



INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF THE MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION NATIONAL ACTION PLAN IN CAMBODIA

FINAL REPORT – VOLUME I

July 2018 – February 2019

Cambodia

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EVALUATION REPORT
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Photo: Indigenous children mapping their experiences in multilingual education

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Independent Evaluation of the Multilingual Education National Action Plan in Cambodia

July 2018 – February 2019

Cambodia

Authors:

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The Evaluation of the Multilingual Education National Action Plan in Cambodia was prepared by Jessica Ball and Mariam Smith. Deirdre Smith edited the report. The evaluation was commissioned by UNICEF Cambodia on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. It was managed by a team led by Erica Mattellone (Evaluation Specialist, UNICEF) with support provided by Phaloeuk Kong and Saky Lim (Monitoring and Evaluation Officers, UNICEF), Nhonh Sophea (Education Specialist, UNICEF), Katheryn Bennett (Chief, Education, UNICEF), Tyler Henry (UNICEF Intern) and Elizabeth Fisher (Research and Evaluation Associate, UNICEF).

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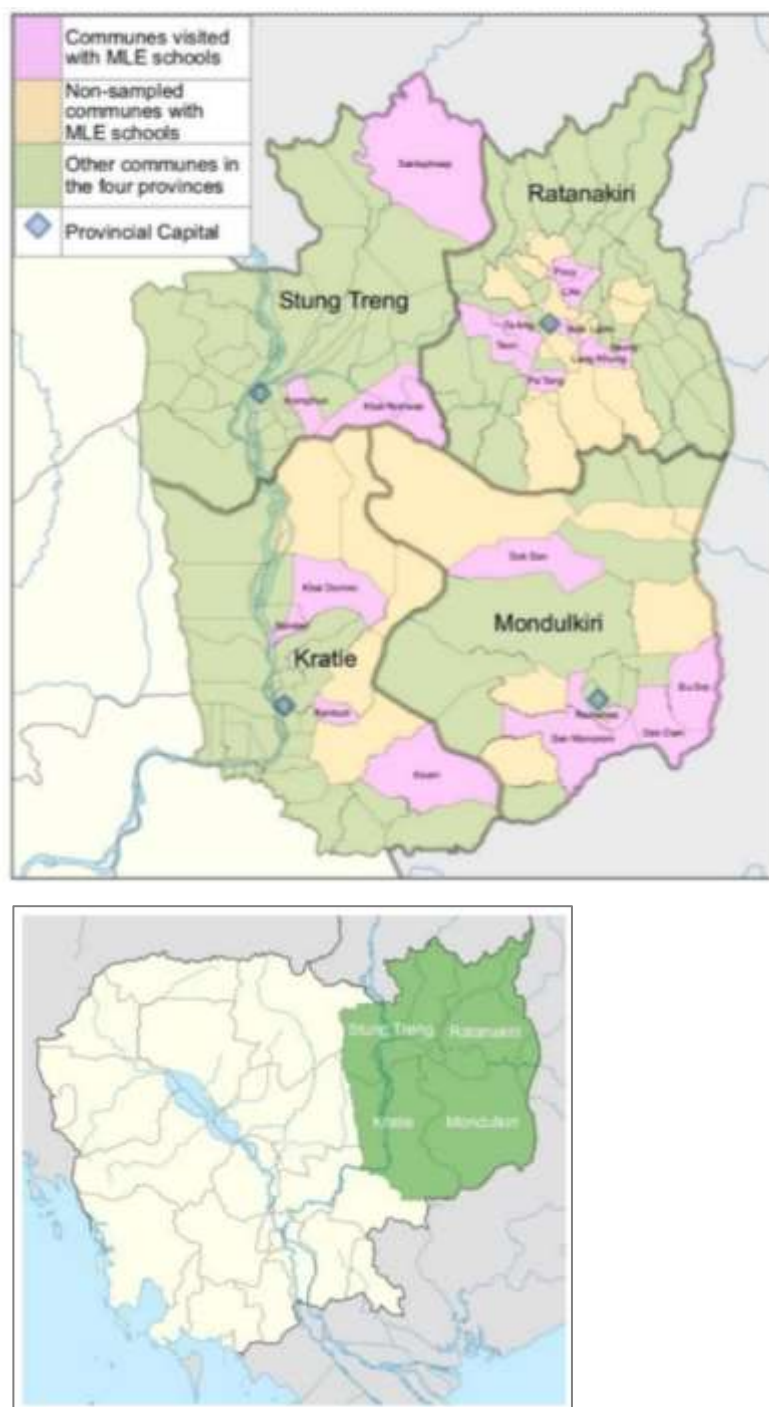
Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CDD	Curriculum Development Department
CFS	Child-Friendly School
CPS	Community Preschool
DPs	Development Partner
DOE	District Office of Education
DTMT	District Training and Monitoring Team
ECED	Early Childhood Education Department
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EMT	Evaluation Management Team
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
ESWG	Education Sector Working Group
EMU	Evangelical Mission to the Unreached
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HCEP	Highland Children's Education Evaluation
ICC	International Cooperation Cambodia
IPA	Indigenous Peoples' Association
IPO	Indigenous Peoples' Organization
KII	Key Informant Interview
LTF	Local Translator and Facilitator
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance
MENAP	Multilingual Education National Action Plan
MENAP 2	Multilingual Education National Action Plan 2019–2023 (under development)
MLE	Multilingual Education
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MSC	Most Significant Change
MT	Mother Tongue
MTB	Mother Tongue-Based
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NFED	Non-Formal Education Department
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NIS	National Institute of Statistics
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
PED	Primary Education Department
POE	Provincial Office of Education
PRD	Pedagogical Research Department
PTTC	Provincial Teacher Training College
SED	Special Education Department
RBM	Results-Based Management
RG	Reference Group
RUPP	Royal University of Phnom Penh
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SitAn	Situational Analysis
SSC	School Support Committee
ToA	Theory of Action
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference

TTD	Teacher Training Department
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNICEF EAPRO	UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office

Country map with research sites

Figure 1. Provinces and commune locations visited for data gathering¹



¹ Maps derived from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cambodia_location_map.syg (basemap) by NordNordWest, with commune data from Open Development Cambodia: <https://opendatacambodia.net/dataset/?id=administrative-boundaries-of-cambodia-2014> (Creative Commons Attribution CC-BY-4.0).

Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Acronyms	iv
Country map with research sites	vi
Executive summary	ix
1. Introduction	1
2. Background and context analysis	2
2.1 The education sector in Cambodia	2
2.2 Languages in Cambodia	4
2.3 The Multilingual Education National Action Plan in Cambodia	5
2.4 Multilingual Education National Action Plan timeline	6
2.5 Reconstructed theory of change	7
2.6 Stakeholder mapping/network analysis	9
2.7 How MLE affects children's learning	12
3. Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope	15
3.1 Purpose and use of evaluation findings	15
3.2 Objectives	15
3.3 Scope	15
4. Evaluation approach and methodology	18
4.1 Approach	18
4.2 Methodology	19
4.3 Reliability and validity of data collection and analysis	23
4.4 Risks, limitations and mitigation measures	24
4.5 Equity, gender equality and human rights	26
5. Evaluation findings and analysis	29
5.1 Relevance	29
5.2 Effectiveness	36
5.3 Efficiency	46
5.4 Impact	55
5.5 Sustainability	59
5.6 Equity, gender equality and human rights	63
6. Conclusions	66
6.1 Relevance	67
6.2 Effectiveness	68
6.3 Efficiency	68
6.4 Impact	69
6.5 Sustainability	70
6.6 Equity, gender equality and human rights	71
7. Lessons learned	73
8. Recommendations	76
8.1 Renew the Multilingual Education National Action Plan (MENAP) for 2019–2023 (MENAP 2)	76
8.2 Develop MoEYS capacity, systems and institutions for improved MLE service delivery	78
8.3 Enhance MLE preschool quality and harmonization	79
8.4 Enhance the quantity, quality and retention of MLE primary school teachers and Indigenous core trainers	80
8.5 Review and renew MLE curricula and resources	81
8.6 Raise awareness about child rights and the social value of the MENAP	82
8.7 Improve education management information systems	82
8.8 Develop partnerships between local and international universities	83

Tables

Table 1. Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale Level (EGID) and estimated speakers* of languages in Cambodia	5
Table 2. Key evaluation questions assessing the MENAP against OECD/DAC criteria	19
Table 3. Participants in qualitative data collection aspect of the evaluation.....	21
Table 4. Overview of MENAP primary school statistics for 2017–2018 school year	38
Table 5. Targeted compared to actual enrolment by province, 2018.	38
Table 6. MLE and non-MLE provincial enrolments for Grades 1 to 3 during MENAP period.....	39
Table 7. CARE expenditures on MENAP activities 2015–2018.....	48
Table 8. UNICEF expenditures on MENAP activities 2016–2018	49
Table 9. Additional MENAP targets and achievements	53
Table 10. MENAP sustainability: Key enabling factors, barriers and bottlenecks	60

Figures

Figure 1. Provinces and commune locations visited for data gathering	vi
Figure 2. Reconstructed theory of change deduced from the MENAP 2015–2018.....	8
Figure 3. Stakeholder mapping/network analysis for the MENAP	11
Figure 4. Elements of the change process assessed in evaluating the MENAP	17
Figure 5. Analysis of MENAP strategies compared to components of UNESCO ‘best practice’ in MLE	34
Figure 6. Targeted compared to actual enrolment in MLE primary school, 2015–2018.....	39
Figure 7. Changes in enrolment, Kratie, 2015–2018	40
Figure 8. Changes in enrolment, Mondulhiri, 2015–2018	40
Figure 9. Changes in enrolment, Ratanakiri, 2015–2018	41
Figure 10. Changes in enrolment, Stung Treng, 2015–2018.....	41

Annexes – Volume II

Annex 1. Terms of reference: Evaluation of Cambodia Multilingual Education National Action Plan
Annex 2. Technical brief: Terms of reference for the evaluation
Annex 3. Evaluation team members
Annex 4. Questions for key stakeholders
Annex 5. Documents reviewed
Annex 6. Participant lists
Annex 7. Location, type and size of schools visited
Annex 8. Extended presentation of costing for the MENAP
Annex 9. Informed consent protocol
Annex 10. Evaluation design matrix
Annex 11. Extended description of evaluation methodology
Annex 12. Extended description of qualitative data analysis
Annex 13. Quality assurance
Annex 14. Effectiveness of the MENAP: Extended findings from quantitative analysis of education data
Annex 15. Summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations
Annex 16. International evidence on MLE
Annex 17. Resources for teaching and learning in Indigenous languages created by International Cooperation Cambodia
Annex 18. Actor-focused theory of change and theory of action

Executive summary

The 2015–2018 Multilingual Education National Action Plan was endorsed and launched in 2015 by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport in collaboration with UNICEF Cambodia and CARE, and in consultation with other stakeholders in Cambodia. Its goal was to increase the inclusion of Indigenous² children in quality education as primary rights holders. The plan was implemented from 2015 to 2018. It aimed to ensure that Indigenous children have equitable access to quality and relevant education; build national and sub-national capacity to manage, monitor and scale up provision of multilingual education; and promote demand for quality multilingual education among school support committees, parents and local authorities.³ A multilingual education curriculum was delivered using Khmer and five Indigenous languages (Bunong, Kavet, Kreung, Tampuan and Brao). It was offered in preschools and primary schools in Monduliri, Ratanakiri, Kratie and Stung Treng, where there were high numbers of Indigenous children. More recently, the programme was rolled out in six preschools in one district of Preah Vihear. The initiative uses a bridging model where children transition to Khmer as the language of instruction and the national curriculum in Grade 4. The plan is unprecedented in Southeast Asia for its government commitment to using ethnic minority languages to promote equity. It aligns with the Royal Government of Cambodia's strategic development priorities and is supported by numerous international rights frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals.⁴ It is supported by research on the contributions that multilingual education can make to ethnolinguistic minority children's participation in education and society. In 2016, responsibility for the Multilingual Education National Action Plan shifted from CARE to the newly established Special Education Department within the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. When the plan concluded its first term in July 2018, UNICEF Cambodia, on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, commissioned an independent evaluation.

Evaluation purpose, objectives and intended users: This evaluation aimed to assess how well the Multilingual Education National Action Plan had been implemented to inform its future strategic direction. The evaluation objectives were to: (1) assess the extent to which the plan has met its objectives and to identify enabling factors, barriers and bottlenecks; (2) review and validate strategies and activities implemented to strengthen multilingual education and retrospectively deduce a theory of change for the plan; (3) assess national, sub-national and development partner support for implementing the plan; and (4) document lessons learned that can inform a new five-year plan and a new five-year Education Strategic Plan 2019–2023. Data were collected in the four provinces where multilingual education had been introduced for at least one year: Ratanakiri, Monduliri, Stung Treng and Kratie, omitting Preah Vihear (given how new the programme was there, it was not included within the scope of this evaluation).⁵ The evaluation is relevant to primary rights holders,⁶ primary and secondary duty bearers⁷ and development partners (notably UNICEF Cambodia and CARE) and can foster learning about institutionalized approaches to ethnic minority languages in education.

Evaluation methodology: The evaluation was rights-based and theory-based, and used a non-experimental, mixed-methods, iterative-inductive approach.⁸ Key evaluation questions and sub-questions clustered around evaluation criteria used by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and

² On 11 August 2018, the Multilingual Education National Action Plan evaluation reference group decided it would refer specifically to Indigenous children and Indigenous languages in the evaluation, rather than to ethnic minority children or languages, as the inaugural Multilingual Education National Action Plan applied only to the use of five Indigenous languages in the five north-eastern provinces. The term Indigenous is capitalized throughout the document as a sign of respect, in the same way that, for example, Khmer and French are capitalized. The Indigenous people consulted for this evaluation preferred it to be capitalized.

³ Multilingual Education National Action Plan (2015–2018), pp. 11–14.

⁴ The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and others.

⁵ The terms of reference directed the evaluation to exclude Preah Vihear, where the Multilingual Education National Action Plan also applied, because it has not developed a comprehensive strategy for implementing the Multilingual Education National Action Plan. To date, only six multilingual education preschools have been introduced in Preah Vihear.

⁶ Primary rights holders include Indigenous children, parents, local authorities and Indigenous community groups.

⁷ Primary duty bearers include the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, UNICEF Cambodia and CARE.

⁸ O'Reilly, Karen, *Key Concepts in Ethnography*, SAGE, London, 2009.

Development / Development Assistance Committee,⁹ namely: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The evaluation incorporated equity, gender equality¹⁰ and human rights considerations as cross-cutting issues. Priority was placed on Indigenous participation and methods considered globally to be good practice in data gathering involving Indigenous people. A total of 696 (317 female / 45 per cent) rights holders and duty bearers participated in primary data collection, including: Indigenous children and parents, multilingual education teachers, school principals, school support committees, Indigenous peoples' organizations, commune council members, village leaders, District Offices of Education, Provincial Offices of Education, staff of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and UNICEF, and international, national and local non-governmental organizations. Primary data were collected using 84 focus group discussions, six outcome harvesting workshops, 41 (14 female / 34 per cent) key informant interviews, surveys and direct observation. A maximum variation sampling strategy was used to select a diverse sample of schools, out of which the evaluation team was able to visit 24 multilingual education primary schools in 14 districts, 11 multilingual education preschools in eight districts, and four non-multilingual education primary schools for comparison. Secondary data included a review of over 100 in-country planning, policy and evaluation documents, international studies of multilingual education and language-in-education policies, costing data and quantitative education management data, as available. Direct assessment of children's learning or teacher competencies in multilingual education were outside the scope of the evaluation.¹¹ Ethical guidelines were followed at all stages of data collection and analysis.

Main findings and conclusions

On relevance. The evaluation explored the extent to which the Multilingual Education National Action Plan provided Indigenous girls and boys with greater access to meaningful education. Primary rights holders and duty bearers confirmed the relevance of teaching in a language that children could understand, using a culturally enriched multilingual education curriculum, and having Indigenous language speakers as teachers. Indigenous children, parents and teachers emphasized the need for curriculum renewal to amplify cultural components and include pedagogical direction for teaching Indigenous literacy. The plan contributed to the goals of the Education Strategic Plan and the National Strategic Development Plan, as well as the processes of decentralization and deconcentration.

On effectiveness. The evaluation gathered primary rights holders' perspectives and analysed education data to gain an overview of the extent to which expected outcomes of the Multilingual Education National Action Plan had been achieved. **The plan met its targets in terms of increased teachers, classrooms and students in multilingual education in Grades 1 to 3.** In 2018, 205 teachers (77 female) delivered multilingual education in 80 primary schools to a total of 4,895 children (2,423 female / 52.5 per cent). In 2018, there were 89 multilingual education community preschools and three state preschools in five provinces, with 92 preschool teachers (72 female / 78.3 per cent) and 1,681 preschool students (855 female / 51 per cent). **Except in Stung Treng, enrolments increased from the 2015 baseline until 2017, when they levelled or dropped slightly. Overall, there was a 72.5 per cent increase in enrolments in multilingual education between 2015 and 2018.** Data gaps and inconsistencies underscore the immediate need to strengthen education data systems to track progress. Preschools are a new concept in north-eastern Cambodia and it is too early to assess their effectiveness. **The evaluation concluded that co-location of multilingual education preschools and primary schools provides continuity in children's opportunities to learn in their Indigenous language and in Khmer.**

On efficiency. Financial and technical resources to teachers and schools were assessed. The government committed some 3 per cent of gross domestic product to education from 2014 to 2018. The Multilingual Education National Action Plan was not a costed plan and its implementation did not have a

⁹ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>.

¹⁰ Gender equity was not specifically identified as a target in the Multilingual Education National Action Plan; but it is a value on the part of the commissioning organization, UNICEF, for this evaluation.

¹¹ Concurrent studies under other auspices are examining these impacts. The current evaluation refers to findings of previous studies that report on learning outcomes of children in multilingual education in Cambodia.

specific Programme Budget. However, **the government contributed through its nationwide initiative to convert community schools to state schools, resulting in increased salaries for teachers and the inclusion of former community schools with multilingual education into the Programme Budgets of Provincial Offices of Education.** The Special Education Department, which was mandated to implement the plan starting in 2016, reported a total budget of US\$ 20,988, dispersed in 2018 specifically for teacher training in Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri. All other responsibilities of this department reportedly depended on UNICEF funding. UNICEF contributed US\$ 748,609 from 2016 to 2018. CARE contributed US\$ 672,776 from 2015 to 2018. The Multilingual Education National Action Plan was managed primarily at the sub-national level.¹² Provincial Offices of Education have mobilized core trainers, district officers, school cluster leaders and local authorities to support multilingual education teachers. After significant initial investment to create curriculum and infrastructure, **Provincial Offices of Education report that the operational costs of multilingual education preschools and schools are only slightly greater than for non-multilingual education schools.** However, there are shortfalls reported across all provinces in dedicated funding for language-specific teacher training and monitoring and Indigenous language resources. **The capacity of provincial teacher training colleges with significant numbers of Indigenous trainees has not yet been harnessed to amplify the cadre of well-qualified, Indigenous teachers for multilingual education.** Indigenous peoples' organizations and community networks have not yet been mobilized as advocates and supporters of the Multilingual Education National Action Plan.

On impact. The evaluation asked about any differences the Multilingual Education National Action Plan had made to primary rights holders and any unintended effects. **Multilingual education has increased Indigenous parents' engagement in children's education and their own aspirations to become literate in their mother tongue.** Demand for multilingual education, including extension through Grade 6, has increased.

