ministry's five-year plan for the advancement of multilingual education, the Multilingual Education National Action Plan.

When CARE first met Mme Ton Sa Im, she was then the Director for the Pedagogical Research Department, now named the Department for Curriculum Development. After repeated and in-depth visits to the program, as well as being a key decision maker on the Language Review Committee in the approval process of the textbook, she understood the educational realities in remote communities and realized the potential impact and importance of multilingual education for Cambodia's ethnic minority children.

Throughout the years, Mme Ton Sa Im has visited the program sites on many occasions and after witnessing the results first hand, she has become an ardent supporter.

7. ON-GOING LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH

With support from the Patsy Collins Trust Fund Initiative, CARE embarked on a longitudinal study in 2009 to research the effectiveness of multilingual education by testing the academic performance of ethnic minority children who learn in their home language in a multilingual education school versus those that learn in state schools where the only language of instruction is Khmer. The research aims to test children's academic performance in terms of mathematics, Khmer literacy and oral Khmer. While there is a wealth of research on the positive effects of multilingual education for children's academic performance, little of this is set in the South-East Asian context and none is specifically set in Cambodia (Lee et al). Multilingual education continues to be a controversial topic in many countries and robust evidence-based research supports advocacy. The longitudinal research in the CARE multilingual education project was designed with national and international advocacy in mind.

The main research question was applied in testing children from CARE-supported multilingual education state schools and CARE-supported multilingual education community schools in remote locations without nearby state schools. CARE received permission from the Provincial Office of Education in Ratanak Kiri to use Khmer-only state schools with ethnic minority as the control group.

Data has been collected over seven years at a specific point each year, testing children in the three academic areas mentioned above. The mathematics tests were designed according to the Early Numeracy Research Project while Khmer literacy was tested using the Early Grades Reading Assessment developed by the Research Triangle Institute. The analysis of the earlier results was carried out by the Minnesota International Development Education Consortium and the results were studied by academics from established and well-known universities.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Do ethnic minority children who receive a bilingual education in their home language and the national language in the early grades, Grades 1 to 3, learn the national language, Khmer (literacy and oracy), and mathematics, better than ethnic minority children whose education is in the national language only?

In 2015, the results of the first stage of this research were published in *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*. This research has been supervised by an Advisory Group with representatives of the University of Minnesota, the Royal University of Phnom Penh, CARE USA, and CARE Cambodia.

The findings from the study so far indicate that children in multilingual education schools perform better in mathematics than ethnic minority children who attend non-MLE schools. These results are consistent with other international research on the benefits of multilingual education. As this research is amongst the first in the region on multilingual education and the first on the impact of multilingual education for ethnic minorities in Cambodia, it is sure to not only draw interest from scholars and practitioners, but also provide the MoEYS with additional impetus for policy change and the institutionalization of multilingual education programs. The first findings from the research have been shared with the Ministry, scholars at the Royal University of Phnom Penh and the Ministry's Education Research Committee and it has broadened their understanding with solid evidence and results gathered from the local context of the advantages of multilingual education.

8. PROMOTING MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION AT THE SUB-NATIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS

In order to further its advocacy efforts for ethnic minority education and language rights, CARE became involved in various technical and working groups and forums at the sub-national and national levels. At the provincial level CARE is the Deputy Chair of the Joint Technical Working Group (JTWG), a provincial working group consisting of provincial departments, all NGOs in Ratanak Kiri working inthe education sector, and chaired by the Provincial Office of Education. Additionally, the Ministry decided that Provincial Offices of Education are required to develop their own Education Strategic Plans for five years, which provides additional opportunities for advocacy on multilingual education. CARE has also been involved for many years with the provincial NGO network in Ratanak Kiri.

At the national level, CARE was invited to sit on the high level Steering Committee for Child Friendly Schools. As CARE's work in multilingual education for ethnic minority children falls under the Child Friendly Schools Policy, this is an excellent forum within which to continue advocacy efforts as the committee includes representatives of Ministry, development Partners, including the head of education in UNICEF and is chaired by the Minister of Education. It took significant lobbying with Ministry officials, peers and development partners in order for CARE to be included in this committee and it is an important platform to promote CARE's work as well as to have access to decision-makers and power holders.

