Advocacy Kit for Promoting Multilingual Education: Including the Excluded

Overview of the Kit
Advocacy Kit for Promoting Multilingual Education: 
*Including the Excluded*

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Advocacy kit for promoting multilingual education: Including the excluded.
5 booklets.

[content: Overview of the kit; Language in education policy and practice in Asia and the Pacific; Policy makers booklet; Programme implementers booklet; Community members booklet]

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Foreword

The Asia and Pacific region is characterized by rich ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity. At the same time, however, this diversity makes educating children from different backgrounds a major challenge. At the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, one of the main agreed goals was “to ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls and children from ethnic minorities, have access to complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality”. Another of the goals involved “…improving levels of literacy, particularly among women”. Achieving these goals and making educational opportunities more equitable means dealing explicitly with learners from ethnic/linguistic minorities through affirmative measures. Since effective teaching depends on clear and understandable communication, the language of instruction is at the heart of any learning process. For this reason, mother tongue-based instruction is crucial to providing children with early access to education and to enabling them to participate in learning processes according to their evolving capacities.

Unfortunately, in many countries in this region, the true panorama of languages found in a nation’s population is rarely reflected in their education systems, and large numbers of learners are confronted with either a foreign medium of instruction or a language that is different from their mother tongue. This may be further exacerbated in the case of certain groups who are already in situations of educational risk or stress, such as illiterates, minorities and refugees. It is an obvious yet not generally recognized truism that learning in a language that is not one’s own provides a double set of challenges: not only of learning a new language but also of learning new knowledge contained in that language.

In some countries in Asia, bi/multilingual education programmes, through non-formal education, are helping to prepare ethnic/linguistic minority learners for literacy in both mother tongue and national languages. However, there is a serious lack of recognition and understanding of the role that bi/multilingual education can play in increasing enrolment, retention and achievement in the formal school system. This kit advocates making education systems more responsive to cultural diversity. It provides important insights into the value of mother tongue-based multilingual education, which respects the rights of children and learners and encourages readers to think about the importance of language issues and to investigate them further. It builds on research findings and experiences gained over many years by many organizations and individuals working on mother tongue-based multilingual education. I hope you will find the booklets in this kit useful in advocating and gaining support for mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality as well as saving the world’s many endangered languages.

Sheldon Shaeffer
Director, UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education
Acknowledgements

The work of preparing this kit was genuinely participatory and involved many education specialists, experts and others from inside and outside the Asia-Pacific region. Their names are listed below, and UNESCO Bangkok would like to thank all of them for their contributions.

We sincerely thank members of UNESCO Bangkok’s Advisory Committee on Multilingual Education for their continued support during the development of the Kit.

We gratefully acknowledge the sources used in the Kit and encourage users to make use of them, as well.

We also thank participants of the workshop on Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programmes for Ethnic Minorities held in December 2005 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, for their valuable contributions to the improvement of the Kit.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who shared photos and to members of ethnic minority communities who agreed to have their photos shared with us.

In addition to UNESCO’s regular programme funds, Japanese Funds-in-Trust supported the development and dissemination of the Kit. We appreciate this assistance and the benefits it will have for learners inside and outside the Asia-Pacific region.

Finally, a very special note of appreciation is directed to Dr. Susan Malone, SIL International, the main author of the Kit. Ochirkhuyag Gankhuyag, Programme Assistant at UNESCO Bangkok, coordinated the project and dealt with the challenges to its completion in the past two years.

Listed below are the contributors who provided their valuable time and insights into completing the Kit. If we have inadvertently forgotten someone, please accept our apologies and appreciation for your valuable assistance.

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Overview of the Kit

Education for All (EFA) means a quality education for all. Since the start of the EFA movement, many countries have increased their efforts to meet the educational needs of children and adults. Even though much has been done, certain groups remain excluded – girls and women, people who are in poverty, disabled, people living with HIV/AIDS and people whose mother tongue differs from the official/national language.

Can quality education for all be achieved when education is packaged in a language that some learners neither speak nor understand? This is the situation faced by many children from ethnic minority groups when they enter formal school systems – the official school language is very different from the language they speak at home. Forcing children to learn in a language they do not understand creates an educational handicap that should not exist.