On sustainability. Enabling factors, barriers and bottlenecks that may affect the sustainability of achievements and commitment to the Multilingual Education National Action Plan were examined. **Sub-national duty bearers report more demand than supply of resources to respond to increased demands for multilingual education. The government is in the early stages of institutionalizing multilingual education following path-finding innovations by CARE.** Despite strong commitment by national and sub-national duty bearers, some of these stakeholders expressed a view that multilingual education was only a temporary measure while Indigenous languages persist, and that it was only necessary to use the shortest possible bridging model, such as is currently in place. In contrast, primary rights holders viewed the use of ethnic minority languages in education as a means to secure children's ethnic identity, cultural knowledge and capacity to transmit Indigenous language proficiency to future generations.

On equity, gender equality and human rights. The evaluation explored how the Multilingual Education National Action Plan has enacted an equity- and rights-based approach. **Indigenous girls and boys and their mothers and fathers articulated the relevance and effectiveness of multilingual education and their sense that their language and culture was valued by education authorities.** Boys' enrolment slightly exceeded that of girls in multilingual education preschools and primary schools. More men than women served on school support committees, as teachers, and as leaders in multilingual education.

Lessons learned: The following lessons, which could be applicable to similar programmes, were learned in this evaluation of the Multilingual Education National Action Plan. (1) **Optimal relevance is achieved when teachers' ethnolinguistic proficiency and the curriculum are matched with the cultural and linguistic identity and livelihood needs of the communities they serve.** Communities identify this as the key determinant of learner and parent engagement. (2) **Expanding access to multilingual education in hard-to-reach communities requires sufficient human resources,**

¹² Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 'Education Strategic Plan 2014–2018', Phnom Penh, 2014; Royal Government of Cambodia, 'National Strategic Development Plan 2014–2018', 2014.

financial support and innovative approaches, including digitized education and monitoring information data collection systems, and partnerships with Indigenous and non-formal education organizations already engaged with rural and remote communities. Sub-national entities require on-going technical support to ensure that expansion does not outpace quality in terms of teacher preparation and culturally relevant teaching and learning resources. Educators at all levels need on-going, scaffolded opportunities to deepen understanding of multilingual education. (3) **Ethnic minority languages in education increase inclusion in education, provide opportunities for all children to become bilingual, promote social harmony, and sustain languages and cultures.** (4) **Sustainability depends on visible government commitment to multilingual education as a strategy for inclusion and fulfilment of rights**, and adequate financial and technical support at the national level for sub-national units to ensure that quality of provision keeps pace with quantity. (5) **The potential for multilingual education to realize the rights of Indigenous people to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to promote social harmony needs to be well understood by duty bearers and the public.**

Main recommendations: Recommendations are based on findings from analyses of data collected from a wide spectrum of stakeholders and international research reviews. They are presented in order of priorities established in collaboration with UNICEF and the reference group. They are elaborated in Section 8 of the report. All recommendations require leadership roles by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, with support from development partners and Indigenous groups.

1. Renew the Multilingual Education National Action Plan.¹³

A new, costed Multilingual Education National Action Plan (2019–2023) should be created, which includes more Indigenous languages of instruction. Possible innovations to explore include alternative calendars, a pilot demonstration of multilingual education from Grades 1 to 6, scholarships for Indigenous student participation in teacher training, and support for adult literacy in Indigenous languages.

Timeline: Immediate – by mid-year 2019

2. Strengthen Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport capacity, systems and institutions relevant to the Multilingual Education National Action Plan (2019–2023).

The Special Education Department needs adequate financial and technical resources to carry out its role as the lead implementer of the new plan. A costed plan is needed to ensure timely monitoring and evaluation using specific outcome level indicators. A structure should be created for inter-departmental collaboration with senior government leadership to ensure resource-sharing and collaborative support for the role of the Special Education Department.

Timeline: Intermediate – conduct a formative assessment of capacity in 2021

3. Enhance multilingual education preschool quality and harmonization.

Improvements should be made to the quality of multilingual education community preschools to ensure that they meet criteria under Sub-Decree No. 245: that they be annexed to multilingual education primary schools and then converted to multilingual education state preschools. This will result in enhanced financial resources for operations and much-needed salary adjustments for teachers, with expected positive impacts on teacher retention, attendance and engagement.

Timeline: Long-term – 2019–2023

4. Increase the quantity, quality and retention of multilingual education preschool and primary school teachers and Indigenous core trainers.

Current multilingual education teachers should receive in-service training to upgrade their education, increase their literacy in the Indigenous language, and improve their commitment to the graduated, bilingual model. The 30-day training module created by CARE should be institutionalized in pre-service training for Indigenous teacher trainees at provincial teacher training colleges.

¹³ This is a working title for the purposes of this evaluation. Confirmation of the name of a new plan rests with the government.

Timeline: Long-term – 2019–2023

5. Review and renew multilingual education curriculum and resources.

The curriculum for multilingual education should be reviewed, updated and expanded with more culturally based content. Development partner support will enable local and Indigenous community groups to participate in ensuring the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the curriculum.

Timeline: Intermediate – 2012–2021

6. Raise awareness about child rights and the social value of the Multilingual Education National Action Plan.

Awareness raising strategies must promote a system-wide deepening of understanding of the purpose and potential of multilingual education as a strategy to increase participation in public education and to embrace diversity, protect Cambodia's cultural resources, and promote social harmony.

Timeline: Long-term – 2019–2023

7. Improve education management information systems.

Education management information systems should be improved, including disaggregation of student and teacher gender and ethnicity, and language of instruction in multilingual preschools and primary schools. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport should establish a system of tracking movement of data from source to reporting. Counts should be evaluated against relevant denominators. This would enable estimates on the reach of services into priority populations, and allow comparisons to be made so that equity issues can be examined. School cluster leaders and District Offices of Education should be equipped with tools for electronic data capture and standardized reporting.

Timeline: Immediate – by mid–2020

8. Develop partnerships between local and international universities.

A costed research and development plan should enable partnerships between education research centres locally and internationally. These should support evidence-based decision making about policies, strategies and learning assessment methods to fulfil ethnic minority children's rights to meaningful education and to share lessons learned with stakeholders in Cambodia and globally.

Timeline: Long-term – 2021–2023

1. Introduction

The Multilingual Education National Action Plan (MENAP) in Cambodia is an innovative approach by the Royal Government of Cambodia to promote ethnolinguistic minority children's inclusion in quality education. Children whose first language is an Indigenous or other ethnic minority language are often excluded from schooling because they cannot understand the language of instruction. These children and their parents often feel a lack of cultural safety when faced with going to a school where teachers are not members of their cultural community, do not speak their language, and there is no common language for reciprocal understanding. This situation is found in nearly every country in the world and contributes significantly to unacceptably high numbers of children who never enrol, are not supported to succeed in primary school, and who leave school before completing primary school.¹⁴ The MENAP is unprecedented in Southeast Asia for its specificity. It includes strategies, activities and tasks intended to strengthen capacity at national and sub-national levels for delivering multilingual education (MLE) in five Indigenous languages and Khmer, and to create or consolidate the mechanisms to scale up, manage and monitor MLE.

As the first phase of the MENAP (2015–2018) ended, an evaluation of how well it has been implemented and factors contributing to its outcomes was commissioned. The evaluation was conducted by an independent evaluation team contracted by UNICEF Cambodia on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS). The team comprised two international experts and nine (four female) Indigenous Cambodians. It was carried out from July 2018 to February 2019 in four north-eastern provinces of Cambodia (Kratie, Monduliri, Ratanakiri and Stung Treng – see Figure 1). This evaluation report has eight sections. Section 1 introduces the report. Section 2 provides the context and background to the evaluation. Section 3 presents the evaluation purpose, objectives and scope. Section 4 introduces the evaluation approach and methodology. Section 5 presents an analysis of the findings in terms of the evaluation criteria specified in the terms of reference (Annexes 1 & 2). Section 6 discusses the main evaluation conclusions and Section 7 discusses lessons learned. Section 8 offers recommendations based on the evaluation findings and conclusions. References and annexes with supplementary material are included in Volume 2.



An Indigenous girl learning to write in her mother tongue
© UNICEF Cambodia/2018/Jessica Ball

¹⁴ Ball, Jessica, 'Educational Equity for Children from Diverse Language Backgrounds: Mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education in the early years–Summary'. UNESCO, Paris, 2011.

2. Background and context analysis

The Kingdom of Cambodia has one of the youngest populations in Southeast Asia. Of a total population of 16 million in 2017, 31 per cent were aged 0–14 years, and 20 per cent were aged 15–24 years.¹⁵ A 2017 UNICEF situation analysis of children and women in Cambodia¹⁶ found significant progress in improving maternal health, early childhood development and primary education in rural areas. However, child mortality in Cambodia remains among the highest in Asia. Malnutrition is the underlying cause of 45 per cent of child deaths, and 32 per cent of children under 5 years are stunted.

Approximately 1.2 per cent of people in Cambodia are Indigenous, also known as Khmer Loe, belonging to an estimated 17 ethnic groups.¹⁷ About 5 per cent of the population is Vietnamese, and about 2 per cent is Cham.¹⁸ The Khmer ethnolinguistic population makes up most of the remaining population (roughly 90 per cent). The majority of the Indigenous population lives in the five provinces of north-eastern Cambodia: Ratanakiri, Mondulakiri, Stung Treng, Kratie and Preah Vihear. The populations of Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri are predominantly Indigenous. Previously a remote area of the country, infrastructure has improved in north-eastern Cambodia over the last two decades bringing many changes, including massive internal migration, changes in market relations, changes in traditional leadership, and the loss of large areas of forests, traditionally a critical source of livelihood for Indigenous people.

2.1 The education sector in Cambodia

Over the past three decades, the Royal Government of Cambodia has reconstructed its education system following years of political tumult. Most achievements have centred on the creation of a modern education delivery system at the national and sub-national level, from the central MoEYS level through to Provincial and District Offices of Education (POEs/DOEs), and to schools at pre, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels.¹⁹ Human resource development, including improvements in the quality of education, science, technology and technical training, is one of the four elements of the country's fourth Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency.²⁰

The government has prioritized expenditure on education. In 2017, the MoEYS budget was US\$ 590.46 million, representing 18.3 per cent of the national budget.²¹ This included Official Development Assistance for the education sector, which totalled approximately 20 per cent of the education budget (roughly US\$ 90 million).²² UNICEF is among the top three financial supporters.²³ In 2018, the proportion of Cambodia's gross domestic product spent on MoEYS was 3 per cent²⁴ based on the government budget (recurrent and capital). This did not include education delivered in other sectors such as health, agriculture, labour and others. Between 2015 and 2017, spanning the middle years of the MENAP, the education budget grew by 53 per cent in absolute value. The proportion of education spending allocated at both national and provincial levels also increased. The total national budget rose from 10.8 per cent to 12.3 per cent, while at the provincial level education as a share of the total

¹⁵ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 'World Population Prospects: 2017 revision, key findings and advance table', Working Paper 248, 2017.

¹⁶ UNICEF Cambodia, 'Updated Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Cambodia', 2017.

¹⁷ Cambodia. Ethnologue. www.ethnologue.com/country/kh

The largest indigenous groups are the Kreung, Tampuan, Brao, Jarai, Bunong, Kuy and Stieng.

¹⁸ Indxmundi, Cambodia Demographics Profile, 2014.

¹⁹ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (2010); Kelsall, Tim, Sothy Khieng, Chuong Chantha and Tieng Mui, 'The Political Economy of Primary Education Reform in Cambodia', 2016.

²⁰ Royal Government of Cambodia, Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency: Building the foundation toward realizing the Cambodia Vision 2050. Phase IV of the Royal Government of Cambodia of the Sixth Legislature of the National Assembly, Phnom Penh, September, 2018.

²¹ Budget Law 2007–2017 and Royal Government of Cambodia Circular on 2018 Budget Preparation.

²² Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee, Aid at a glance website. The average proportion of ODA in Cambodia allocated to the education sector in 2015–2016 was 9 per cent. Refer to: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/aid-at-a-glance.htm>

²³ Education Congress Report, 2017, p. 8.

²⁴ Royal Government of Cambodia, 'National Strategic Development Plan 2014–2018'.

provincial budget increased in all 25 provinces. Most of the increased education budget was absorbed through increases in personnel emolument (primary education salaries and other staff-related costs). An analysis by Save the Children and 11 other partners²⁵ found a significant link between prioritizing education in provincial budgets and good education outcomes. The report recommended that greater transparency and ability to study the impacts of interventions could be achieved if primary education, which takes up almost 80 per cent of costs, was disaggregated by programme and sub-programme, which is not the current practice.

Reconstruction of the education sector has been continuously and significantly supported by a reform-minded MoEYS, and by development partners. Strengthening education delivery systems requires strengthening the capacities of implementing partners at all levels, and capacity development has received increased attention over the past decade, as reflected in the MoEYS capacity development master plans.²⁶ Development partners have supported MoEYS to develop and implement a series of education strategic plans (ESPs), starting in 2001. The ESP 2014–2018²⁷ emphasized improved access to early childhood programmes, primary and secondary education for poor children, children in remote locations, and Indigenous children. This plan identifies bilingual education services as one of the special programmes for primary education. The National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) (2014–2018)²⁸ outlined “*measures to reduce the number children out of school, with a specific focus on children from Indigenous communities, children with disabilities, and children from poorer families, through targeted programmes*”.²⁹ A strategic framework for decentralization and deconcentration³⁰ aspires to greater capacity and resources at sub-national and local levels to improve education and accountability.

Recent policy and planning achievements of MoEYS include: Cambodia’s 2007 Constitution and Education Law confirming the right to basic education irrespective of gender, ethnicity or disability; five-year ESPs that have committed the Royal Government of Cambodia and development partners to a system of increasing accessibility, quality and efficiency; the Child-Friendly School Policy³¹ endorsed in 2007 that promulgates the idea that schools should be both child-centred and child-seeking, and that promises all children six dimensions of school that are inclusive, effective, healthy and safe, gender-responsive, community-involving, and child-friendly; the Policy on Education for Children with Disabilities 2008,³² and the MENAP.³³

Over the past decade, access to early childhood education has more than doubled, to approximately 300,000 children since 2012. More than half of preschool children are enrolled in state preschools with the other half enrolled in community preschools, home-based schooling or the private sector.³⁴ Net enrolment rates in primary school increased from 82 per cent in 1997 to 93.5 per cent in 2017, while primary school completion rates increased from 49 per cent in 2001 to 89 per cent in 2017.³⁵ Lower secondary completion rates were 42.7 per cent in 2017, significantly below average for lower middle-

²⁵ Save the Children, Education Budget Analysis, Policy Brief, 2017.

<https://campaigns.savethechildren.net/sites/campaigns.savethechildren.net/files/Education%20Budget%20analysis%20-policy%20brief%20Final.pdf>

²⁶ Van Gerwen, Frans, et al., ‘Outcome Evaluation of the Education Capacity Development Partnership Fund (CDPF): Phase 1 and 2: Final report – Volume 1’, MoEYS Directorate General of Policy and Planning and UNICEF Cambodia Country Office, Phnom Penh, 2018.

²⁷ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), ‘Education Strategic Plan 2014–2018’, MoEYS, Phnom Penh, 2014, p. 8.

²⁸ Royal Government of Cambodia, ‘National Strategic Development Plan 2014–2018’, 2014, p. 177.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 67.

³⁰ Royal Government of Cambodia, Strategic Framework for Decentralization and Deconcentration Reforms, 17 June, 2005. <https://therith.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/strategic-framework-for-decentralization-and-deconcentration-reforms-eng.pdf>

³¹ Cambodia was one of the first countries in the Asia Pacific region to introduce the child-friendly schools framework.

³² Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Policy on Education for Children with Disabilities, March, 2008.

³³ Shaeffer, Sheldon and Kreng Heng, ‘Joint Formative Evaluation of Child-Friendly School Policy Implementation in Cambodia’, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and UNICEF Cambodia Country Office, Phnom Penh, 2016.

³⁴ The Royal Government of Cambodia, ‘UNICEF Country Programme Action Plan 2016–2018’, 2015, pp. 8.

³⁵ UNICEF, Updated Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 2017.

income countries, such as Cambodia. The government is focusing on developing a qualified teaching workforce, recognizing the importance of in-service training and mentoring.³⁶ While the education system has expanded in size and improved in quality, serious deficiencies persist.³⁷ One of the recognized challenges is that remote locations do not attract qualified teachers. Indigenous children often live in these remote locations and lack access to meaningful education. In 2009,³⁸ some 71.8 per cent of Indigenous five-year-olds and 73.2 per cent of primary school-aged children were out of school. More Indigenous boys than girls were out of school. In 2015, preschool and lower primary education in Indigenous languages were seen as a possible solution, given early indications of the promise of this approach provided by a demonstration by CARE.³⁹

2.2 Languages in Cambodia

The number of Indigenous language speakers in Cambodia is small compared to the mainly Khmer-speaking population.

The MENAP (2015–2018) encompassed five Indigenous languages that have government-approved orthographies: Brao, Kavet, Kreung, Tampuan and Bunong. There are approximately 101,950 speakers of these languages in Cambodia, as shown in Table 1.

CARE⁴⁰ introduced MLE in the five⁴¹ north-eastern provinces approximately 15 years ago. The impetus was a general recognition that many Indigenous children had limited or no exposure to Khmer, which is the national language of instruction, and that language barriers were likely the major determinant of low enrolment, attendance, learning engagement and success.⁴² MLE was seen as an approach to increase access to and participation in quality education. In 2015, the MENAP was endorsed by MoEYS to support institutionalization of MLE as a strategy to improve inclusive education in Cambodia. It is unique in the Southeast Asian region and as such has garnered considerable international attention from policy decision makers, researchers and Indigenous organizations. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) (Sustainable Development Goals), particularly Goals 4.2.2 and 4.5.1,⁴³ as well as various government laws, provide a strong rights framework justifying the need for an intervention such as the MENAP. As reviewed in Annex 16, international research has documented the benefits of MLE for access, inclusion and effective education,⁴⁴ as well as for social cohesion and national development.⁴⁵

³⁶ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 'Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: Cambodia country study executive summary', March 5, 2015, pp.10.

³⁷ Kelsall, Tim, Sothy, Khieng, Choung, Chanthra and Tieng Muy, 'The Political Economy of Primary Education Reform in Cambodia', 2016.

³⁸ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 'Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: Cambodia country study executive summary', Phnom Penh, 2009, p.16. This is the most recent information available specifically about out-of-school Indigenous children.

³⁹ On 11 August 2018, the MENAP evaluation reference group decided it would refer specifically to Indigenous children and Indigenous languages in the evaluation, rather than to ethnic minority children or languages, as the inaugural MENAP applied only to the use of five Indigenous languages in the five north-eastern provinces.

⁴⁰ CARE is an international non-government organization providing crisis intervention and solutions to poverty around the world.

⁴¹ Preah Vihear has only introduced six MLE preschools to date.

⁴² Middelborg, Jorn, 'Highland Children's Education Project: A pilot project on bilingual education in Cambodia', Bangkok: UNESCO Bangkok, 2005.

⁴³ 4.2.2 refers to participation in at least one year of pre-primary education; 4.5.1 refers to parity of participation in education, including by Indigenous peoples.

⁴⁴ Cummins, Jim, *Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*, Multilingual Matters, vol. 23, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove, *Linguistic Genocide in Education—or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights?* Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, N.J., 2012.

⁴⁵ Coleman, Hywel (ed.), *Language and Social Cohesion in the Developing World*, British Council and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) H. Pinnock et al., 2015.