In addition to participation in official groups such as those described above, working in partnership with others has proven invaluable for advocacy. There is a well developed alliance between UNICEF, Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) and CARE on advocacy. Together, joint efforts have been made to ensure the Ministry is well informed and supported on multilingual education. Additionally, there are platforms such as the Annual Retreat of Ministry leadership and representatives of major development partners to which CARE does not have access whereas VSO and UNICEF do and are able to lobby on CARE's behalf. Prior to any presentations or meetings with government officials, key messages are reviewed to ensure that all partners are on the same page and follow similar strategies. In recent years, Plan International became actively engaged in early childhood education in ethnic minority areas and CARE has partnered with this organization and their local partner Krousar Yeurn, providing support for implementing the multilingual education model in community pre-schools.
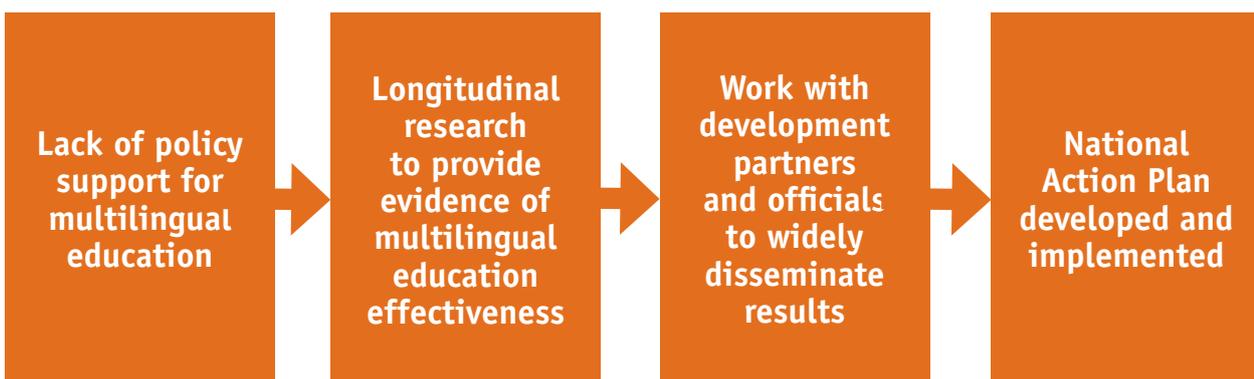
MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION NATIONAL ACTION PLAN (MENAP)

The most significant step taken by the government in solidifying its commitment to the institutionalization of multilingual education is the development of the Multilingual National Action Plan (MENAP). The MENAP clearly states Cambodia's support for multilingual education programs and its commitment to funding and expanding multilingual education access for ethnic minority children at the preschool and primary level. It is aligned with the Education Strategic Plan, which assures that activities are budgeted for at the national and provincial levels. The implementation of the MENAP will aim to provide access to multilingual education for more than 10,000 children by 2018.

CARE worked with government representatives and other key partners in a long and thorough development process in order to gather inputs from multiple stakeholders and produce early versions, while at the same time advocating for its ratification at high levels. A workshop in September 2013 was convened in order to get further comments and inputs from high level officials, with CARE taking the lead role as the technical expert on multilingual education in Cambodia.The workshop was facilitated by well known multilingual education expert, Dr. Kimmo Kosonen, senior consultant at the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) and lecturer at Payap University in Chiang Mai. The Minister of Education, H.E. Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, opened the workshop, demonstrating that commitment to multilingual education expansion comes from the highest level of the Ministry. Key staff from all relevant departments in the Ministry were invited as were development partners such as UNESCO.

CARE and UNICEF were instrumental in convening decision makers and in pushing forward the development of the MENAP and have been working together for many years. According to representatives from both organizations, the relationship between the two is highly collaborative and mutually supportive, with each organization bringing important sets of skills to the partnership. CARE has the technical experience and experience on the ground as well as strong and established relationships with communities and officials at all levels. UNICEF has a long history of supporting Cambodia in the education sector and a unique position to influence at high levels of the government. In early 2015, UNICEF and CARE provided support to a delegation headed by the Minister of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport on a field visit to multilingual education schools in Mondul Kiri and Ratanak Kiri, which provided opportunities to deepen the Minister's understanding of multilingual education and his already enthusiastic support of the MENAP.