In some countries in the Asia and Pacific region, bi/ multilingual education programmes established in non-formal education systems help ethnic/linguistic minority learners to become literate in their own languages and in the national language. But at the national policy level there is a serious lack of recognition and understanding of the role that bi/multilingual education can play in increasing enrolment, retention and achievement in the formal school system. On the other hand, it should be acknowledged that policy makers and education practitioners are faced with difficult decisions with regard to the language of instruction when technical and political factors are in competition. Therefore, understanding the true panorama of providing education in learners’ mother tongue is one of the crucial steps towards achieving quality education for all.

Who Can Use This Kit?

This kit was prepared for all of those who want to ensure that “Education for All” does, indeed, include everyone! The kit will be especially valuable for policy makers, education practitioners and specialists who want to improve access to and quality of education for those excluded by language. It will also be helpful for speakers of ethnic minority languages who want to improve the education situation in their own communities.

This kit is designed to raise awareness on the importance of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MLE). It presents key arguments and facts about MLE and provides important insights about the value and benefits of providing education in learners’ mother tongue. The kit also presents ideas, research findings and concrete examples that you can use to think about your own situation and suggests steps for taking actions to make your school system more responsive to linguistic diversity.
The kit is not a definitive textbook, and it will not have an answer for every problem that you might face. To help you as much as possible, at the end of each booklet we have included lists of references. In addition, each booklet contains a glossary of terms and, at the front of each booklet is a one-page summary of its contents.

**How Can You Use This Kit?**

This kit contains three main booklets. Each booklet has a designated audience: 1) policy makers, 2) education programme planners and practitioners and 3) community members. Please remember that developing MLE requires contributions from everyone at all levels. For that reason, we encourage you to use all three booklets along with other available resources as you work together to plan, implement and sustain your MLE programmes.

This kit can be used in many different ways. For those who are already involved in MLE programmes, you might use these ideas to help you to promote mother tongue instruction and strengthen your programme. Those who are not familiar with multilingual education but want to improve educational access for minority language students might use these booklets to identify specific points that they can investigate and discuss in their own contexts.

**Glossary of Terms**

Each booklet contains its own glossary of terms and there is also a master list of terms used throughout the kit. Please consult these glossaries as necessary.

**A Note for Translators**

This kit was developed originally in the English language. But for it to be used widely, it will need to be translated into different languages and may be adapted to fit different contexts. For those of you who will be given the task of translating and adapting this kit, please remember the following important points.

This kit is meant to be user-friendly. For this reason, it is written in an informal, conversational style, as if you were talking to a person rather than simply writing for her or him. You are encouraged to use this style in your translation, instead of using a formal – often overly complicated – one.

Although this kit was written in English, we “pre-tested” it at a regional workshop (December 2005, Chiang Mai, Thailand) to see if it was understandable to persons whose mother tongue is not English. In order to make it understandable, this kit uses a simple vocabulary. We intentionally tried not to use complex terms. However, some special terms can be difficult to translate. For example, terms “multilingual education” or “gender” may not exist in your language, but it is important to translate them accurately. If you find terms that you are not sure how to translate, please check with professionals or agencies who may already be
using the terms and may have already translated them. If educators in your country have not translated the terms (or it is translated inaccurately), check with other national and international organizations that work in these areas to see how they have translated them.

Please include the following statement in your edition: “This kit is a translation and adaptation of Advocacy Kit on Multilingual Education [ISBN 92-9223-110-3] ©UNESCO Bangkok”. We seek your cooperation to send two copies of all translations and adaptations to the following address:

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## Glossary of Terms – Languages

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dialect</td>
<td>Manner of speaking a language that varies according to region or social group (see also <strong>variety</strong>)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
| Dominant language        | Language spoken by the dominant social group, or language that is seen as the main language of a country  
  - *May have official or national language status even if it is not spoken by a numerical majority of the national population*                                |
| Foreign language         | Language that is not spoken in the immediate environment of the learner                                                                                                                                     |
| Heritage language        | Language of a person’s ancestors or ethnolinguistic group                                                                                                                                                  |
| Home language            | Language spoken in the home (see also **L1**, **mother tongue**)  
  - *Some people have more than one home language*                                                                                                                                                    |
| L1                       | First language, native language (see also **mother tongue**, **home language**, **local language**)  
  - *Refers to language or languages learned from birth*                                                                                                                                               |
| L2                       | Second language, non-native language, language of wider communication, or foreign language  
  - *Often refers to contexts where the language is spoken in the wider society outside the home; in bilingual education, refers to second (official, foreign) language introduced after the L1*  
  - *For ethnolinguistic minorities, the L2 is usually an official and/or national language*                                                                                                     |
| 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 ethnolinguistic groups  
  *Example: Tok Pisin in PNG*                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Local language           | Language spoken in the immediate community  
  - *May refer to languages that are not yet fully developed in written form*                                                                                                                             |
Majority language  Language spoken by the majority of people in a region/country