2.3 The Multilingual Education National Action Plan in Cambodia

MoEYS launched the MENAP (2015–2018) with the support of UNICEF and CARE. It was based on the following legislation, conventions, declarations and policies: (i) Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 2, 20, 29 and 30); (ii) United Nations Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; (iii) Dakar Education Declaration (2000); (iv) Cambodia's Constitution (Article 66); (v) Cambodia's Education Law (Article 24); (vi) National Policy for Ethnic Minorities Development (2008); (vii) Education for all Education Action Plan; (viii) National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development (2010); (ix) ESP 2014–2018; (x) Prakas No. 48, 2013, Identification of Language for Learners of Khmer Nationality and Ethnic Minority Origin.

The MENAP had four objectives:

1. Ensure ethnic minority girls and boys have inclusive access to quality and relevant education
2. Build the capacity of national and sub-national education officials to manage and monitor MLE implementation
3. Scale up MLE provision in relevant provinces
4. Promote demand for quality MLE among school support committees, parents and local authorities.⁴⁶

The MENAP described six main strategies to support institutionalization of MLE:

1. Capacity building, in particular for teachers, and teacher training
2. Provide teaching-learning materials
3. Coordination, data and information, monitoring and evaluation
4. Expansion of MLE delivery
5. Infrastructure and resourcing (ensure sufficiency)
6. Conversion of community schools to state schools.

The MENAP identified common issues to be addressed, including mapping and measuring Indigenous children's participation in school, quality improvement of schools, building community awareness and capacity for community involvement, training teachers to work in MLE schools, and monitoring quality implementation of the MLE programme. The MENAP included outcome targets for preschools and primary schools to be achieved by 2018.⁴⁷ No theory of change or theory of action was explicit in the MENAP. UNICEF Cambodia tasked the evaluation team with constructing these retrospectively, after a desk review was done and data was collected (see Section 5 and Annex 18).

Table 1. Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGID)⁴⁸ Level and estimated speakers* of languages in Cambodia

Languages used in MLE primary schools		
Language	EGID level	# Speakers nationally
Kavet	6b - Threatened	6,220
Brao	5 - Developing	9,030
Krung	6b - Threatened	20,700
Tampuan	6a - Vigorous	31,000
Bunong	5 - Developing	35,000
Other languages not currently used in education		
Kaco'	6b - Threatened	3,370
Kraol	6a - Vigorous	4,200

⁴⁶ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Multilingual Education National Action Plan (MENAP) 2015–2018, MoEYS, Phnom Penh, 2015, p. 7.

⁴⁷ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Multilingual Education National Action Plan (MENAP) 2015–2018, MoEYS, Phnom Penh, 2015, pp. 11–13.

⁴⁸ EGID is an international tool used to measure the status of a language in terms of endangerment or development.

Stieng	6b - Threatened	6,540
Kuay	7 - Shifting	10,000
Lao	6b - Threatened	18,500
Jarai**	5 - Developing	20,800
Cham	6a - Vigorous	204,000
Chinese, Hakka	6a - Vigorous	350,000

*Number of speakers in the country as a whole; ** Approved in 2018 for use in MLE

Key:

<p>5 – Developing: The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some, though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.</p> <p>6a – Vigorous: The language is used for face-to-face communication by all generations and the situation is sustainable.</p>	<p>6b – Threatened: The language is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users.</p> <p>7 – Shifting: The child-bearing generation can use the language among themselves, but it is not being transmitted to children.</p>
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Source: <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/KH/languages>

Implementation of the current MENAP has been documented to some extent in MoEYS Education Congress reports,⁴⁹ UNICEF annual reports and donor reports.⁵⁰ No information was provided to the evaluation team about whether there was a dedicated Programme Budget or portion of the primary school or early childhood education budget for the MENAP at its inception. The Special Education Department (SED), established within MoEYS in 2016 to implement the MENAP, reported that in 2018 only, it was given US\$ 20,988 (655,500,000 riels) specifically to conduct MLE teacher training Ratanakiri and Mondulhiri. Funding for the many other strategies and activities identified in the MENAP has come from development partners, mainly UNICEF and CARE (see Section 5 and Annex 8).

2.4 Multilingual Education National Action Plan timeline

The MENAP was implemented over a four-year period from 2015 to 2018. The MoEYS Primary Education Department (PED) and the Early Childhood Education Department (ECED) implemented the MENAP from 2015 to 2016, with significant technical and financial contributions from UNICEF and CARE.

Linguists at International Cooperation Cambodia (ICC), in collaboration with SIL⁵¹ and the Evangelical Mission to the Unreached,⁵² developed Indigenous language orthographies over many years, prior to the MENAP. MoEYS, with support from CARE, approved orthographies in five Indigenous languages covered by the MENAP.⁵³ With extensive consultation from Indigenous people in communities in the five provinces, CARE produced training modules for MLE primary school teachers and MLE community preschool teachers, and curricula for MLE in Grades 1, 2 and 3. CARE trained members of the PED and ECED within MoEYS to conduct MLE teacher training and preschool teacher training using the MLE teacher training curricula. Under the MENAP, CARE trained core teacher trainers in POEs. The

⁴⁹ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, The Education Congress: The Education Youth and Sport Performance in the Academic Year 2013–2014 and Goals for Academic Year 2014–2015, March, 2015; Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, The Education Congress: The Education Youth and Sport Performance in the Academic Year 2014–2015 and Goals for Academic Year 2015–2016, March, 2016; Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, The Education Congress: The Education Youth and Sport Performance in the Academic Year 2015–2016 and Goals for Academic Year 2016–2017, March, 2017; Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, The Education Congress: The Education Youth and Sport Performance in the Academic Year 2017–2018 and Goals for Academic Year 2017–2018, March, 2018.

⁵⁰ UNICEF Cambodia, Terms of Reference: Individual consultancy for evaluation of Cambodia Multilingual Education National Action Plan, 2018.

⁵¹ Formerly known as Summer Institute of Linguistics, now simply known by the acronym SIL.

⁵² The Evangelical Mission to the Unreached particularly worked on the orthography for Tampuan.

⁵³ Brao, Kavet, Kreung, Tampuan and Bunong.

PED and ECED trainers and POE core trainers used the CARE package to provide MLE training in cascade form to MLE primary and MLE community preschool teachers.

In late 2016, a new Special Education Department (SED) was formed within MoEYS. SED became the lead department for implementation of the MENAP, in conjunction with POEs in four provinces: Ratanakiri, Kratie, Mondulkiri and Stung Treng. When SED became responsible for teacher training, the PED and ECED withdrew from MLE teacher training and monitoring.

The MENAP has raised the profile of Cambodia throughout the region, as the government has acted to implement an innovative approach to education. Evidence confirms that this approach fulfils child rights and advances the Sustainable Development Goals.

Three decades of research evidence and practice-based experience with MLE around the world have shown that MLE can fulfil the rights of ethnolinguistic minority children to be included in quality education that is meaningful to them, and increase these children's school enrolment and academic success.⁵⁴ MLE can promote children's readiness to participate in society as ambassadors of their culture, keepers of first languages, which are often endangered, and contributors to mainstream economies.⁵⁵ A more comprehensive review of international evidence about MLE is provided in Annex 16.

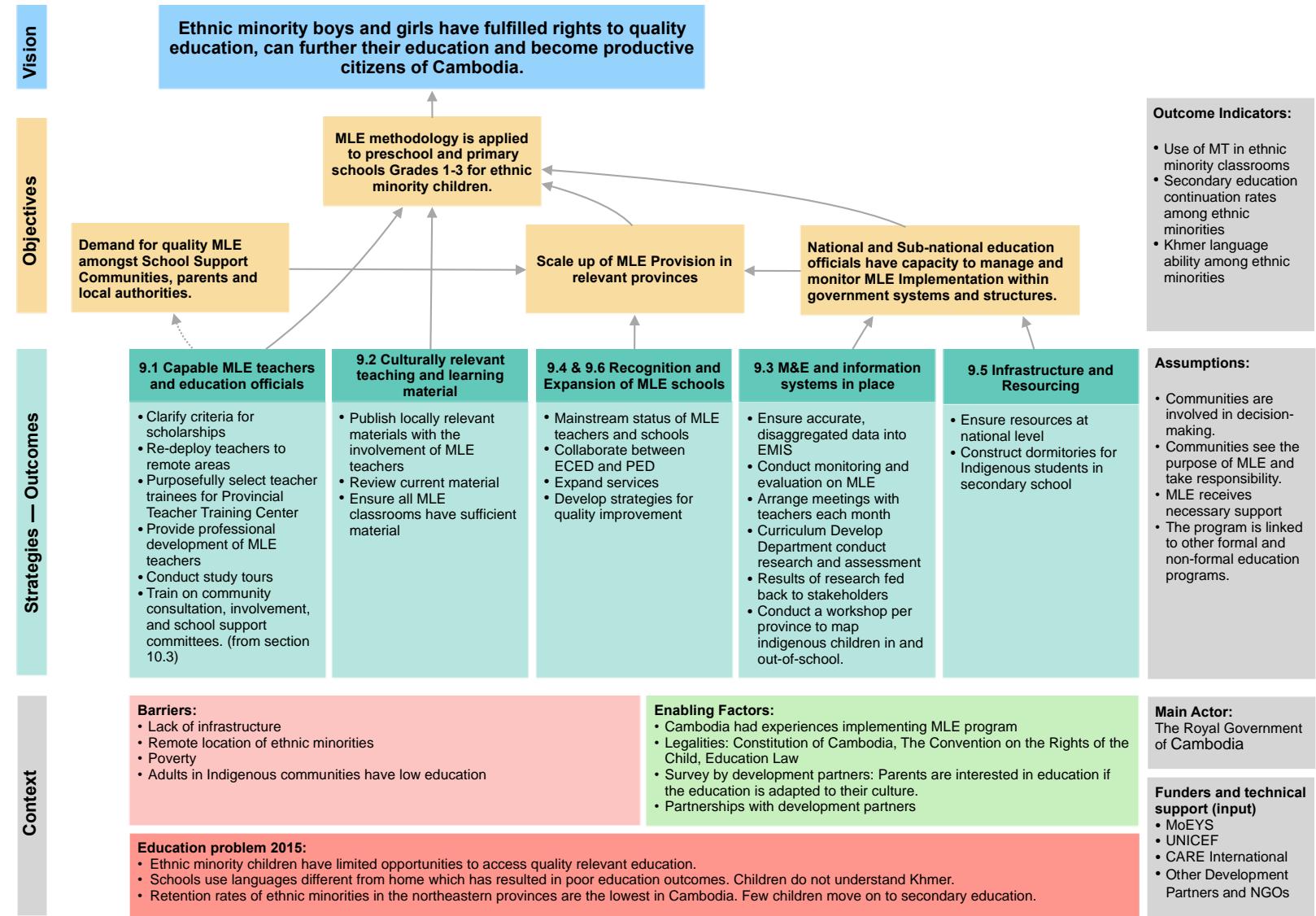
2.5 Reconstructed theory of change

The MENAP (2015–2018) document was analysed to evaluate the consistency of activities and strategies with overall objectives, intended impacts and effects. This was also to deduce its logic and retrospectively construct a theory of change, shown in Figure 2.

⁵⁴ Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove, 'Language Rights and Revitalization', 2018, in Hinton, Leanne, Leena Huss and Gerald Roche (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization*, Routledge, pp. 13-21.

⁵⁵ Phillipson, Robert and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, 'Linguistic Imperialism and the Consequences for Language Ecology', 2018, in Penz, Hermine and Alwin Fill (eds.), *Handbook of Ecolinguistics*, New York: Routledge, pp. 121-134.

Figure 2. Reconstructed theory of change deduced from the MENAP 2015–2018



At the beginning of the MENAP, key actors agreed on the educational problem pertaining to Indigenous children (red box). The vision (top blue box) is appropriately formulated to address the education problem (bottom red box). Key actors agreed on a set of strategies and outcomes (turquoise boxes) in order for Indigenous children to access MLE preschools and primary schools and to fulfil their right to quality education. As it is a national plan, the main actor is the Royal Government of Cambodia, while acknowledging financial and technical support from development partners (vertical grey boxes).

Between 2015 and 2018, there were significant gains in the objectives (orange boxes) of scaling up MLE in relevant provinces and applying MLE pedagogy in preschools and primary schools for ethnic minority children. These two objectives were supported by two other objectives: community demand for MLE and, to a lesser extent, increased capacity of national and sub-national officials to manage and monitor MLE provision. Increased capacity of officials was recognized at the outset as a key support to anchoring MLE in the government system of education and the provision of the MLE pedagogy.

The most conspicuous gaps in the MENAP, and therefore in the reconstruction of the theory of change, are the numerous outcomes necessary for the larger intermediate outcomes to be realized. For example, there was no identification of ways to synchronize the MENAP with concurrent and future policy and legislative developments, orthography development, and research to create measurement tools for assessing learning in MLE. Existing and potential relationships among actors needed to fulfil the vision were not described. Nevertheless, enabling tools and conditions have been created, including MLE-supportive Prakas, campaigns to encourage parents to enrol children and become involved in education, and orthography development and approval. Encouraging the government to take over as the primary implementer and building MLE teaching capacity was not mentioned. More intentional leadership and coordination by MoEYS on these developments would have given a clearer indication of government commitment to the vision of the MENAP.

Considering the severity of the education problem (red box), the prioritization of government resourcing to sub-national levels is not explicit in the MENAP. Among the enabling factors (light green boxes), development partners and their experience with MLE is a strength that was capitalized on during implementation, especially for building teaching capacity. Other roles and resources of development partners were not identified and are not visible in the reconstructed theory of change. Historical roles of development partners in advocacy and multi-stakeholder coordination were overlooked. These assumptions mainly focused on community involvement, however, few of the strategies brought community involvement into focus, even though this was identified as one of the four objectives. The only community engagement mentioned was not in the MENAP section on strategies but rather in Section 10, enumerating common issues to be addressed. Although lack of infrastructure was recognized as a barrier (pink box), few strategies aimed to strengthen infrastructure and resourcing, especially considering the awareness of the remote locations and other challenges mentioned as barriers for Indigenous children to access education. Costing was not articulated in the MENAP. The MENAP identified assumptions which indicate potential risks (vertical grey box).

Looking at the theory of change, the education problem, barriers and enabling factors, combined with the resources and assumptions, lead up through the programme's strategies (i.e. providing teacher training or monitoring of student achievement). This in turn creates an increase in demand for quality MLE, the possibility for scale-up, and greater capacity at all levels. By achieving these interim objectives, the MENAP can work towards achieving its overall vision of fulfilling the rights of Indigenous girls and boys throughout Cambodia, allowing them to gain a better education and become productive citizens.

2.6 Stakeholder mapping/network analysis

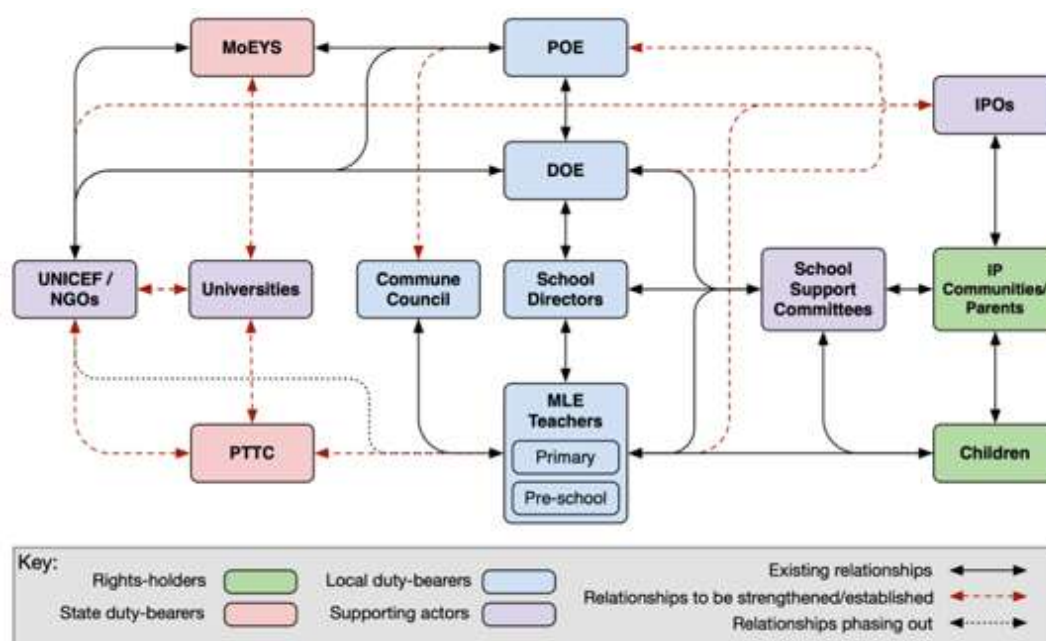
A stakeholder analysis was done based on in-country data collection. This identified key actors and their current and potential inter-relationships. Figure 3 shows an interpretation of the inter-relationships between key stakeholders in an effort to deepen the understanding of the roles of primary rights holders, duty bearers and other contributors to implementing the components of MLE best practice (illustrated

later in Figure 5). On the far right of the diagram are children as rights holders, primary beneficiaries and key actors in education. In the evaluation, children described the benefits of having access to MLE and asked to act as ambassadors of MLE beyond their local school and village. Closest to the children are the children's parents, local authorities and school support committees who expressed awareness of their rights to preserve their culture and to access meaningful education. Indigenous girls and boys and their parents expressed a desire to be invited into more active roles in MENAP implementation, such as curriculum review and revision, advocacy for MLE, and extension of MLE to higher grades.

Figure 3 shows supporting organizations and civil society actors who have key roles in implementation. Closest to the rights holders are the school support committees and Indigenous peoples' organizations. Indigenous peoples' organizations have not yet been recognized as having a role in formal education, but have demonstrated a growing interest. Future roles of these organizations that would benefit MENAP relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, include mobilization and accountability activities at local, provincial and national level, contributions to curriculum review and revision, and motivating MLE teachers.

Khmer children and their families: Although not a focus of the current evaluation, testimonials in villages where Khmer children attend MLE preschools and primary schools suggest that Khmer children are achieving in MLE primary schools. They are important actors as primary rights holders and potential beneficiaries of opportunities to become bilingual and bicultural through formal education. Involvement of Khmer children and families in MLE can have a significant effect on social harmony in villages and the nation as a whole. Khmer community members have participated in school support committees and Khmer families have a role to play in recognizing equitable, relevant, and effective education for all children in a village.

Local duty bearers at school level: Closest to the rights holders are MLE preschool and primary school teachers. Preschool teachers play a crucial role in attracting Indigenous children to education and providing a first experience of schooling in a language they understand. Primary school teachers uniformly demanded updated and expanded cultural content of curricula and an extension of the number of years that mother tongue is used as a language of instruction. As a cadre they can contribute to expanded and updated MLE curriculum and teaching and learning resources to achieve the target of quality in education for ethnic minority children. Primary school teachers can respond to children's needs, ensure their voices are heard at other levels of the education system, and communicate challenges and opportunities to community members. They can share effective practices with other MLE teachers, extending the reach of innovative practices to other communities. School directors play a pivotal role as primarily liaisons with parents, teachers and local and provincial authorities. They can provide the government with accurate data and share findings on enabling factors, barriers, bottlenecks and innovative practices to improve the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of MLE.