Figure 5: Process of advocating for government ownership

| Lack of policy support for multilingual education | → | Longitudinal research to provide evidence of multilingual education effectiveness | → | Work with development partners and officials to widely disseminate results | → | National Action Plan developed and implemented |

9. PROMOTING MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

CARE was one of the founding members of the Bangkok-based Asia Pacific Multilingual Education Work Group which began meeting in 2003 and was formally established in 2009. The Steering Committee, of which CARE is a member, includes Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), the South-East Asian Ministers for Education Organisation (SEAMEO), UNICEF, Mahidol University and Save the Children. It is chaired by UNESCO and its secretariat is housed in UNESCO. The purpose of this working group is to support the development of multilingual education in the region and coordinate human and financial resources as well as provide opportunities for networking and collaboration. One of the major activities of the working group is the organization of an international conference which takes place every two years and which attracts participation from scholars, practitioners and government officials from around the world.

CARE has on several occasions sponsored Cambodian government representatives to join these and other conferences and workshops and quickly recognized the powerful impact this could have. By inviting and supporting officials to international forums, not only did CARE continue to build its relationships with individuals and departments in the government, but also provided them with an excellent opportunity for learning and understanding about multilingual education from an international perspective. Officials attending such events need to prepare themselves well, are put into contact with officials from other governments and can witness the growing global movement for multilingual education. Such international forums are not only an opportunity for learning, but also an opportunity for Cambodia to shine on the global stage. Relative to other nations in the region, Cambodia is leading the way in its support of and gradual institutionalization of multilingual education. Often, Cambodia is looked up to as a source of guidance and experience. In 2010, a delegation from East Timor visited Cambodia to learn more about its multilingual education program.

At the Fourth International Conference on Language and Education, CARE, on behalf of the Steering Committee, invited H.E. Mme Ton Sa Im to give a presentation during a plenary session, describing Cambodia's policies on multilingual education. Her presentation was not only well received but also praised by other participants, including scholars as it is not often that a government official is willing to openly discuss and be questioned about politically sensitive issues. This opportunity to shine on the international stage and to be held up as a leader and innovator goes a long way in the advocacy work on multilingual education with the government. Additionally, officials return home with a greater sense of pride in and responsibility towards the multilingual education program.

LESSON LEARNED
Be involved in important forums that set standards and best practices and invite high level government officials to participate.

10. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: MOVING FROM IMPLEMENTER TO ADVISOR

CARE Cambodia now has over a decade of experience in multilingual education development, implementation and advocacy. Moving away from an implementer role towards more of a role of technical advisor and supporter of multilingual education implementation by the government, the key focus is now on promoting the full ownership of the Ministry at the national, sub-national and district levels and to support the expansion of multilingual education. Handing over the program to the Ministry is vital in ensuring its sustainability as only through full government ownership, can multilingual education be scaled up and maintained.

In the early days during the pilot and during the first steps into early childhood development and then upscaling of the multilingual education model into state schools, what started as a responsive advocacy has now been channeled

into a strategic advocacy plan. As already described above, CARE is working to build the organizational and technical capacity of Commune Councils to implement pre-school education in their communities and lobbying for CARE trained community teachers to be fully recognized as state school teachers. CARE will continue capacity building of government officials at all levels on multilingual education to ensure they are able to take full ownership of the multilingual education program.

Advocacy is the deliberate process of influencing those who make decisions about developing, changing and implementing policies.

Alongside of this, CARE has been supporting the development of the Multilingual Education National Action Plan (*see Box 2*), providing technical assistance so that it is synchronized and fully integrated with the planning of the Education Strategic Plan and national and sub-national Annual Operation Plans.