Minority language  Language spoken by a social and/or ethnic minority group

- Sometimes used to refer to the language of a numerically large group that is not dominant

Mother tongue (MT)  First language, native language (see also L1, home language, local language)

- Language that a person: (a) has learnt first; (b) identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others; (c) knows best; or (d) uses most

National language  Language considered to be an important, widely-spoken language in a country; sometimes also an official language

Example: India recognizes two official and 22 national languages; Bahasa Indonesia is both national and official language of Indonesia

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

Example: India has Hindi and English as official languages of the country and a number of different official state languages

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

Variety  Manner of speaking a language that varies according to region or social group (see also dialect)
Glossary of Terms – General

Advisory committee  Group of leaders committed to supporting an MLE programme

- Usually composed of mother tongue speakers and members of partner agencies

Alienation  Being disconnected from one’s own language and culture

- Minority language speakers in dominant language education may later reject their own language and culture

Awareness-raising  Providing information that can help people achieve the goals and needs that they have identified for themselves

Bilingual  Individual: Ability to speak/understand (and sometimes read/write) two languages

- Society: Presence of at least two language groups

Bilingual education  Use of two languages for literacy and instruction

- Ideally, literacy and learning begin with the learner’s first language,
  and a second language is introduced gradually

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

Curriculum  Teaching plan, content and instructional materials for an education programme

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

Facilitator  Person who helps others to learn; teacher

First Language  Schooling beginning with the L1 for reading, writing and learning, while teaching the L2 (see multilingual education)

First MLE

Fluency  High competence in speaking, reading and/or writing

Gender equality  Situation in which women and men, girls and boys have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political development
### Overview of the Kit

<p>| <strong>Illiterate</strong> | Person who has not yet had the opportunity to learn reading and writing in a language she/he understands |
| <strong>Implementation</strong> | The process of mobilizing people and resources to carry out a new programme |
| <strong>Indigenous</strong> | Person or group descended from original or early inhabitants of a region or country |
| <strong>Interculturalism</strong> | Promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance between ethnonlinguistic and/or social groups |
| <strong>Language development</strong> | <em>In education:</em> Teaching someone to speak, read and write a language well&lt;br&gt;<em>In minority language communities:</em> 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 |
| <strong>Language minority</strong> | 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 |
| <strong>Literacy</strong> | Ability to read, write, calculate and otherwise use a language to do whatever is needed in life |
| <strong>Mainstream</strong> | Language and culture of the dominant group&lt;br&gt;- <em>Often refers to schools designed for members of the dominant group that do not meet the needs of linguistic minorities</em> |
| <strong>Migrant</strong> | Person or group that has moved from one region to another |
| <strong>Mobilization</strong> | The process of organizing a community (and its supporters) to work together to plan and implement a programme |
| <strong>Multilingual</strong> | <em>Individual:</em> Ability to speak/understand (and sometimes read/write) more than two languages&lt;br&gt;<em>Society:</em> Presence of more than two language groups&lt;br&gt;- <em>Ideally this begins with developing the L1 and adding other languages gradually</em> |
| <strong>Multilingual education (MLE)</strong> | Use of more than two languages for literacy and instruction |
| <strong>Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)</strong> | Agency that is not part of any national government, often working for community development |
| <strong>Orthography</strong> | Standardized system for writing a language, including a script and rules for spelling and punctuation (see also <em>writing system</em>) |</p>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Partners</strong></td>
<td>Individuals, organizations and agencies that collaborate with communities to implement a new programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Submersion</strong></td>
<td>Use of a second/foreign language for all instruction, with little or no help for learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability</strong></td>
<td>Setting up a programme so that it will continue for a long time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transfer</strong></td>
<td>What is learned in the L1 contributes to competence in other languages; one only needs to learn to read once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing system</strong></td>
<td>Graphic representation of a spoken language (see also orthography)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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