Figure 3. Stakeholder mapping/network analysis for the MENAP

Local duty bearers within provinces: DOEs offered administrative support to MLE schools, while POEs need to engage Indigenous core trainers with Indigenous language proficiency. If Indigenous core trainers with Indigenous literacy skills are recruited, they can provide significant support for students' cultural and linguistic needs as well as the means and authority to test learners in MLE in their Indigenous language. DOEs play a pivotal role in MENAP implementation, with the authority to request, manage and close MLE schools, monitor enrolments and promotions, and gather data that reflect achievements. POEs have taken crucial steps to include Indigenous community teachers on the government payroll. An important role of POEs for a future MENAP is to engage with local Indigenous peoples' organizations and language networks to more effectively mobilize their support for MLE. This could be done through advocacy, community liaison, teacher support and expanded curriculum materials. Although not part of the education system, commune councils collaborate closely with communities and express strong support for MLE in preschools and primary schools, and support for education in general. They perform an on-going role in encouraging school enrolment, advocating for MLE, and monitoring to ensure its effectiveness. Commune leaders can also contribute to mapping, including mapping Indigenous language speakers, out-of-school children, birth rates affecting demand for preschool and primary school, and in-migration.

Regional duty bearers (provincial teacher training colleges (PTTCs)): The PTTC in Stung Treng expressed strong interest in delivering MLE teacher training to the large number of Indigenous trainees who go through the course every year. These Indigenous trainees can become MLE teachers, which increases efficiency and sustainability. Prior to the MENAP, PTTCs were involved in a 'fast-track training' initiative implemented by CARE, which resulted in over 30 Indigenous teachers being trained in MLE. The 30-day MLE training module created by CARE for this purpose has not been used.

National-level duty bearer (MoEYS): Administrative, reporting and legislative functions have been the focus of the MoEYS contribution to date. Some of the main roles needed in the future are advocating for sufficient Programme Budget to expand and improve the quality of MLE, coordinating efforts for curriculum improvements, monitoring and resource development with ECED and PED, and leading efforts to harness the resources and capacities of local non-government organizations (NGOs) that have provided non-formal education for over two decades. SED needs to ensure ethnic minority children's inclusion in relevant, quality education with demonstrated internal capacity for leadership in curriculum review, training, monitoring and support for meaningful Indigenous community engagement.

MENAP supporting partners: Cambodian universities and research councils have not yet been part of the MENAP or the provision of MLE. For a future MENAP, these institutions could be engaged in research to support MLE, for example: (1) helping to develop sound learning assessment tools in Indigenous languages; (2) collaborating with international scholars on the design and conduct of methodologically rigorous studies of innovative practices and longitudinal student outcomes; and (3) consolidating learning from the achievements of MLE / MENAP to share knowledge across regions. Other government institutions, such as the Education Research Council and the Royal Academy of Cambodia may also play roles, especially in regard to MLE support, orthography development, and approval.

Development partners: UNICEF Cambodia and CARE, with support from several key donors, have demonstrated their roles in laying the groundwork for the MENAP and implementing MLE in preschools and primary schools. There is abundant evidence of their crucial roles in leadership, funding and technical expertise, drawing on in-country and international experience. Development partners have created delivery systems and built capacity for a gradual transition to the government being responsible for MLE and other targets of the MENAP.

2.7 How MLE affects children's learning

A large body of research⁵⁶ about language acquisition in childhood has drawn several conclusions. Children's first language is the most effective language of learning. Children are able to learn more than one language and learn in more than one language concurrently.⁵⁷ Children have a natural, multilingual capacity. Multilingual learning does not 'take up more space' in a child's brain. Being in multilingual environments does not 'confuse' children.⁵⁸ Multilingual learning in childhood has cognitive benefits. Multilingual learning throughout primary school produces metalinguistic skills that make it easier for older children to learn and become literate in additional languages. However, the cognitive and academic benefits of MLE may not be realized if children are forced to transition too soon to a new main language of instruction. Evidence indicates that 'too soon' is the end of lower primary school or earlier. Hence this is referred to as an 'early exit' or 'short cut' model.⁵⁹

2.7.1 Important distinctions between fluency and proficiency

Researchers have established a distinction between being able to use a language in everyday conversation (sometimes called 'fluency') and being able to use a language for abstract thinking, academic learning and producing new ideas (often called 'proficiency'). Just because one can speak a language does not mean one is literate in the language. Literacy is a special skill that requires study and not only (as many educators in Cambodia expressed) living in a village where the language is spoken. Being able to read a written text in a language ('reading') is distinct from being able to read in

⁵⁶ Ball, Jessica, 'Educational Equity for Children from Diverse Language Backgrounds: Mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education in the early years—Summary', UNESCO, Paris, 2011.

⁵⁷ This synopsis refers to children who are neurotypical, that is, they are fully equipped biologically for optimal growth and development according to typical age norms. Although research is sparse, studies have shown that children with various kinds of developmental delays and disorders are also able to learn more than one language, though this process is likely to be slower and to lead ultimately to lower levels of proficiency depending on the nature of their atypicality. Children who have diverse abilities should not automatically be excluded from MLE programmes. However, they may need more time, and their learning should be assessed (and encouraged) bearing in mind their special learning challenges.

⁵⁸ Beller, Simone, 'Fostering Language Acquisition in Daycare Settings: What does the research tell us?' Working Papers in Early Childhood Development, No. 49, Bernard van Leer Foundation, PO Box 82334, 2508 EH, The Hague, The Netherlands, 2008.

⁵⁹ Benson, Carol, 'The Importance of Mother Tongue-Based Schooling for Educational Quality', Paper commissioned for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2005: The Quality Imperative. UNESCO, 2004.

order to learn new knowledge from written text, which is generally considered ‘literacy’ or ‘cognitive-academic language proficiency’ (CALP).⁶⁰

2.7.2 Requirements for effective use of more than one language in education

Longitudinal studies have shown that even though most young children can converse in at least one language, becoming *fully proficient* in any language takes a long time.⁶¹ Several conclusions from research are relevant to the current evaluation. Although children can learn more than one language, whether they develop more than conversational fluency about everyday events in a language depends on increasingly advanced learning opportunities in that language. Proficiency in a language as a medium for learning (CALP) takes about six years of formal education, that is, **all of primary school**.⁶² Early learning in one language does not guarantee continued development of proficiency in that language or even retention of the language over time. Languages can be acquired, retained or forgotten over one’s lifespan. The loss of a language because it is replaced by learning another language is called ‘subtractive bilingualism’.⁶³ Continuous opportunities to interact with fully proficient speakers of a language are the most important input into becoming proficient in that language.

2.7.3 What MLE can contribute to education outcomes

Research evidence confirms the effectiveness of MLE⁶⁴ when it is done well. MLE can offer a welcoming environment for young children and their families who speak a non-dominant language. It can show children and parents that their language is a legitimate language of learning and reinforce children’s confidence that their communication skills and culturally based knowledge are normative and worthy, building their self-efficacy as capable learners. In addition to increasing enrolment, attendance and learning engagement, it can promote oral language skills in the mother tongue. These are the foundation of literacy in the mother tongue. MLE can also interest parents and local school supporters in formal education. Because MLE involves instruction in more than one language, it exposes children to the language of instruction in higher levels of education, thereby supporting their transition. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in MLE can acquire the many known benefits of becoming bilingual and potentially bi-literate, enhancing their cognitive development and social skills as well as their skills for participating in civil society.

2.7.4 Key lessons learned from research about MLE

MLE is not immersion in the mother tongue only: there is always some teaching and learning in at least one other language, usually a national language.⁶⁵ Ideally, MLE is the beginning of a child’s journey through education delivered primarily in their mother tongue with the study of additional language(s) until they are literate (reading to learn) at the end of primary school.⁶⁶ MLE is most effective when the curriculum incorporates culturally based knowledge and skills relating to identity, local ecology and

⁶⁰ Cummins, Jim, ‘BICS and CALP: Empirical and Theoretical Status of the Distinction’, *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (2nd Ed.), vol. 2, Springer Science and Business Media LLC, New York, 2008, pp. 71-83.

⁶¹ Lightbown, Patsy, ‘Easy as Pie? Children learning languages’, *Concordia Working Papers in Applied Linguistics* vol. 1, 2008, pp. 5-29.

⁶² Collier, V., ‘How Long? A Synthesis of Research on Academic Achievement in a Second Language’, 1987, *TESOL Quarterly*, 23; Cummins, J., *Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*, 2000.

⁶³ Cummins, Jim, ‘The Acquisition of English as a Second Language’, *Reading Instruction for ESL Students*, International Reading Association, Delaware, 1994.

⁶⁴ Ball, Jessica, ‘Educational Equity for Children from Diverse Language Backgrounds: Mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education in the early years—Summary’, UNESCO, Paris, 2011; Thomas, Wayne P. and Collier, Virginia P., *Why Dual Language Schooling*, Albuquerque, NM: Fuente Press 2017.

⁶⁵ UNESCO, MTB MLE Resource Kit – Including the Excluded: Promoting Multilingual Education. UNESCO Bangkok 2016.

⁶⁶ Cummins, Jim, ‘BICS and CALP: Empirical and Theoretical Status of the Distinction’, *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (2nd Ed.), vol. 2, Springer Science and Business Media LLC, New York, 2008, pp. 71-83.

livelihoods, and when teaching activities involve community members.⁶⁷ MLE can be a catalyst for change in education and social policies aimed at social inclusion and equity.⁶⁸ Attention must be paid to the situations that children will face when they transition to school, and from one level of schooling to another, and MLE must be designed accordingly. One approach does not fit all communities, provinces or countries.⁶⁹



Indigenous children illustrate changes brought about by MLE. ©UNICEF Cambodia/2018/Jessica Ball



A girl signs a consent form to participate in the evaluation of MLE. ©UNICEF Cambodia/2018/Jessica Ball

To achieve quality, MLE requires significant initial investment in research, development and human resource capacity building. Training must be developed and delivered to education officials at all levels, as well as to teachers and local language speakers. Teaching and learning materials in the mother tongue(s) that reflect the culture and local learning needs of specific language communities must be produced.⁷⁰ Parents and local policy makers must be socialized to understand and support MLE as a process that can serve children and communities well. Local community engagement brokers must be mobilized to liaise between communities and education decision makers.⁷¹ Compromises are likely to be needed to establish local consensus on one variety of a particular language to be used for the programme, and in linguistically diverse communities, to select one or two predominant languages to start with, adding more as the capacity of the education delivery system strengthens.⁷² Continuous systems-level work is needed to change attitudes and introduce MLE in teacher training colleges, to encompass local languages in learner assessment tools and administrative data, and to convince policy makers of the importance of supporting MLE. This will close equity gaps for Indigenous and other

⁶⁷ Ball, Jessica, 'Educational Equity for Children from Diverse Language Backgrounds: Mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education in the early years—Summary', UNESCO, Paris, 2011; Cummins, Jim, 'Negotiating Identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society', California Association for Bilingual Education, 1986.

⁶⁸ Coleman, Hywel (ed.) 'Language and Social Cohesion in the Developing World', Colombo: British Council and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, 2015.

⁶⁹ Ball, Jessica, 'Educational Equity for Children from Diverse Language Backgrounds: Mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education in the early years—Summary', UNESCO, Paris, 2011.

⁷⁰ Cummins, Jim, 'Bilingual Education and Special Education: Issues in assessment and pedagogy', San Diego: College Hill, 1984.

⁷¹ Malone, Susan E., 'Planning Mother Tongue-Based Education Programmes in Minority Language Communities', SIL International, 2010.

⁷² Metila, Romylyn A., Lea Pradilla and Alan B Williams, 2016, 'The Challenge of Implementing Mother Tongue Education in Linguistically Diverse Contexts: The case of the Philippines', *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 25 (5-6), 781-789.

ethnolinguistic minority children and families, reduce conflict, increase social cohesion, honour international agreements and develop the economy.⁷³

3. Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope

3.1 Purpose and use of evaluation findings

3.1.1 Evaluation purpose

The main purpose of this evaluation was to measure the extent to which the MENAP (2015–2018) had been implemented and how effectively it had strengthened the quality of MLE in the four provinces (*summative*). The evaluation also aimed to identify lessons learned, good practices and innovations to help MoEYS and UNICEF plan for improvements to inclusive education in Cambodia (*formative*).

The evaluation investigated enabling factors, bottlenecks and barriers affecting implementation, taking into consideration multiple viewpoints and experiences described by various stakeholders (from children to government representatives) in diverse contexts (from government offices to classrooms). The evaluation also reconstructed a theory of change for the MENAP.

3.1.2 Key uses and users of the evaluation

As the period of the first MENAP ended in December 2018, MoEYS and UNICEF agreed that an evaluation was timely to inform the strategic direction of a new MENAP for 2019–2023 (MENAP 2, tentative working title), and a new ESP (2019–2023). Users of the evaluation are primary duty bearers including MoEYS (SED, PED, ECED, Curriculum Development Department, Planning and Policy Department, Teacher Training Department), PTTCs, POEs and DOEs, UNICEF Cambodia (notably the Education section), UNICEF Regional Office for East Asia and the Pacific (EAPRO) and UNICEF Headquarters (programme division). The evaluation is also relevant to primary rights holders, such as children, parents, school support committees, local authorities and Indigenous peoples' organizations. UNICEF Cambodia will disseminate key findings to primary rights holders in plain language. Other users are development partners supporting the fulfilment of child rights, in collaboration with rights holders and duty bearers, including CARE and others. By identifying key factors enabling or hindering success, as well as promising practices, the evaluation will foster learning about MLE across UNICEF and others, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Asia Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group, whose members include SIL, CARE, UNICEF and others.

3.2 Objectives

This evaluation had four objectives:

1. Assess the extent to which the MENAP has met its specific objectives (including the identification of enabling factors, barriers and bottlenecks)
2. Review and validate the strategies and activities implemented to strengthen MLE as part of MENAP 2015–2018, and re-construct the theory of change
3. Assess support provided by national and sub-national authorities to implement the MENAP, including support provided by UNICEF and other implementing partners
4. Document lessons learned, good practices and innovations that can inform the development of a new five-year MENAP.

3.3 Scope

The evaluation was retrospective, covering the four-year period from 2015 to 2018.⁷⁴ It was also forward-looking in providing lessons learned and recommendations. The evaluation assessed the

⁷³ Cummins, Jim, *Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2000; Lo Bianco, Jo, 'Scaling up: Expanding bilingual education', Bangkok: UNICEF, 2016.

⁷⁴ Terms of reference, p. 1.

quality and contribution of the MENAP to inclusive access to quality and relevant education of Indigenous girls and boys and its likely sustainability. The key criteria for assessment were those used by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development / Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC),⁷⁵ namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The evaluation also incorporated equity, gender equality⁷⁶ and human rights considerations as cross-cutting issues (see Evaluation Matrix, Annex 10).

The evaluation assessed the extent and nature of implementation activities and factors that contributed to or inhibited implementation of the MENAP and achievement of targets. The evaluation was not intended as part of the design process for a subsequent MENAP, which the evaluators understand may be undertaken in 2019. The evaluation was not intended to investigate cause and effect relationships in regard to measuring which interventions in which contexts have had what kinds of effects. The evaluation did not have access to education data about populations of children that might enable useful comparative analyses of impact and effectiveness, such as Indigenous children out of school in the four provinces, demographic profiles of children in the villages visited, or progress of Khmer compared to Indigenous children in MLE and non-MLE schools. The evaluation did not intend to assess learning outcomes of children in MLE schools as a measure of effectiveness.

Geographically the evaluation covered four of the five provinces where the MENAP had been introduced for at least one year: Mondulkiri, Ratanakiri, Stung Treng and Kratie. A fifth province where the MENAP applies, the POE in Preah Vihear, had not developed a comprehensive strategy for implementing the MENAP, although it had introduced six MLE preschools. Community visits were conducted in 14 districts in four provinces, including four districts in Mondulkiri, five districts in Ratanakiri, three districts in Kratie, and two districts in Stung Treng (Annex 7). Non-MLE schools were included in sampling for comparison purposes.



Participants identify outcomes of the MENAP in a multi-stakeholder 'discovery workshop' in Phnom Penh.

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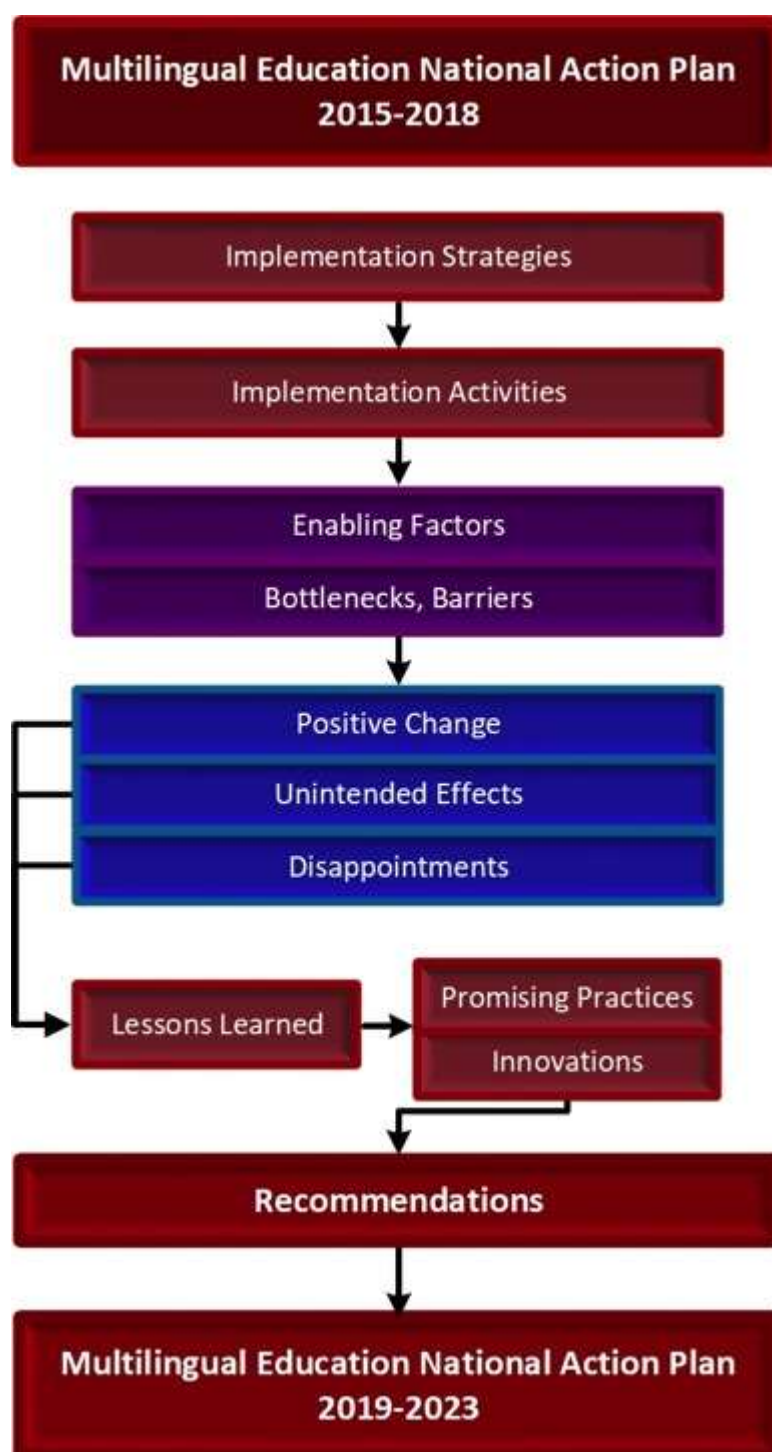
A community member explains her focus group's views of outcomes of the MENAP.

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⁷⁵ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>.

⁷⁶ Gender equality was not specifically identified as a target in the MENAP but is a value on the part of the commissioning organization, UNICEF, for this evaluation.