While a strategic advocacy plan has been developed and approved, it is important to remain flexible and adjust to political conditions and realities on the ground. The development of the Multilingual Education National Action Plan was a slow process in part due to the timing of the 2012 commune elections and the 2013 national elections. Multilingual education proved to be a sensitive issue for the Ministry during election times and progress stalled, even though political will within the Ministry was present. CARE's decision at this time was to not press forward with the Multilingual Education National Action Plan, but to take a 'look and listen' approach instead. This type of re-assessment of strategic tactics towards advocacy goals is important in maintaining government trust rather than rushing ahead and potentially jeopardizing long worked for relationships.

LESSON LEARNED
Develop a strategic advocacy plan while remaining responsive to the reality on the ground.

CONCLUSION

The key result, among many, which CARE's multi-layered and collaborative advocacy contributed to is the development and implementation of national policy on multilingual education. The proclamation clearly expressed the government's commitment to multilingual education while the forthcoming Multilingual Education National Action Plan, the most tangible evidence of the government's ownership of multilingual education, outlines how to operationalize the support and expansion of multilingual education services. Government ownership and up scaling is a key step towards sustainability and ensuring future generations of ethnic minority children have access to relevant and quality education.

The advocacy work carried out by CARE and its partners can be organized into three key areas: **government engagement and capacity building**, **gathering evidence** and **strategic partnerships**. Actions in each area took place at local, sub-national, national or global levels or at multiple levels. In the initial stages of its program, CARE worked towards building evidence at the local level through its pilot program while concurrently using soft advocacy approaches to engage with provincial and national education authorities with an eye to building strong, supportive relationships. International examples of multilingual education programs and success were utilized in developing a suitable model for the Cambodian context.

In the following stages, as the Ministry began to understand and support the model and subsequently trialed its own pilot and soon after opened up state schools to multilingual education CARE supported the Ministry's activities with technical capacity building at the sub-national and national levels. This work was not done in isolation, but in partnership with strategically placed organizations such as UNICEF. As the Ministry progressed in its implementation