Figure 4. Elements of the change process assessed in evaluating the MENAP



4. Evaluation approach and methodology

4.1 Approach

A non-experimental, mixed methodology with an iterative-inductive approach was used to obtain quantitative and qualitative data and to gather different perspectives on the MENAP (2015–2018) from primary rights holders and duty bearers at national and sub-national levels. The method used was human rights- and child rights-based⁷⁷ and was equity and gender sensitive. Data collection drew out the perspectives of rights holders and duty bearers using methods appropriate to the particular stakeholders, including visual and play-based methods with children (see Evaluation Matrix, Annex 10). Data analysis triangulated perspectives of rights holders, primary and secondary duty bearers, development partners, and information gleaned from secondary data and document review.

The evaluation approach took into consideration previous investigations of MLE and schooling in Cambodia, both in terms of findings and the methods that have been successfully used to gather multi-stakeholder perspectives in the Cambodian context. These included, for example, the Formative Evaluation of Child-Friendly Schools (2016),⁷⁸ the Outcome Evaluation of the Education Capacity Development Partnership Fund Phase I and II (2018),⁷⁹ regional studies on out-of-school children,⁸⁰ and studies of outcomes of MLE by international researchers.

The evaluation complied with the rationale, objectives, scope of work and general approach outlined by UNICEF in the terms of reference (Annex 1 and 2). Methodological rigour and ethical conduct were priorities throughout the evaluation. The design, conduct and report of the evaluation were guided by UNICEF's revised Evaluation Policy (2018),⁸¹ the Evaluation Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (2016),⁸² UN SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator, UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards and Research, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis (2015)⁸³ and UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Report Standards (2017).⁸⁴

4.1.1 Indigenous research ethics and methods

The evaluation prioritized Indigenous participation on the data collection team and as respondents in focus group discussions (FGDs) and discovery workshops, as the primary beneficiaries of the MENAP are Indigenous children. Indigenous research ethics calls for Indigenous involvement in matters that affect Indigenous children and families.^{85,86} The evaluators engaged a team of nine (four female / 44 per cent) Indigenous Cambodians to assist with data collection (Annex 3 profiles evaluation team

⁷⁷ Graham, Ann, et al., 'Ethical Research Involving Children', Florence: UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, 2013.

⁷⁸ Shaeffer, Sheldon and Heng, K., 'Joint Formative Evaluation of Child-Friendly School Policy Implementation in Cambodia: Final report', Phnom Penh: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and UNICEF Cambodia Country Office, 2016.

⁷⁹ Van Gerwen, Frans, et al., 'Outcome Evaluation of the Education Capacity Development Partnership Fund (CDPF): Phase 1 and 2: Final report – Volume 1', Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport Directorate General of Policy and Planning and UNICEF Cambodia Country Office, Phnom Penh, 2018.

⁸⁰ UNESCO, 'Situational Analysis of Out-of-School Children in Nine Southeast Asian Countries', UNESCO Bangkok Office, Paris, 2017.

⁸¹ UNICEF's revised Evaluation Policy: https://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/2018-14-Revised_Eval-ODS-EN.pdf.

⁸² United Nations Evaluation Group, 'Norms and Standards for Evaluation', UNEG, New York, 2016. <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>.

⁸³ https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV-UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.PDF.

⁸⁴

https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/UNICEF_adapted_reporting_standards_updated_June_2017_FINAL.pdf.

⁸⁵ Ball, Jessica, 'Nothing About Us Without Us: Restorative research partnerships involving Indigenous children and communities', Ethical research with children, Open University Press/McGraw Hill Education, Berkshire, UK, 2015.

⁸⁶ To be considered an 'Indigenous evaluation' would require that Indigenous people either initiated the evaluation or were involved as partners with UNICEF and MoEYS from the outset, including developing the terms of reference.

members). All had experience in non-formal Indigenous language and literacy education and/or participatory data collection from previous projects. Together, the team was proficient in the languages used in the communities where data were collected.

Significant effort was made to obtain the perspectives of primary rights holders, including Indigenous children, their parents, and school support committees. A growing body of research on evaluation methods, as well as general research, has confirmed narrative methods as a preferred approach to gathering data in many types of investigations involving Indigenous people.⁸⁷ Joined by Indigenous team members using Indigenous languages in Indigenous communities, the evaluators used key informant interviews and FGDs with open-ended questions. These prompted self-reports of experience with languages in education, a facilitated approach to outcome harvesting, including elicitation of most significant change stories when time allowed, and pictorial mapping of change events relating to schooling and language of instruction during the MENAP five-year timeline.⁸⁸ By incorporating methods congruent with Indigenous methodologies,⁸⁹ the evaluation yielded detailed expressions by participants about their experiences of the MENAP in local contexts, and promoted active engagement of Indigenous people in provincial discovery workshops. Data collection elicited the experiences and accounts of primary and secondary duty bearers, other stakeholders and key informants, as did meetings in local communities, key informant interviews, FGDs and outcome harvesting workshops in the four provincial capitals and Phnom Penh.

4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 Key evaluation criteria and questions

Key evaluation questions and sub-questions were clustered around the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The evaluation also incorporated equity, gender equality⁹⁰ and human rights considerations as cross-cutting issues.

Table 2 lists the key questions that addressed these criteria. Annex 4 provides a more extensive list of questions. All questions were reviewed and approved by the reference group during the inception phase.

The initial list of questions was refined and extended in key informant interviews and FGDs, as additional questions became important in an iterative process of discovery throughout primary data collection, secondary data analysis, and document review. The reference group gave feedback on the rights-based framework and ethical conduct, data gathering methods and tools, and stakeholder questions throughout the evaluation, including in meetings to discuss an inception report and interim report of progress and preliminary findings.

Table 2. Key evaluation questions assessing the MENAP against OECD/DAC criteria. A full list of the main evaluation questions and their sub-questions is available in Annex 10.

OECD/DAC criteria	Key questions
EQ1. Relevance of the MENAP	To what extent is the MENAP suited to ensuring that MLE is accessible to children (rights holders) in the four provinces where it has been substantially implemented?

⁸⁷ Caxaj, Susanna C., 'Indigenous storytelling'; Chilisa, Bagele, *Indigenous Research Methodologies*, Sage Publications, London, 2011, pp. 35-44.

⁸⁸ Burchill, Marlene, et al., 'Reflections on "Aboriginalising" the Research Process: "Hunting and gathering" as a focus group methodology', *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2011, pp. 29-39.

⁸⁹ Dawson, Alexandra, *Indigenous Research Methods*; Burchill, Marlene, et al., 'Reflections on "Aboriginalising" the Research Process', pp.29-39.

⁹⁰ Gender equality was not specifically identified as a target in the MENAP but is a value on the part of the commissioning organization, UNICEF, for this evaluation.

OECD/DAC criteria	Key questions
EQ2. Effectiveness of the support provided by MoEYS, UNICEF and others in achieving its outcomes	To what extent have the expected outcomes of the MENAP been achieved and what were the major factors influencing achievement or non-achievement of the MENAP targets, including enabling factors, barriers and bottlenecks?
EQ3. Efficiency of the management of MENAP to ensure timely and efficient use of resources	How well has the MENAP been managed in terms of the technical and financial resources provided to teachers and school operations?
EQ4. Impact resulting from the implementation of MENAP (positive and negative changes, intended and unintended) in the five provinces	<p>To what extent has the MENAP contributed to ensuring that Indigenous children have access to equitable, inclusive, quality and relevant education?</p> <p>In what ways and to what extent has the MENAP changed the capacities of national and sub-national education officials to manage and monitor MLE implementation?</p>
EQ5. Sustainability of the benefits of MENAP	What are the key barriers, bottlenecks and enabling factors towards achieving sustainability of the MENAP for a new five-year term (2019 to 2023)?
EQ6. Equity and gender considerations	To what extent and how does the MENAP ensure an equity focus?

4.2.2 Data sources

Multiple data sources were included in the evaluation:

- Document review: Over 100 documents were reviewed to glean relevant background, context and findings about education and school management in Cambodia, MLE globally and in Cambodia, and relevant policy and planning documents relevant to education, languages, Indigenous peoples and governance (Annex 5 provides a list of reference documents)
- Analysis of secondary quantitative education data, including enrolment and demographic data (achievement data were not made available)
- Summary review of secondary costing data, where available
- Direct engagement with 696 participants (317 female / 45 per cent) in a variety of formats and settings (Annex 6 provides a list of participants)
- School and community visits (see Annex 7).

4.2.3 Quantitative data

Quantitative data were sought to measure the expansion of MLE delivery against targets and to assess the comparative effectiveness of the MENAP across a number of categories.⁹¹ Quantitative data were obtained in the form of spreadsheets that contained aggregated views of raw data collected from 80 different primary schools and six preschools (a total of 304 classrooms) in the four provinces. However, complete data sets⁹² were not made available in time for original analyses of secondary data in order to produce an independent quantitative assessment of the expansion of MLE during the MENAP years. As a result of the limited and late data provided, only descriptive summaries of the expansion of MLE during the four years of the MENAP were possible (presented in Section 5 and Annex 14).

⁹¹ Preschool and primary school enrolment, attendance, promotion and transition to upper primary and lower secondary specific to Indigenous children with access to MLE and without access to MLE and compared to non-Indigenous children in the north-eastern provinces and in Cambodia as a whole; and comparisons of Indigenous children enrolled and not enrolled in preschool and primary school during each of the four years of the MENAP.

⁹² Data sets received from various sources were incomplete, making it impossible to conduct most analyses that would have yielded a nuanced statistical view of MENAP implementation and outcomes.

4.2.4 Costing data

Costing data provided for the evaluation were not sufficient to conduct an analysis of costs, expenditures, cost-effectiveness or cost efficiency. Expenditure data obtained from UNICEF and SED are summarized in Section 5 and Annex 8.⁹³ CARE costing data arrived too late for analysis.

4.2.5 Qualitative data collection

4.2.5.1 Participants

Primary data from stakeholders were collected from duty bearers,⁹⁴ rights holders,⁹⁵ development partners and local NGOs involved in activities included in the MENAP, mainly MLE. Annex 6 provides a list of all participants by role, location and form of participation in the evaluation.

Table 3 is an overview of the stakeholders in the evaluation: approximately 696 participants (317 female / 45 per cent; 276 children / 40 per cent). Primary rights holders included children and community members. Duty bearers included school leadership, DOEs, POEs and NGOs. Overall, there were 764 participants⁹⁶ (342 female / 45 per cent; 275 children / 36 per cent) in the FGDs, of which 22 per cent were in Monduliri, 15 per cent in Stung Treng, 38 per cent in Ratanakiri, 19 per cent in Kratie, and 7 per cent in Phnom Penh. The 41 participants in key informant interviews (34 per cent female) represented various groups of stakeholders. The majority of these were duty bearers and development partners.

Table 3. Participants in the qualitative data collection aspect of the evaluation

Primary rights holders	Number of participants	Female	% female
Children enrolled in school	275	141	51
Out-of-school children	1	0	0
Mothers, fathers and other primary caregivers/guardians and/or school support committee members (94 members)	178	95	53
TOTAL	454	236	52
Primary and secondary duty bearers	Number of participants	Female	% female
MoEYS Special Education Department	4	3	75
MoEYS Primary Education Department	1	1	100
MoEYS Early Childhood Education Department	3	1	33
MoEYS Curriculum Development Department	2	0	0
MoEYS Other	4	3	75
POE staff in the four provinces (including directors and staff working with primary, teacher training, special education, preschool and monitoring related to MLE)	20	6	30
PTTCs	4	0	0
Royal University of Phnom Penh	1	0	0
DOE staff in areas where schools and preschools were sampled	24	0	0
Primary and preschool teachers (MLE teachers using an Indigenous language and teachers using the national language)	115	56	49
School authorities (school directors)	18	2	11
Commune leaders	6	0	0
Village leaders	20	3	15
TOTAL	222	75	34

⁹³ Costing data from CARE arrived too late to be included in this evaluation.

⁹⁴ Primary duty bearers include MoEYS and UNICEF Cambodia.

⁹⁵ Primary rights holders include commune councils, parents and their children.

⁹⁶ Some stakeholders participated in more than one group.

Development partners supporting the fulfilment of child rights (see Note 1, below)	Number of participants	Female	% female
CARE International	3	2	67
UNICEF Cambodia	10	2	20
PLAN International	1	1	100
TOTAL	14	5	36
Local NGOs and other stakeholders (see Note 2, below)	Number of participants	Female	% female
Cambodian Indigenous Youth Association (CIYA)	2	1	50
Cambodian Indigenous Peoples' Organization	2	0	0
International Cooperation Cambodia	2	0	0
Non-Timber Forest Products	1	0	0
We World	1	0	0
TOTAL	8	1	13

Notes:

1. Development partners supporting the fulfilment of child rights who participated in the evaluation work in collaboration with rights holders and duty bearers.
2. This category consists of stakeholders who play a role in advocating for the fulfilment of Indigenous children's rights, and who variously collaborate with duty bearers to see their rights fulfilled.

Children participated with the verbal consent of their parent who brought them to the data collection session. Participants were shown an informed consent protocol in their first language (usually verbally) and asked to confirm their understanding of their rights regarding their participation either by signing a form or giving their verbal consent (see Annex 9 for the informed consent procedure). This protocol was adapted for children.

4.2.5.2 Community visits

The MLE programmes visited included: 24 out of the 80 MLE primary schools, representing approximately 30 per cent of all MLE schools in Cambodia; and 11 preschools out of 89 MLE community preschools and three MLE state preschools, representing approximately 12.3 per cent of MLE preschools in Cambodia.⁹⁷ Eight of the MLE preschools visited were housed within a primary school location that was also in the sample.

MLE primary schools and preschools were selected purposively using a maximum variation sampling strategy. The sample included peri-urban/rural/remote locales, and sampled schools ranged from 11 km to 147 km from the provincial capital (note that distance is less significant than road or path conditions for travel, which greatly affects frequency of training and monitoring, and other factors). The sample included varied school performance, 'high, average or low' based on UNICEF records of grade promotions for the overall school population (which is not disaggregated by Indigenous identity). The schools ranged in size from large to small; most had one class per grade, and the schools ranged from three to six grades. Some schools had preschools or primary schools in the village. Some of these were MLE and some were not, representing a seemingly random connection that is discussed subsequently in this report under effectiveness (Section 5.2). In addition to the MLE programmes, four non-MLE schools were visited.

4.2.6 Methods

Data collection methods included:

⁹⁷ The total number of MLE preschools in Cambodia is difficult to confirm at this time, as various reports offer different totals and the definition of a preschool needs to be established (e.g., mobile preschools offering limited exposure may be MLE). The initial sampling selected 23 MLE primary schools and 17 MLE preschools. Only in 11 of the visits to preschool locations were MLE preschool teachers and/or preschool children available. All of these locations were in villages with MLE primary schools except for one, a village with only an MLE preschool. The evaluation team was not able to meet with anyone, despite several requests through education officials beforehand.

- Individual semi-structured key informant interviews
- FGDs
- Outcome harvesting workshops at village level where findings from FGDs were discussed, compared and elaborated on by participants from all the FGDs held previously on the same day in the village
- Outcome harvesting workshops (called ‘discovery workshops’) at provincial and national level
- Participatory pictorial mapping of change over time with children in MLE preschools and primary schools
- Direct observation of children’s interactions with each other, with teachers and parents
- Direct observation of classrooms including visual displays of languages
- Informal sampling of children’s writing
- Direct observation of conditions of school facilities
- Ratings (5-point Likert scale) on three survey questions.

An evaluation matrix in Annex 10 links data collection methods with different stakeholders for different evaluation questions. Annex 11 provides extended details of field-based data gathering processes including the use of outcome harvesting.



Final discovery workshop including local level education providers, Indigenous leaders, national level education leaders and development advisors. ©UNICEF Cambodia/2018/Jessica Ball

4.3 Reliability and validity of data collection and analysis

4.3.1 Qualitative data analysis

Analysis of qualitative data yielded 805 excerpts that were systematically collected, categorized and tagged. For each excerpt, the source, location and actors involved in the outcomes were labelled. Each excerpt was tagged with one or more descriptive category for analysis for triangulation of data within emerging themes. Annex 12 provides an extended description of this process. Qualitative data analysis involved an iterative process, building on frequently occurring perceived outcomes and determining factors, and triangulating data derived from multiple methods and sources. Lenses were used to weigh accounts of the extent to which the MENAP had been implemented, and how well, in terms of the OECD/DAC criteria. This included gender, human rights, inclusion of children’s voices and Indigenous minorities. Section 5 points to the data sources that yielded findings, and the frequency with which a finding was endorsed.

4.3.2 Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data were aggregated for each of the four provinces, and year to year. Aggregated figures were tabled and plotted to show trends over time within and between provinces.

4.3.3 Quality assurance

The evaluation was guided by UNICEF's expectations regarding the quality of evaluation processes and deliverables, as articulated in the UNICEF-Adapted United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards (v. 6/2017). These included:

- Ensuring the quality of data collected and the integrity of analysis reflected in the evaluation deliverables
- Ensuring that the data collection processes adhered to UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Norms and Standards (2017)
- Ensuring that the qualitative and quantitative evidence gathered was comprehensive and robust enough to make an informed assessment in line with the evaluation's objectives, and in support of the conclusion and recommendations put forward by the evaluation
- Managing all data collection (e.g., interview processes, FGDs, surveys, workshops and desk review of documentary sources relating to the subject of the evaluation), analysis, reporting, and communication
- Finalizing travel arrangements, accommodation and equipment used during the evaluation.

Quality assurance by evaluation stakeholders was overseen by the evaluation management team within UNICEF Cambodia, which was supported by a reference group. This included the UNICEF EAPRO (see Acknowledgements for management team and reference group membership). The reference group gave feedback on an inception report, a report of preliminary findings, and the final report (Annex 13 provides details of the quality assurance arrangements).

4.4 Risks, limitations and mitigation measures

4.4.1 Risk: Lack of timely access to complete, consistent, quantitative data (including costing) for assessing MENAP targets

The MENAP specifically targets increased participation in education by Indigenous children. Yet until recently, MoEYS had not disaggregated data in the Education Management Information System in terms of ethnicity or Indigenous identity. These data were not available to assess the expansion of MLE during the four-year period of the MENAP, or achievement in terms of promotions or any other variables. Limited time (seven weeks) for data collection did not allow for an exhaustive search for data or for direct engagement with POEs to compile new data sets. However, some school directors, DOEs and POEs showed the team un-tabulated (raw) data they had collected but did not have the technical expertise or human resources to process. At the national level, there were numerous obstacles to collecting costing and other data, which points to an outstanding need for a digitized, streamlined and coordinated education and financial information processing system.

Costing data from the main sources of funds for the MENAP (MoEYS, CARE, UNICEF) were needed as one indicator of the efficiency, sustainability and impact of the MENAP. This included the cost of teacher training, teacher salaries, and developing and providing curricula and materials to MLE schools, school expansion and operating costs, and other costs associated with the implementation of the MENAP. These data needed to be available in usable form in the early weeks of the work plan (by mid-September). UNICEF colleagues did their best to liaise with MoEYS and CARE to obtain costing data, however these data were not available until after the report was finalized. This was due to factors out of their control. Information was provided by SED on a budget plan that SED later recognized as erroneous. Therefore, the evaluation could not answer specific questions about cost-efficiency or cost-effectiveness. Annual operational plans and budget strategic plans in POEs were not made available

to the evaluation team. Therefore, frequent assertions by national and sub-national government duty bearers about financial shortfalls for MLE expansion and quality improvements could not be verified. This lack of data is a major obstacle within the MENAP at this time.

Mitigation: The evaluation used multiple methods of data collection and analysis and triangulated perspectives on outcomes. For costing, the evaluation drew on data provided by UNICEF on UNICEF expenditures, and summary tabulations of costs for certain activities provided by SED. However, these data did not yield a complete picture of the achievements or costs of the MENAP and its component strategies.

4.4.2 Risk: Lack of demographic data to put MLE data into context

In order to interpret findings about student enrolment, attendance and promotion, past and present demographic data was needed to put these data into context. There were no clearly delineated data available for this purpose, including for example numbers of children speaking an Indigenous language and numbers of children of a particular age within a school catchment area, numbers of out-of-school children past and present in a school catchment area, and so on. Parents and teachers explained that, for many reasons, few children attend school at the age when they are eligible to attend. Two main reasons are: slow growth for their age due to malnutrition, so parents hold them back; and parents preferring their children to work with them on farms and in forests.

Mitigation: Efforts were made to gather community members' impressions of whether the number of children who were over-age for grade and the number of out-of-school children had changed during the four-year period of the MENAP. Background documents, for example about out-of-school children in Cambodia, were used to provide some contextual perspective.

4.4.3 Risk: Limited professional development time for in-country team

The evaluation time frame allowed only 10 days for team recruitment, training, inception, piloting tools and field-based data collection. The data collection process was complex and required skilled individuals and team work, and there was insufficient time to confirm these before field work.

This evaluation prioritized obtaining authentic and rich accounts of the experiences of Indigenous children, parents and other community members in relation to the MENAP. Achieving this data collection objective depended on a skilful team of Indigenous language speakers who could communicate with Indigenous children, parents and other community members, build rapport, ensure informed consent, and translate participants' responses in Khmer or English. These team members also needed pre-existing knowledge of MLE, if not the MENAP per se. The team needed to work from evaluation questions and consent protocols (including an explanation of the MENAP and the purpose of the evaluation) that had been translated from English into Khmer. Khmer speaking team members needed to translate these tools and participants' responses into English or Khmer for the external evaluators.

Mitigation: The evaluators conducted preliminary and on-going training of in-country team members. In 95 per cent of community visits, the evaluators accompanied the team and provided direct supervision, guidance and feedback. The combined team yielded a full complement of skills needed for the evaluation. The local team contributed knowledge of local languages, cultures, relationship building, communication protocols, and context-specific conditions influencing education. The external evaluators contributed specialist knowledge of research methods and the theory and practice of MLE, and one of the evaluators spoke Khmer and Bunong.

4.4.4 Risk: Limited view of contextual variation in MENAP implementation

With a limited number of school visits possible within the time and budget available, the evaluation could not encompass all of the complexity of MLE under the MENAP.

Mitigation: The sampling method used a maximum variation approach that applied diversity criteria to ensure an overall variety of locations and conditions for MLE.

4.4.5 Risk: Weather

The evaluation was commissioned by UNICEF on behalf of MoEYS in July 2018 in order to support new five-year plans for education. Thus, the evaluation was necessarily scheduled during the rainy months of August and September, which could interfere with visiting the sampled schools.

Mitigation: The evaluation plan called for evaluators to visit communities, rather than ask community members to travel for data collection, thereby minimizing their need to travel. Rain and muddy road conditions prevented visits to the planned number of preschools, and required community members to meet the evaluation team half way in one case. Discovery workshops in provincial capitals included a process where community representatives (parents, teachers, school committee members, commune leaders and DOE officers) were provided with travel and accommodation to present the respective stakeholders' views they had collected prior to the workshop.

4.4.6 Risk: School closure

The necessary scheduling of an August start date for data collection in the field meant that schools were closed for the long holiday.

Mitigation: The evaluation did not intend to assess the quality of instruction, classroom processes or children's learning. Nearly all teachers, school support committee members and children attending local schools lived in the sampled communities. They were eager to meet the evaluators during visits, show their classroom facilities and learning resources, and travel to the provincial centre for discovery workshops. As the mission of the evaluation was to inform imminent decision making about a future MENAP, not observing classes in session did not present a problem.

4.4.7 Risk: No data on the extent of delivery of MLE to children with disabilities

The extent to which the MENAP resulted in increased inclusion of Indigenous children with disabilities could not be assessed as there were no data identifying children with disabilities and no teachers identified having any students with disabilities.

Mitigation: Efforts were made to ask teachers and parents whether any Indigenous children with disabilities were enrolled in MLE preschools or primary schools. This approach was unproductive, mainly because the understanding of what constituted a disability seemed to be lacking in the sample communities.

4.5 Equity, gender equality and human rights

The evaluation used a rights-based approach, including valuing primary rights holders' perspectives and agency with regard to the MENAP, on par with those of duty bearers.

4.5.1 Indigenous rights

The evaluation prioritized Indigenous people's participation in all phases. This included:

- Two members of Indigenous associations and community networks on the reference group
- Four members of Indigenous associations and community networks in the final discovery workshop in Phnom Penh
- An in-country evaluation team consisting exclusively of Indigenous women (four) and men (five) who were fully proficient in one or more Indigenous language(s) (see Annex 3 for team biographies)
- An emphasis on data collection methods that are advocated by Indigenous research scholars globally, including narrative and visual methods in small and large groups rather than more quantitative methods with individuals
- Extensive opportunities for Indigenous people to express their views and experiences both formally and informally over team-sponsored meals in villages and workshops

- Informed consent procedures presented in ordinary, Indigenous language, and written or verbal consent depending on prospective participants' preferences
- Efforts made to gather perspectives of local and Indigenous-led organizations (CIYA, the Cambodia Indigenous Peoples Alliance, Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP), ICC, We World).

4.5.2 Gender equality

The evaluation prioritized equal opportunities for participation by girls and boys, women and men in all data collection methods, resulting in roughly equal numbers of female and male participants (see Annex 6). Anticipating gender-specific roles and power dynamics, opportunities were provided during community visits for gender-separate FGDs and for women and men, girls and boys to choose to sit separately or together. During workshops where women and men were together in small and large groups, a female Indigenous team member reached out individually to female participants as they arrived and during meeting breaks to ask for their experiences and views. The Indigenous team included four women and five men. FGDs and discovery workshop facilitation included explicit requests to allow all voices to be heard—girls and boys, women and men. Specific questions were asked about the number of girls versus boys enrolling in school and their respective attendance and participation patterns. Throughout data collection, questions to stakeholders explored whether aspects of the MENAP had affected girls differently than boys.

4.5.3 Ethical considerations

The evaluation was conducted according to the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis (2015), the UNICEF-Adapted United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards (2017), and the United Nations Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines (2008). Practices that were implemented are described below.

Child rights: During visits to all villages, the evaluation prioritized gathering the perspectives of children in MLE, children not in MLE, and out-of-school children. The evaluators recruited an Indigenous team member with proven previous skills in participatory data collection with children, and the ability to produce on-the-spot illustrations of children's depictions of events. Children were presented with an explanation of the purpose of the evaluation in plain language and in their Indigenous language, as needed. They were presented with an informed consent protocol including a description of the evaluation, the activities they were being asked to do, the choice to participate or not, and the opportunity to indicate their agreement to participate either verbally or by signing their name on a consent roster. This included asking children for permission to take their photographs and to retain their illustrations. A combination of informal discussion, visual mapping and writing was used to give children with different preferences and abilities (verbal, visual and writing) the chance to participate fully. Children were offered an opportunity to present their stories and experiences of MLE to adult participants (including parents, teachers and school support committee members) and to listen and respond to the stories and experiences of adult participants. At their request, children were told they would receive from UNICEF Cambodia a plain language description of what the evaluation found.

Integrity, independence and impartiality: The evaluation team exercised independent, impartial and unbiased judgment. Throughout the evaluation, all team members confirmed they did not have a conflict of interest with this evaluation.

Privacy and respects of rights: The evaluation team members clearly communicated to different stakeholders the purpose of the evaluation, the criteria applied and the intended use of findings. Before participating in any data collection activity, evaluation team members ensured that all participants gave genuinely free, prior and informed consent, in most cases signified by their signature on an informed consent form or roster. They respected the stakeholders' right to refuse to participate, to withhold their agreement to have their responses used in the evaluation until after hearing all of the questions, and to provide information anonymously. All participants were given multiple opportunities to grant, refuse or withdraw their consent based on a clear understanding of the people/institutions involved, the intent of

the process, and possible risks or outcomes. All information has been used and represented only to the extent agreed to by its contributor.

Avoidance of harm and fair representation: Prior to field visits, the evaluators worked with the evaluation management team of UNICEF Cambodia to identify vulnerable groups, and ensured that any participatory processes and evaluation questions were responsive to their needs. Local Indigenous translators and facilitators for interviews, FGDs, discovery workshops, other meetings and interviews worked with the evaluators to review the questions that would be asked. This ensured they were relevant, meaningful and non-threatening. These Indigenous team members engaged with Indigenous and Khmer community members to set a tone of informality, openness and rapport. Respect for the participation rights of groups and individuals was weighed against any potential harm that could come to these groups or individuals as a result of their involvement or representation in data gathering or research dissemination activities.



Indigenous girls share their views of the changes brought about by multilingual education.

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Accuracy, completeness and reliability: The evaluation co-leaders ensured that all data was tracked from its source to its use and interpretation. All evaluation questions were answered through triangulation of qualitative data and a limited amount of quantitative data from multiple sources. A comprehensive evaluation matrix (Annex 10) was used to link each evaluation tool, stakeholder and question. All findings and conclusions have been explicitly justified and substantiated, and the recommendations are based on findings, and not evaluator bias.

5. Evaluation findings and analysis

This section is structured according to the OECD/DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, as well as equity, gender equality and human rights considerations. Each sub-section presents the main evaluation question from the evaluation matrix (see Annex 10). Sub-questions are presented as topic headings.

5.1 Relevance

EQ1. To what extent is the Multilingual Education National Action Plan (MENAP) suited to ensure MLE is accessible to children (rights holders) in the four provinces where it has been substantially implemented?

Summary	
Key evaluation parameter	Key findings
Access to quality, relevant education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is unequivocal positive support for MLE as the key strategy in the MENAP to produce inclusion of Indigenous children in meaningful education. • MLE is culturally and linguistically relevant in Indigenous communities. It has increased the engagement of Indigenous girls and boys in primary school, as well as the attendance and lesson preparation of teachers. • MLE promotes Indigenous children's sense of belonging in school and society, and parents' perception that the government values their rights and their languages as media of learning. • The MENAP has generated increased demand by Indigenous girls and boys, school support committees and local authorities for expanded and updated cultural curricula, and the extension of MLE to Grade 6 to support children's literacy in an Indigenous language, as well as in Khmer. The MENAP has increased demand for MLE in additional languages. • MLE teachers tend to combine the MLE curriculum and the national curriculum, in part to fill the school year or because of doubt about government authorization of the MLE curriculum. • The relevance of MLE preschools to the inclusion and success of Indigenous children and to parent satisfaction are less clear and were acknowledged by primary rights holders as a new concept that depends excessively on limited commune finances and support.
Validity of objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The objectives of the MENAP remain relevant to the ESP, other government priorities, and the rights of Indigenous peoples. Primary rights holders emphasize language retention and Indigenous literacy, whereas some national and sub-national duty bearers emphasize the MENAP as a means to bridge Indigenous children's inclusion in education in Khmer. The MENAP strategies to improve monitoring and evaluation and data systems have not been vigorously implemented.
Development partner support for implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development partners, especially CARE and UNICEF, contributed relevant and timely technical and financial support.
Relevance of the MENAP to related national plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MENAP goal to enhance the inclusion of children who have been under-served by mainstream education remains relevant as a parallel initiative alongside comprehensive national plans for education and development. • The MENAP includes strategies that are also components of the ESP 2014–2018, and that are congruent with those prioritized in the NSDP 2014–2018, and the decentralization and deconcentration process.

5.1.1 Access to quality, relevant education by Indigenous girls and boys (primary rights holders)

5.1.1.1 MLE primary schools

Primary rights holders in villages with MLE primary schools⁹⁸ expressed strong interest in MLE. In FGDs, children attending MLE primary schools were the most vocal proponents of MLE, exclaiming their delight in being able to go to school in their own language, relate with friends and teachers who speak their language, and begin to learn elements of the written version of their language.⁹⁹ Children in Grades 5 and 6 who had been in MLE described their ability to communicate in their Indigenous language through social media. Parents described having a new interest in their children's education because they could see that their children were engaged, could understand their teacher, and were being treated well by the MLE teachers. A confirmed change in behaviour during the period of the MENAP was that, where children have access to MLE, parents are now taking their children to school.¹⁰⁰

Parents described how their adolescent children who had no access to MLE had not enrolled in school or had dropped out in lower primary grades because they could not understand the teacher, whereas now their younger children were able to learn because they understood the language of instruction. Many parents also expressed appreciation that their children were becoming proficient in the national language and gaining skills that would help them get jobs and become engaged in wider society.¹⁰¹

I really notice the difference in confidence in students at Dak Dam and Bu Lala, where they have MLE, compared to Indigenous children in schools that don't have MLE. The students with MLE know more and are better in reading, writing and communication skills. I've seen with my own eyes, when I go to visit! The bilingual kids – both Indigenous and Khmer – are stronger than both the Indigenous and the Khmer kids who do not have MLE. It evens the whole thing out when they are bilingual. They are all smart together. We thought we were really good at my school until we saw what the children with Dak Dam and Bu Lala can do.

– School cluster leader

All primary MLE teachers described oral use of the Indigenous language in the classroom. However, not all described teaching children to write meaningful text in the Indigenous language. Many teachers reported a lack of confidence in their own ability to write the Indigenous language. Some teachers said they thought the Indigenous language was supposed to be used only as a way of attracting children to school and to provide a short bridge to acquiring Khmer as quickly as possible.¹⁰² These MLE teachers described teaching in Khmer as much as possible, with little or no focus on helping children to gain skills in writing meaningful or creative text in the mother tongue.

Primary rights holders and most teachers provided overwhelming positive support for the Indigenous cultural content in current MLE curricula developed by CARE.¹⁰³ Some MLE primary teachers described

⁹⁸ Thirty-nine data excerpts support the perception of MLE students' strong interest in MLE, confirmed by four types of data sources.

⁹⁹ Thirty-four data excerpts support this, from sources including 20 communities, the multi-stakeholder workshop in Phnom Penh, an interview in Phnom Penh, and from the team's own observations.

¹⁰⁰ Confirmed in 14 villages, three provincial discovery workshops and the national discovery workshop.

¹⁰¹ Sixty-one excerpts describe changes in confidence and achievement among children who are or have been attending MLE schools and are now engaged in society. Sources come from 20 communities, four provincial discovery workshops, five interviews with POE/DOE level offices of education, and the Phnom Penh multi-stakeholder workshop.

¹⁰² Five data excerpts from MoEYS/POE/DOE offices confirm that educators see the main purpose of MLE being a quick transition to Khmer as the medium of instruction. Seven excerpts from teachers described their emphasis on Khmer rather than indigenous languages in order to achieve this purpose.

¹⁰³ Data excerpts from 14 villages and from three discovery workshops confirmed this. Most of the positive comments came from Ratanakiri, where CARE was most involved in local elaboration of curriculum content. In other provinces, relevant cultural content was described more as an aspiration than a reality.

creating lessons that involved taking students on a village walk¹⁰⁴ to observe, describe and discuss objects and events in the community, taking children to the forest to find traditional medicine and edible plants, and planting vegetable gardens. Some MLE teachers described writing stories together with students in the mother tongue and making tools and instruments together with community experts. However, teachers varied in their reports on the amount of time and creative effort devoted to teaching the cultural content.

Although MLE primary teachers are expected to use only the CARE MLE curriculum, some teachers described teaching both the CARE MLE curriculum and the Khmer curriculum.¹⁰⁵ They variably offered one or more of three reasons: (1) the CARE MLE curriculum is easy and can be completed quickly, leaving time for the Khmer curriculum; (2) the Khmer curriculum is hard and students ultimately need to catch up to their Khmer peers when they enter Grade 4, so they should have the advantage of being taught both curricula; (3) a few teachers doubted that the government actually approved or will continue to approve the MLE curriculum and so they emphasize the Khmer curriculum ‘to be on the safe side’.

Regardless of whether the national curriculum was combined to varying degrees in Grades 1 to 3, children, parents and most teachers emphasized a strong need for expanded and updated culturally specific content. Children were vocal and articulate about wanting a more culturally grounded curriculum and eagerly offered suggestions of what this might include (musical instruments, weaving, medicines from the forest, farming, how to make hunting tools, old stories and new ways of using traditional forest products).

In Grades 1 and 2, the children know how to write words in the mother tongue, but only in Grade 3 do they have the chance to write long sentences. MLE is important for our culture and we don't want it to be lost. – MLE teacher

MLE is not just a bridge. It is a centre for children to learn about their culture and identity. – Indigenous community member

If we can have MLE for more years in school, then children will be able to use the language properly for cultural purposes, for example dramas and recording history. This could make education come to life and have a future. – Indigenous community member

We want MLE extended through Grade 12. Our goal is to keep the culture. They need to study longer not just for the sake of our written language, but to keep their culture. – School support committee chairperson

In a visit to a non-MLE school, the school support committee and local authorities agreed that children learn all kinds of things at home using the Indigenous language and that school-based learning does not equate to this rich, direct, experiential learning at home, on farms and in the forests.¹⁰⁶ In this non-MLE school visit, the school support committee and local authorities expressed their view that MLE is needed to enable Indigenous children to start school on time. Reportedly, parents keep their children at home until the children are able speak enough Khmer to be confident in a school where Khmer is the language of instruction, resulting in Indigenous children being old for their grade in non-MLE schools. In communities with no MLE primary school, local NGOs reported that adult literacy classes had been mainly subscribed by children, even when there had been a local primary school. Children had sought out the classes to compensate for not being able to understand schooling in Khmer, and to gain access to a culturally grounded curriculum.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ The village walk is included in the CARE MLE curriculum.

¹⁰⁵ Data excerpts from four teachers described this combined approach.

¹⁰⁶ Data excerpts from 11 villages, mostly in Mondulkiri, and from two discovery workshops described this. In addition, the significance of cultural content and Indigenous ways of life was shown in all of the children's visual mapping of MLE impacts.

¹⁰⁷ Where MLE in primary schools has been introduced, local NGOs (ICC, We World) have stopped providing non-formal literacy classes. In future studies, recording how many school-aged children in villages without MLE

Across all four provinces, there was an appeal not only for more cultural content, but for more years of MLE, with requests to extend up to Grade 4, Grade 6 or Grade 12.

5.1.1.2 MLE preschool

MLE preschool is a new concept in the four provinces, having begun with limited resources as a pilot programme in recent years in the already complex environment of the community preschool model. Within this model, an MLE community preschool can, through a defined process, become a state preschool, meaning that it would be part of the MoEYS system. School support committees and teachers in four Indigenous communities expressed strong interest in having an MLE preschool. Regardless of whether a community had an MLE preschool or a Khmer preschool, Indigenous parents expressed dissatisfaction with the use of Khmer in preschool.

There were instances that supported the relevance of an MLE preschool. In Monduliri, for example, an MLE preschool teacher described translating the standard preschool curriculum into Bunong and creating materials in Bunong. The school director reported seeing a positive difference from when there had been a Khmer preschool teacher who the children did not understand. Since the MLE preschool began, more Bunong parents are enrolling and bringing their children to preschool, rather than taking them to work on farms.¹⁰⁸ In Kratie, education officials and two teachers reported a smoother transition to non-MLE primary school for children who had attended MLE preschool. The evaluation team was unable to establish whether this was a pattern in the other three provinces, where there was reportedly little communication, joint leadership or management between preschool teachers and primary school teachers.