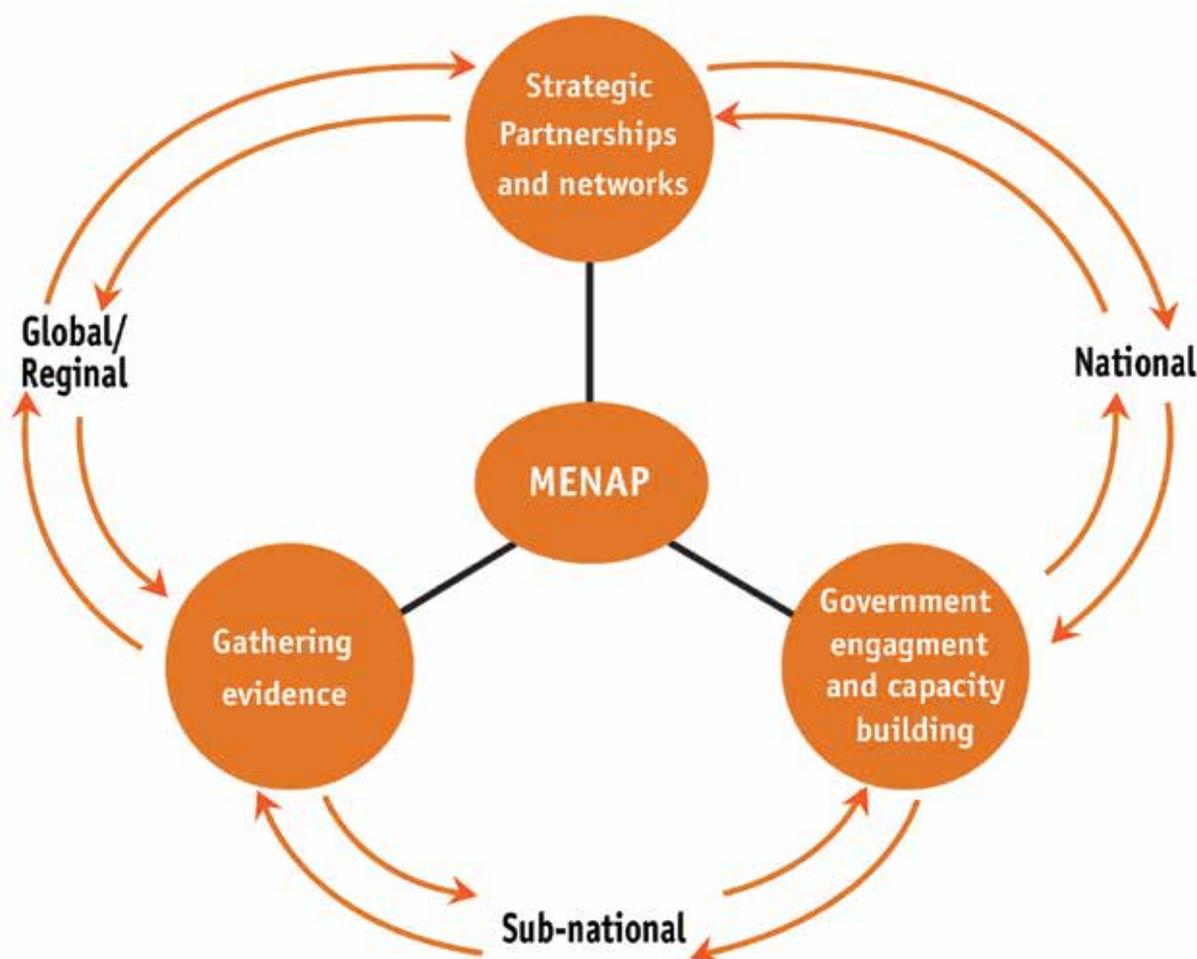*Figure 6: Interaction of sub-national, national and global advocacy efforts*
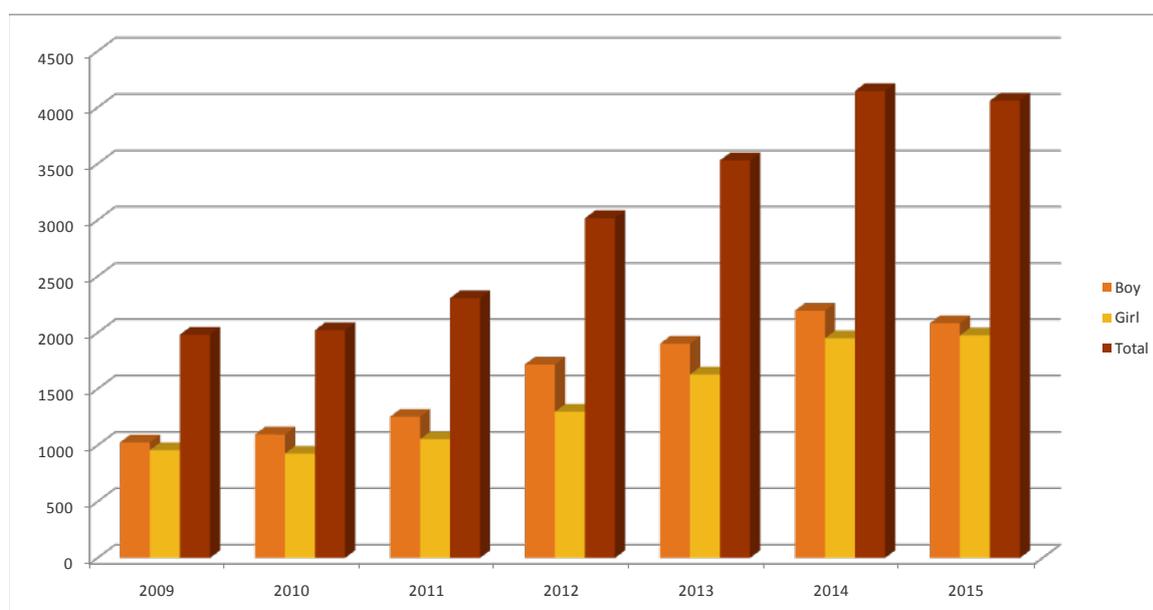
Figure 7: Number of students enrolled in MLE 2009-2015

and policy support on multilingual education, endorsing first a set of Guidelines and later issuing a proclamation, CARE promoted government efforts at national conferences and forums, presenting Cambodia as a progressive model in multilingual education implementation in the region.