All community preschool teachers, including those at MLE preschools, are supposed to receive a series of standard trainings totalling 35 days. An additional four-day training on MLE, developed with technical support from CARE, is also supposed to be provided to MLE preschool teachers, in addition to the standard training. Any revision of the materials for MLE preschool should align with the community preschool curriculum in ECED. However, based on the findings of the evaluation, the experience of MLE teachers does not appear consistent with these guidelines.

Unlike MLE primary school teachers who use the CARE MLE curriculum, MLE preschool teachers and others reported that there is no MLE-specific curriculum and no linguistically and culturally specific teaching and learning materials.¹⁰⁹ Early childhood officers in POEs reported that MLE preschool teachers use the standard Khmer curriculum, which they are expected to translate into the Indigenous language. All but one of the MLE preschool teachers interviewed described not feeling confident in their own literacy and translation capacity to do on-the-spot translation of the curriculum. Few MLE preschool teachers reported being literate in their Indigenous language. One MLE preschool teacher was not aware that her preschool was supposed to be an MLE site. Another MLE preschool teacher reported that she was not aware that she should be trying to deliver MLE: she assumed she was supposed to be waiting to receive training in what MLE was and how to do it. MoEYS educators reported that MLE preschool teachers receive an additional four-day training in MLE after doing the standard early childhood education (ECE) training, however there were conflicting reports on how often this training was delivered and by whom.

5.1.2 Validity of MENAP objectives

Stakeholders at every level agreed that the objectives of the MENAP were realistic and remained relevant for children whose first language was an Indigenous language. Duty bearers asserted that Indigenous children needed the MENAP in order to be attracted to primary school, where MLE would

enrolled in non-formal literacy classes would be a good way to assess whether or not children found formal education understandable or culturally relevant.

¹⁰⁸ This was expressed specifically in relation to preschools in two locations, and also by several multi-stakeholder groups in the national discovery workshop in Phnom Penh.

¹⁰⁹ Confirmed by excerpts from five community preschools, discovery workshops and interviews with DOEs, POEs and MoEYS.

help them learn Khmer quickly and thereby gain access, in upper primary and secondary school, to mainstream education using the national, Khmer-medium curriculum. This objective is gradually being realized, as discussed in the subsequent section on findings about Effectiveness.

While duty bearers generally emphasized the MENAP objective of providing a bridge for Indigenous children to successfully enter mainstream education in Khmer language, primary rights holders emphasized the objective of transmitting and preserving their language and culture, and of having a local, meaningful curriculum that teaches skills relevant to Indigenous community life.

5.1.3 Consistency of activities and strategies of the MENAP with overall objectives, intended impacts and effects

The MENAP was endorsed in 2014 and implemented in 2015, essentially as a collection of key strategies. The MENAP did not have an articulated theory of change linking activities, strategies or actors with overall objectives, intended impacts and effects.¹¹⁰ For example, the design of monitoring and evaluation systems and the actors expected to develop them, build their capacity and deploy them are not mentioned. The MENAP implied several assumptions and, as a planned change, is missing several steps. For example, the vision expressed in the MENAP, namely that ethnic minority girls and boys will have fulfilled rights to quality education, did not provide a definition of quality. There is no record within the MENAP that the vision or ideas about quality, strategies or activity were confirmed at the planning stage by primary rights holders, including Indigenous parents or representatives of Indigenous people.

5.1.3.1. MENAP strategies compared to international 'best practice' in MLE

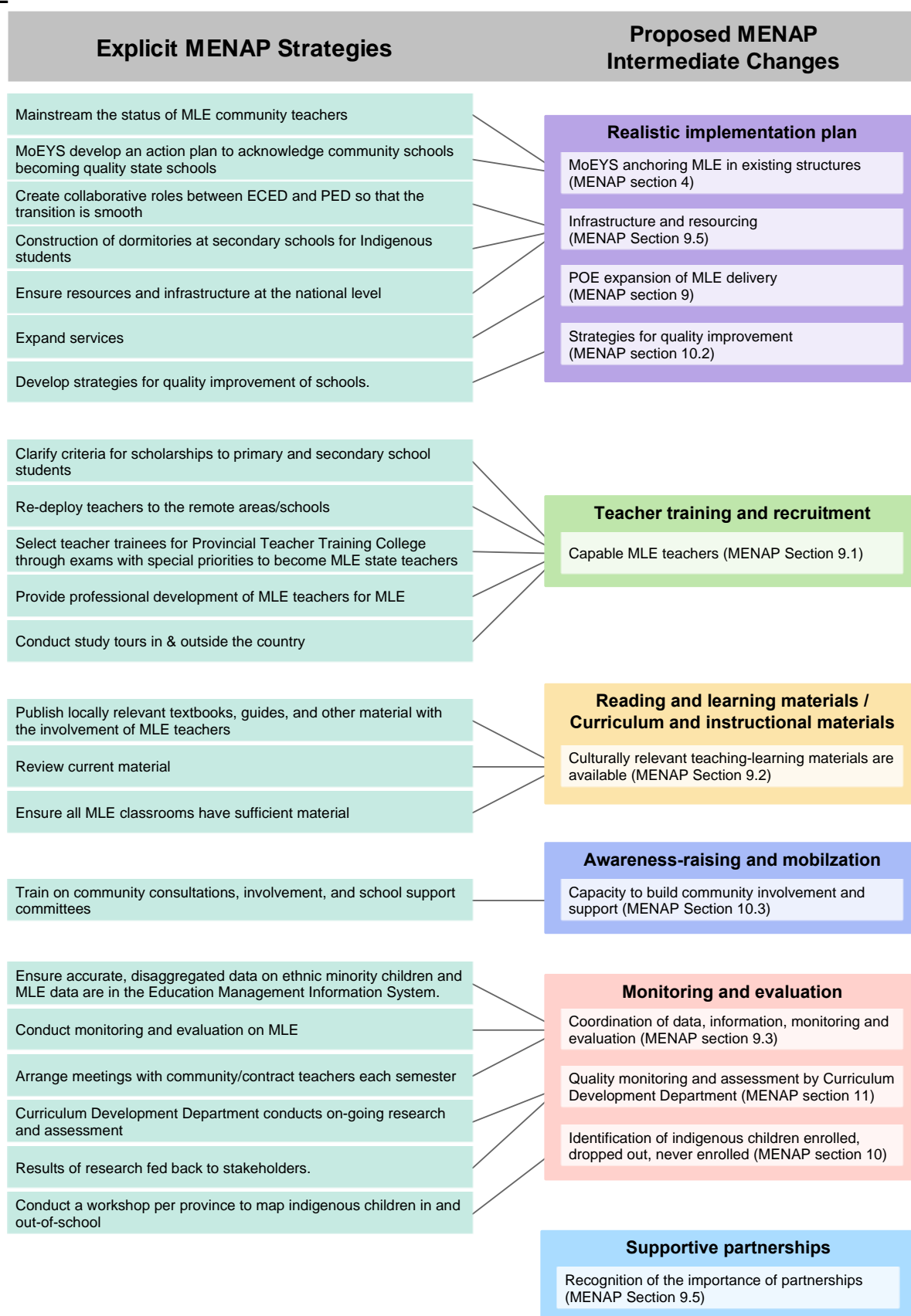
The logic of the MENAP as a planned approach to providing ethnic minority children with MLE was assessed with reference to internationally recognized 'best practices' in MLE. Figure 5 shows the MENAP objective of preschools and primary schools using the mother tongue, depicted on the right. On the left, strategies explicit in the MENAP are linked to a set of intermediate changes that the evaluation team deduced from the strategies and other components of the MENAP. These are grouped together in light of components of successful MLE programmes that are generally accepted internationally.¹¹¹ Three components of best practice were not included in the MENAP and are therefore not shown in Figure 5: preliminary research, acceptable alphabets and supportive mother tongue-based MLE policy and legislation.

The remaining components of best practices in MLE are shown in Figure 5 (right column), with links to strategies identified in the MENAP (left column).

¹¹⁰ Funnell, Sue C. and Patricia J. Rogers, *Purposeful Program Theory: Effective use of theories of change and logic models*, Vol. 31 John Wiley & Sons, 2011; Kurtz, Cynthia F. and David J. Snowden, 'The New Dynamics of Strategy: Sense-making in a complex and complicated world', *IBM Systems Journal* 42, no. 3 (2003): 462-483.

¹¹¹ UNESCO, 'MTB-MLE Resource Kit: Including the Excluded: Promoting multilingual education', Paris/Bangkok, 2016.

Figure 5. Analysis of MENAP strategies compared to components of UNESCO ‘best practice’ in MLE



Realistic implementation plan (purple box): The MENAP articulated strategies for recognition, administration and expansion of MLE. It identified the need for general strategies to improve quality in schools, infrastructure and resourcing. This was relevant to the objective, as MLE schools are often located in remote areas that have not had formal education.

Teacher recruitment and training (green box): The MENAP outlines several strategies for recruiting and training teachers, particularly regarding recognition of MLE teachers within the system. Strategies for recruitment and teacher training were confirmed by all stakeholders as one of the most significant determinants of success of the MENAP. However, stakeholders highlighted: the lack of targeted recruitment and retention of core trainers with Indigenous language proficiency; an outstanding need for more training in Indigenous language literacy for Indigenous teachers; and more specific skill-building in what they referred to as MLE pedagogy.

Reading and learning materials / curriculum and instructional materials (yellow box): The MENAP mentioned a review of materials and a strategy to publish locally relevant textbooks and guides, with involvement of MLE teachers. During the evaluation, stakeholders described a need for materials to be reviewed and updated to increase the cultural relevance and accuracy of the MLE curriculum and the practicalities of using multiple resources. Many teachers expressed uncertainty about whether the MLE curriculum and supplementary resources, including resources they might create, were authorized by the government, and whether MLE competencies were accepted as equivalent to the competencies attained through the national curriculum.

Awareness-raising and mobilization (dark blue box): The MENAP acknowledged that government officers need to be trained in how to involve communities. It included an all-encompassing strategy on training officers in how to consult with communities, and to effectively involve school support committees, local authorities and community networks. All participants who were duty bearers at school, district and provincial levels requested capacity building not only on the MLE pedagogy but also on how to engage with Indigenous community groups, so that they could collaborate to improve the curriculum and liaise with parents and school support committees. Community, district and provincial level participants uniformly reported an increase in engagement of communities in education. However, community mobilization and strategies for partnerships and collaboration were not explicitly mentioned in the MENAP.

Monitoring and evaluation (pink box): One MENAP strategy included the identification of Indigenous children enrolled, dropped out and never enrolled. The evaluation found that local efforts to understand these problems were weak. There appears to have been no strategy to coordinate efforts, and there were no primary data available on out-of-school Indigenous children or children who had dropped out against which to assess reported increases in students going to school. There was no strategy or designated actor for monitoring Indigenous children's enrolment and progression through MLE and beyond.

Supportive partnerships (light blue box): Partnership development is mentioned in the preface of the MENAP. The government's role in partnerships within and beyond government departments is not expressed.

5.1.4 UNICEF support for building capacity of national and sub-national officials to manage, monitor and scale up MLE

The evaluation confirmed the relevance of UNICEF support in building the capacity of officials.¹¹² UNICEF functioned as a convening authority for designing and implementing the MENAP, contributing to building strong interest in MLE in the region at different levels of MoEYS, and in the four provinces included in the evaluation. School support committees, teachers, school directors and education officials all mentioned the increased capacity in MLE that they had gained from trainings provided by

¹¹² Confirmed by 282 excerpts sourced from community members, teachers, DOE, POE, MoEYS, discovery workshops, UNICEF and NGOs.

UNICEF and CARE. Although POEs have taken responsibility for in-service training and monitoring, the provincial level officers depended on development partner support for training new MLE teachers. UNICEF collaborated with CARE to strengthen capacity of key units in MoEYS responsible (or formerly responsible) for MENAP implementation. UNICEF leveraged resources to improve school facilities and provided top-ups of teacher salaries as a strategy to retain capacity. UNICEF supported POEs to develop their plans for implementing the MENAP. On behalf of MoEYS, UNICEF commissioned an evaluation to assess the implementation of the MENAP and make recommendations on system improvements.

5.1.5 Relevance of the MENAP to the Education Strategic Plan, the decentralization and deconcentration process and the National Strategic Development Plan

The MENAP aimed to address challenges identified by MoEYS in its analysis of the performance of the education sector from 2009 to 2014. The MENAP contributes to responses to education sector challenges identified in the ESP 2014–2018.¹¹³ The ESP identified: (1) improved access to community early childhood programmes; (2) equitable access to primary education in the most remote areas and for the most disadvantaged groups through bilingual education; (3) access and quality of secondary education through the provision of scholarships to poor families; and (4) measures to reduce the number of children out of school, with a special focus on Indigenous children. The ESP identifies bilingual education services as one of the special programmes for primary education, and identifies the need to transform community schools into public schools.¹¹⁴ To respond to the problem of high numbers of out-of-school Indigenous children, the National Strategic Development Plan (2014–2018)¹¹⁵ outlined “*measures to reduce the number children out of school with a specific focus on children from Indigenous communities, children with disabilities, and children from poorer families, through targeted programmes*”.¹¹⁶ The MENAP addresses the provinces that, according to NSDP 2014–2018, have the highest poverty rates, with the exception of Otdar Meanchey.¹¹⁷ The MENAP aligns with decentralization and deconcentration processes described in the NSDP and in the strategic framework for decentralization and deconcentration reform in education.¹¹⁸ MoEYS aims to build capacity and resources at the sub-national and local levels for improved education services. The MENAP provides a central role for DOEs and local authorities closest to rights holders to improve service delivery and local accountability. Local authorities are especially involved in establishing community preschools, which is also part of the NSDP.¹¹⁹

5.2 Effectiveness

EQ2. To what extent have the expected outcomes of the MENAP been achieved and what were major factors influencing achievement or non-achievement of MENAP targets, including enabling factors, barriers and bottlenecks?

Summary	
Key evaluation parameter	Key findings
Achievement of expected outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyses of quantitative and qualitative data showed increased enrolments across all provinces and close to the MENAP targets (based on CARE and SED data).

¹¹³ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, ‘Education Strategic Plan 2014–2018’, MoEYS, Phnom Penh, 2014, p. 8.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 25.

¹¹⁵ Royal Government of Cambodia, ‘National Strategic Development Plan 2014–2018’, 2014, p. 177.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 67.

¹¹⁷ The NSDP refers to Otdar Meanchey, which is alternatively spelled Oddar Meanchey.

¹¹⁸ Royal Government of Cambodia, Strategic Framework for Decentralization and De-Concentration Reforms, 17 June, 2005. <https://therith.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/strategic-framework-for-decentralization-and-deconcentration-reforms-eng.pdf>.

¹¹⁹ Royal Government of Cambodia, ‘National Strategic Development Plan 2014–2018’, 2014, p. 177.

Summary	
Key evaluation parameter	Key findings
Factors influencing achievement/non-achievement of targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous language of instruction, culturally relevant curriculum and Indigenous teachers were identified by primary rights holders as key determinants of increased enrolment of Indigenous children. Improved school and economic conditions were identified by duty bearers as determinants of increased enrolment of all children in the north-eastern provinces. Seasonal demands of family farming, poverty and lack of safety are persistent barriers to enrolment and regular attendance in some communities. An alternative school calendar, innovated in a Kratie community, was identified in many communities as a possible solution.
Learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All stakeholder groups gave high ratings for children's likelihood of developing proficiency in Khmer and much lower ratings for their likelihood of becoming proficient in their Indigenous language. Teachers, children and parents reported that by Grade 3 some children were able to write a few words or a sentence in their Indigenous language, but were more able to read and write in Khmer (also found in a review of studies on learning outcomes of MLE in Cambodia). Reports that children in MLE were not developing literacy skills in Indigenous language prompted teachers and parents to ask for more teachers who were proficient in Indigenous languages, more curriculum time on Indigenous reading and writing, and an extension of MLE to Grade 6.

5.2.1 Quantitative findings on the extent to which expected outcomes of the MENAP have been achieved

Programme implementation and uptake was evaluated by looking at the recruitment of teachers and enrolment of students over time. CARE was the primary source of data, along with SED. Data from these two sources were closely matched, though not completely in agreement. Where discrepancies were noted, the only explanation available to evaluators was that some variability was expected when large data sets were obtained from different locations. However, there were no indications of a systematic skew in findings across data sources; that is, even if there were inaccuracies in the data at any point in time, longitudinal trends were probably valid and interpretable. As such, the findings that follow sometimes present both data sources. This section reports key findings. Annex 14 offers an extended presentation of quantitative data tabulations relevant to assessing results of the MENAP.

All sub-national stakeholders cited increased enrolments and regular attendance by Indigenous students in MLE primary schools as the most significant outcome of the MENAP.¹²⁰ Statistical analyses of secondary data obtained from CARE via UNICEF Cambodia showed that, in 2018, MLE was being delivered in 80 primary schools by 205 teachers (77 female / 37 per cent) to a total of 4,895 children (see Table 4).¹²¹ Ratanakiri has the most MLE students, while Stung Treng has the fewest.

¹²⁰ Confirmed by 51 excerpts sourced from children, community members and teachers in 17 villages, and in DOEs, POEs and discovery workshops in all provinces and in Phnom Penh.

¹²¹ Table 4 indicates the raw totals for key MENAP target indicators including: number of primary schools and preschools implementing MLE; gross student enrolment for these schools; and number of teachers at MLE schools.

Table 4. Overview of MENAP primary school statistics for the 2017/2018 school year (see Table 6 for gender-disaggregated data on student enrolment)

Province	# of MLE schools	# of MLE teachers	# of female MLE teachers (% Female)	MLE enrolment	Non-MLE primary enrolment	Total primary enrolment
Kratie	14	38	21 (55.3%)	747 720*	36,179	36,926
Mondulkiri	23	54	18 (33.3%)	1,025 1025	7,448	8,473
Ratanakiri	34	88	29 (33.0%)	2,503 2,725	22,619	25,122
Stung Treng	9	25	9 (33.3%)	620 620	15,228	15,848
Total	80	205	77 (37.6%)	4,895 5,090	81,474	86,369

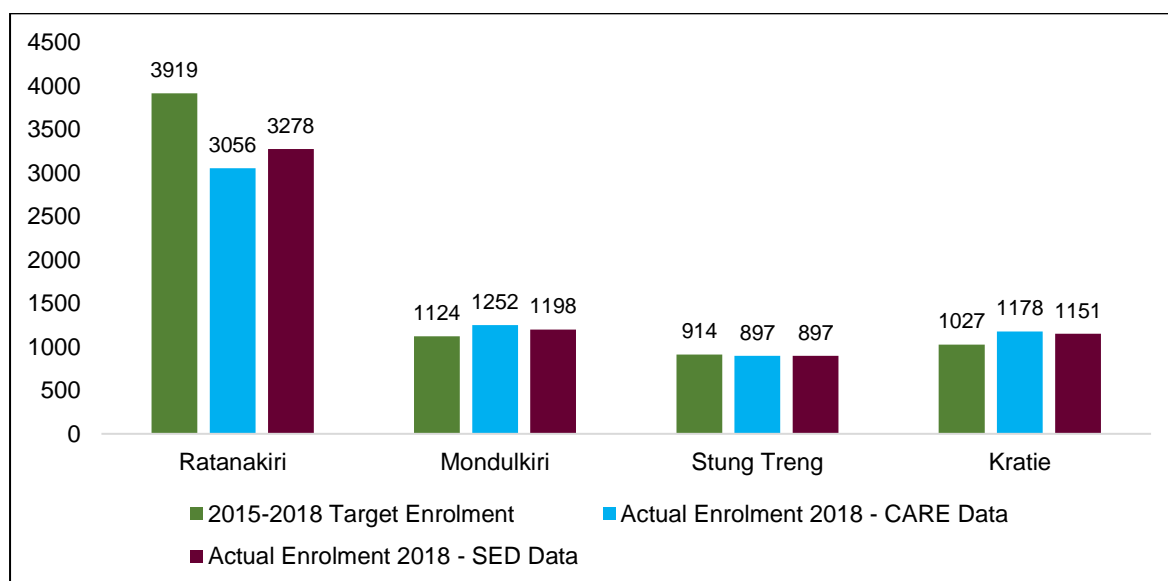
*Figures obtained from SED appear in italics. Figures obtained from CARE appear in regular type face.