In the final stages of promoting full ownership and expansion of multilingual education by the Ministry, CARE and its strategic partners, worked closely to advocate for the development of the Multilingual Education National Action Plan. This was strongly underpinned by CARE's high-quality research on multilingual education effectiveness in the north-eastern provinces and guided by international standards and best practices.

Although CARE and others have had significant success in promoting multilingual education and seeing it progressively accepted and more deeply instituted at the highest levels, the idea of multilingual education remains a politically sensitive issue and its elevation to a national program remains fragile, as it is in many other countries. While many of the officials at district, provincial and national levels, who have been involved with the program for years, are well aware of the potential and importance of multilingual education, as new officials replace outgoing ones, there can sometimes be a step backwards in institutional understanding. For this reason, even in a climate where multilingual education is protected by policies and champions in the government, this foundation can become shaky at any time. Old misconceptions can re-arise through new staff, such as the idea that multilingual education will encourage ethnic minority communities to breakaway from the nation or that the use of the Khmer alphabet for minority languages can have a negative impact on the national language. Individuals or departments may become taken by new ideas of educational reform, ones that sideline education for minorities and children with disabilities and multilingual education may once again find itself on the fringes. For this reason, advocacy efforts at all levels must be responsive and program staff should be on guard for shifts and changes in attitudes. Many of the advocacy strategies and tactics described here—finding champions in the Ministry, inviting officials to internationals forums, building trusting and responsive relationships—can all aid in this effort.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS COMMONLY USED IN MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

Competencies: Knowledge, abilities or skills in language or other subjects of the school curriculum.

Curriculum: Teaching plan, content and instructional materials for an education program.

Dominant group: Most powerful social group of the country due to population (numerical majority), economics (wealth) and/or politics (power).

Dominant language: Language spoken by the dominant social group, or language that is seen as the main language of a country.

First Language First MLE: Schooling beginning with the L1 for reading, writing and learning, while teaching the L2.

Fluency: High competence in speaking, reading and/or writing a language.

Home language: Language spoken in the home, sometimes referred to as 'L1' or 'mother tongue'.

Language Development:

In education: Teaching someone to speak, read and write a language well.

In minority language communities: Promoting oral and written use of a language, for example by expanding its vocabulary, agreeing on a written form, and creating books and school materials.

Language of Instruction: Language used for teaching and learning the school curriculum, also called medium of instruction.

Lingua franca: Widely spoken language used for communication between ethno-linguistic groups.

Local language: Language spoken in the immediate community.

Language minority: Group of people who share a language and often have less power in society due to population (numerically fewer), economics (less wealth) and/or politics.

Literacy: Ability to read, write, calculate and otherwise use a language to do whatever is needed in life.

Mother tongue (MT): First language, native language.

Multilingual:

Individual level: Ability to speak/understand (and sometimes read/ write) more than two languages.

Society: Presence of more than two language groups.

Official language: Language adopted by a country for public administrative and institutional use, often including schools.

Orthography: Standardized system for writing a language, including a script and rules for spelling and punctuation.

Unwritten language: Language that is spoken but not yet used for reading/writing.

Writing system: Graphic representation of a spoken language in letters or symbols.

OTHER DEFINITIONS

Multilingual education can be defined as the planned and systematic use of two or more languages in a program of instruction for children.

Multilingual: Children will use two or more languages, including Khmer, in their everyday interactions and for their learning in school.

Multi-literate: Children will be able to read and write confidently in two or more languages.

Multicultural: Children will be comfortable living and working with people from outside their community while maintaining their love and respect for their home culture and community.

Bilingual education refers to education using two languages. The term bilingual education was originally used among linguists.; however, nowadays the more broad term of multilingual education is used as more than two languages are often involved. This document uses the term multilingual education unless referring to a program or policy issued before the shift to the use of multilingual as the preferred term.

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