Table 5 shows actual student enrolment in 2018 compared to MENAP targets set in 2015. The numbers reported in this table reflect totals for Grades 1 to 6 for schools with MLE programmes. Enrolment targets specifically for MLE Grades 1 to 3 were not available. Table 5 contains figures from CARE and SED. They are generally close. The main difference was found for Ratanakiri (7.3 per cent / 222 more students, according to SED).

These findings are depicted graphically in Figure 6. In Ratanakiri, actual enrolment fell short of the target by 22 per cent, based on CARE data, or 16.4 per cent based on SED data. In Mondulkiri, actual enrolment exceeded the target by 11.4 per cent, based on CARE data, or 6.6 per cent based on SED data. In Kratie, actual enrolment also exceeded targets, by 14.7 per cent based on CARE data, or 12.1 per cent based on SED data. In Stung Treng, actual enrolment was very close to the target according to both CARE and SED data.

Table 5. Targeted, compared to actual, enrolment by province, 2018

Province	Enrolment target	Actual	% of target
Kratie	1027	1178	114.7
Kratie with SED correction		1151	112.1
Mondulkiri	1124	1252	111.4
Mondulkiri with SED correction		1198	106.6
Ratanakiri	3919	3056	78.0
Ratanakiri with SED correction		3278	83.6
Stung Treng	914	897	98.1
Stung Treng with SED correction		897	98.1
Total	6984	6383	91.3
Total with SED correction		6524	93.4

Figure 6. Targeted, compared to actual, enrolment in MLE primary school, 2015–2018

5.2.1.1 Longitudinal trends in enrolment

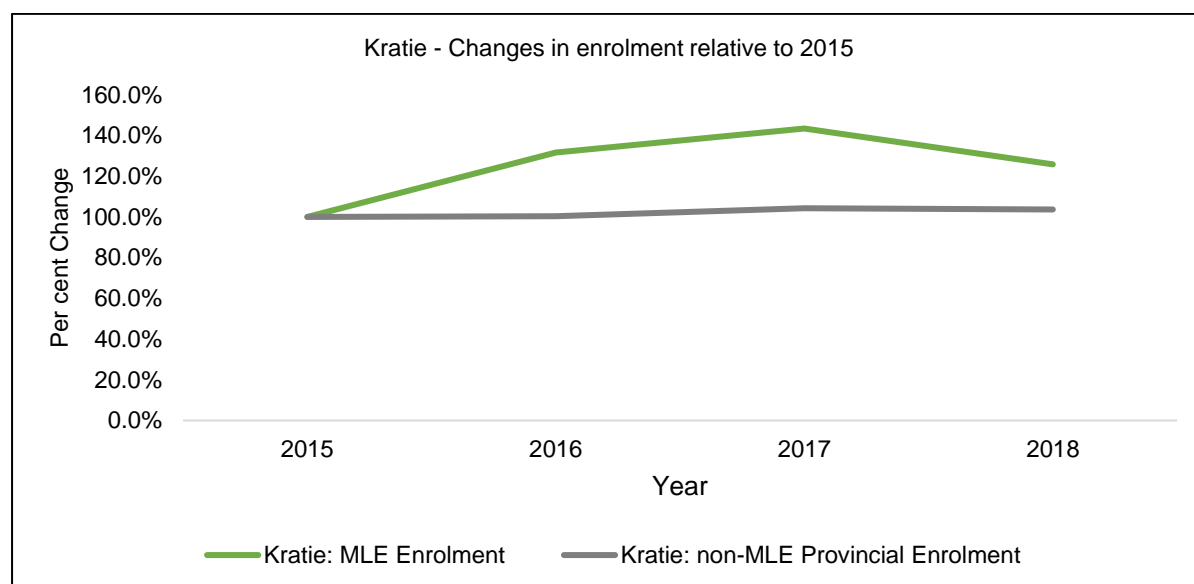
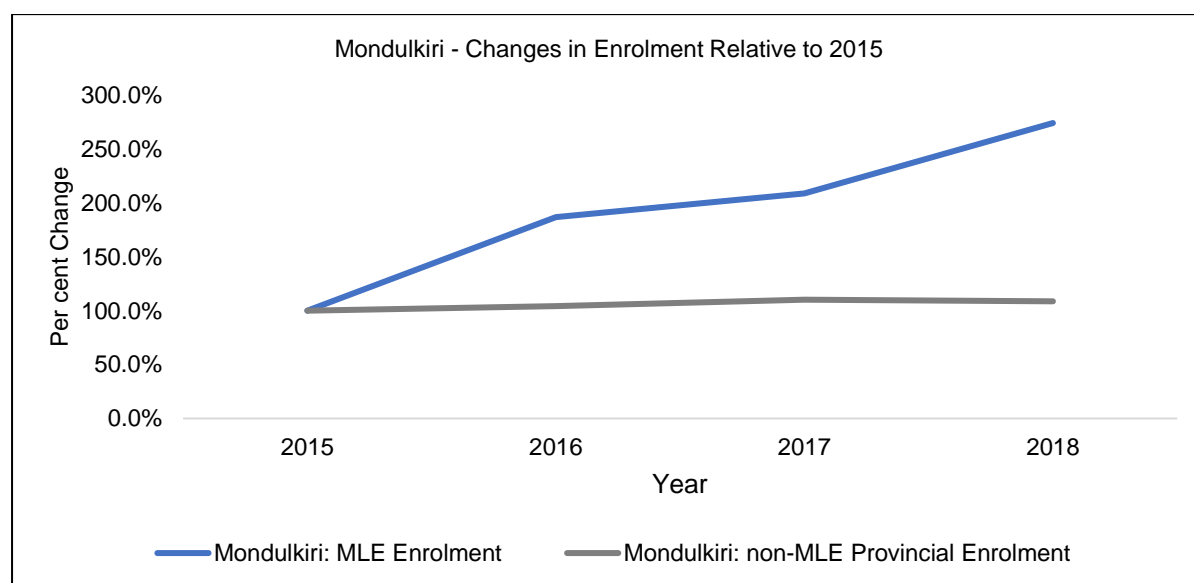
Table 6 presents primary enrolment findings for each province for Grades 1 to 3 over the course of the four active years of MENAP implementation. For each province for each year, there are two data elements. The first is MLE enrolment in Grades 1 to 3 for that province for that year. Directly below, in *italics*, is enrolment for primary Grades 1 to 3, minus the MLE enrolment, to enable comparison of MLE and non-MLE enrolments within the province.

These findings are presented graphically in Figures 7 to 10, showing changes in enrolment within provinces. For these analyses, the enrolment rate for 2015 was set as a baseline, and enrolments for 2016, 2017 and 2018 are expressed graphically in terms of percentages of those 2015 figures. It is evident that in all provinces except Stung Treng enrolments increased from the 2015 baseline, although by 2017 enrolments had levelled off or dropped slightly. In Stung Treng, there was a small enrolment decrease in 2017, but levels recovered by 2018.

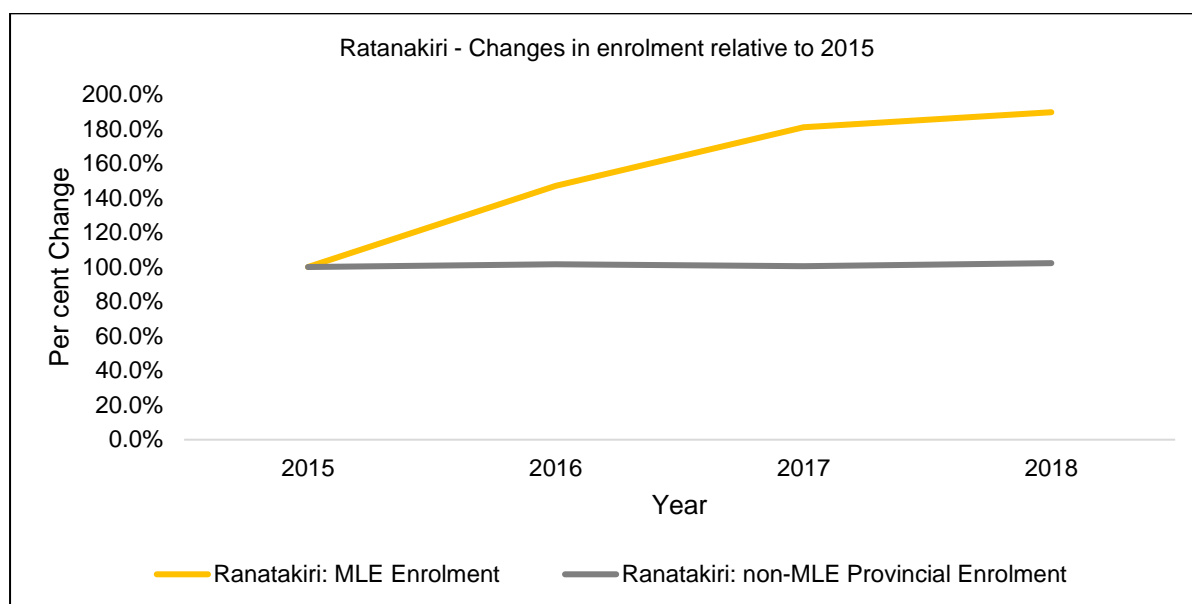
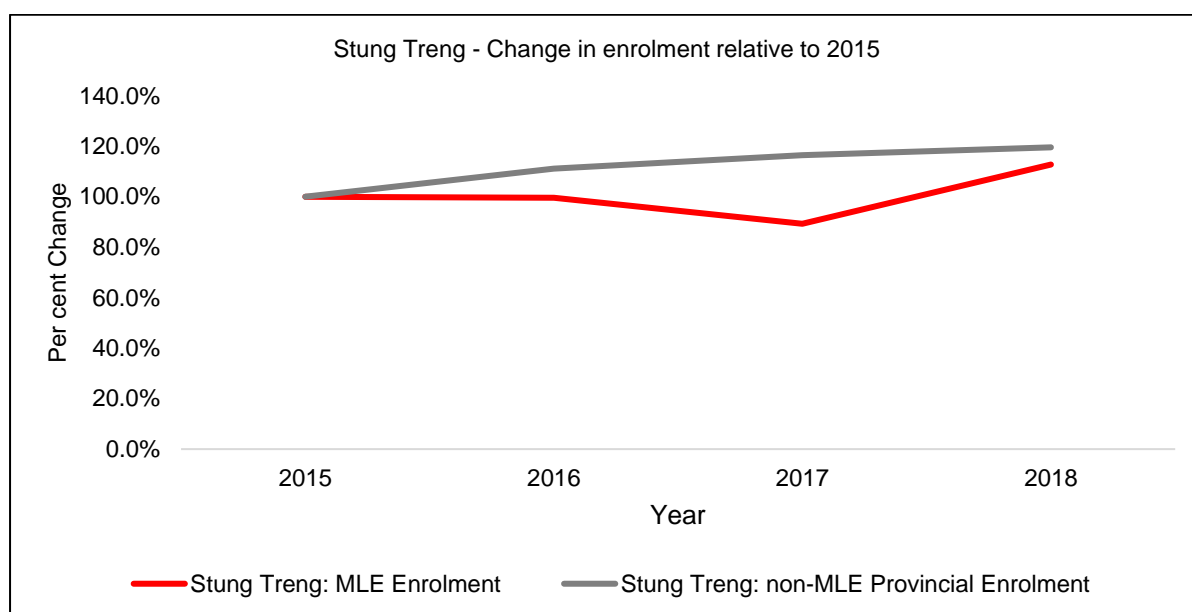
Table 6. MLE and non-MLE provincial enrolment totals for Grades 1 to 3 during the MENAP period, disaggregated by gender

Province	2015 MLE (% fem); <i>Province (% fem)</i>	2016 MLE (% fem); <i>Province (% fem)</i>	2017 MLE (% fem); <i>Province (% fem)</i>	2018 MLE (% fem); <i>Province (% fem)</i>
Kratie	594 (45.8%); 34,907 (47.4%)	782 (47.3%); 36,180 (47.6%)	852 (46.6%); 36,400 (47.8%)	747 (43.9%); 36,179 (47.1%)
Mondulakiri	374 (47.6%); 7,100 (49.5%)	699 (45.8%); 7,406 (48.3%)	781 (45.3%); 7,824 (48.9%)	1025 (48.1%); 7,726 (48.4%)
Ratanakiri	1,320 (49.5%); 22,126 (46.8%)	1,940 (48.1%); 22,493 (47.8%)	2,389 (48.7%); 22,222 (47.4%)	2,503 (48.1%); 22,619 (48.0%)
Stung Treng	550 (50.4%); 12,738 (48.7%)	548 (49.3%); 14,152 (48.0%)	491 (52.1%); 14,830 (48.3%)	620 (51.5%); 15,228 (48.3%)
Total – MLE enrolment	2,838 (48.6%);	3,969 (47.7%);	4,513 (48.1%);	4,895 (47.9%);

Total – Non-MLE enrolment	76,871 (47.7%)	80,231 (47.8%)	81,276 (47.9%)	81,474 (47.7%)¹²²
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Figure 7. Changes in enrolment, Kratie, 2015–2018**Figure 8. Changes in enrolment, Mondulhiri, 2015–2018**

¹²² Please note that in some earlier versions of tables provided by UNICEF this number was 81,752.

Figure 9. Changes in enrolment, Ratanakiri, 2015–2018**Figure 10. Changes in enrolment, Stung Treng, 2015–2018**

5.2.2 Major factors influencing the achievement and non-achievement of MENAP targets, including enabling factors, barriers and bottlenecks

5.2.2.1 Enabling factors for inclusion

Language of instruction: Providing education in a language that children can understand was most frequently cited by stakeholders as the main enabling factor for increased inclusion of Indigenous children in education. The relevance of the MLE curriculum and the social and cultural safety experienced by having an Indigenous teacher were also identified as key enabling factors (discussed previously with reference to relevance criteria).

Findings of qualitative data show that Indigenous children are engaged in learning, and that they show initiative by asking questions and demanding more learning opportunities, especially more opportunities to master culturally specific skills (tool making, hunting, traditional forest harvesting). Teachers linked

the more regular attendance and active participation of children in MLE to greater achievements in reading and writing, as well as grade-level promotions, in each year of the MENAP.¹²³ Communities and district officials reported an increased number of children attending lower secondary school. In two of the districts sampled in Monduliri, and in one of the districts in Stung Treng, Indigenous children coming from MLE primary schools were reportedly among the most outstanding students in lower secondary education.

It was reported, but could not be verified, that a number of former Indigenous MLE students were currently attending teacher training. School support committee members in three communities with MLE schools reported that MLE graduates who do not continue beyond primary school are still more successful in getting jobs and playing leadership roles in their communities than primary school graduates who were at school before MLE was introduced. In contrast, in the same communities, teachers and school support committee members said Indigenous children in non-MLE schools were less successful.

Comparing the Indigenous children and the Khmer children, the Indigenous children do not participate in the classroom. They are quiet. The main reason why they are quiet is that if they say anything, then the Khmer children laugh at them for not having the right sounds, so they think it is better to be quiet. That is the reason why they are among the least talented children in school. They get 30th place in the testing. Sometimes, the teachers tell funny stories and when it is time to laugh, the Indigenous children do not laugh because they don't understand enough of the language to know when to laugh. Only the Khmer children laugh. When the teacher asks, then the students don't answer and look around or look the other way. You can tell that they are afraid. – Grade 5 teacher in a non-MLE school

Enabling factors not attributable to the MENAP: The design of the evaluation did not allow for a comparative assessment between the contributions of the MENAP and changes in experiences of schooling for all children. School support committees, local authorities and DOEs noted that: Khmer children in non-MLE schools also saw improvements in the condition of school facilities; there were better economic conditions for many families; teacher salary increases led to more reliable and engaged teachers; and parents increased their understanding of the value of schooling.¹²⁴ School enrolment increased in Cambodia as overall during the four years of the MENAP.¹²⁵

5.2.2.2 Barriers to inclusion

Although most stakeholders agreed that MLE had encouraged more enrolment and regular attendance, community members acknowledged persistently high numbers of out-of-school children, as well as children not attending during the planting and harvesting seasons. The most frequently cited barriers to inclusion of Indigenous children, cited especially by school support committees, local authorities and DOEs, are listed below in order of frequency of occurrence.¹²⁶

1. Poverty, driving parents to recruit their children to work on farms and in forests, and sending older children to the forest to collect non-timber forest products to sell
2. Malnutrition, driving parents to keep children (especially girls) who are weak and small for their age home from school, sometimes until they are bigger and sometimes indefinitely

¹²³ Confirmed by 63 excerpts sourced from children, community members and teachers in 17 villages, DOE/POE in all provinces, discovery workshops in all four provinces, mixed stakeholders in PP and by MoEYS.

¹²⁴ Enabling factors in non-MLE schools would be worthy of separate investigation in a more general evaluation of education.

¹²⁵ Attributed to general improvements in economic conditions, school facilities, teacher salaries and parents' valuing of education.

¹²⁶ Confirmed by 21 excerpts sourced from six communities and some mixed groups, two of which were non-Indigenous and one that was not yet implementing MLE, although identified as MLE.

3. Some families have not yet grasped that MLE uses a language and teaches a curriculum that offers relevant and meaningful education for their children, unlike their previous experiences with the Khmer national curriculum delivered by Khmer teachers
4. Parents want their children to keep their culture and perceive school as eroding cultural identity and knowledge¹²⁷
5. Safety concerns, especially for girls, motivate parents to refuse schooling (one village reported an increase in sexual assaults on girls walking to school)
6. No one to take children to school during planting and harvesting seasons
7. School violence is motivating parents to refuse schooling (one village reported that nearly all MLE alumni from Grade 3 dropped out of school to avoid a punitive teacher in Grade 4)
8. An unprecedented (and non-traditional) increase in early marriage, causing girls to drop out.¹²⁸

Demographic data at commune or village levels were not available to quantify the meaning of 'more' when participants reported enrolment and attendance increases. School directors and school support committees in Indigenous communities did not have information about numbers of children not attending school. A village leader explained: *"There are lots of children who never go to school – both Indigenous and Khmer. We don't see them and we don't know them so how can we count them?"*

Promising practice: Alternative calendar

The potential for an alternative calendar scheduled to accommodate planting and harvesting seasons was mentioned by all POEs and many DOEs, for both MLE and non-MLE schools. The evaluation found only one example, in Stung Treng, where an alternative calendar had been used successfully to ensure high attendance of Indigenous children when school was in session. In this scenario, however, children were not receiving the equivalent number of days and hours of instruction as the national school calendar (four months less than the national calendar). Many education officers discussed an alternative calendar as a potential solution for children who were out of school or irregular attendees. The main obstacle to flexibly offering schools the option of an alternative calendar is the need for more teachers, textbooks and classrooms on the days when school is in session, as children need to attend school in the mornings and afternoons. Another potential obstacle identified was a possible negative impact on retention of teachers who want to work fewer hours over more days, rather than in concentrated periods of intensive teaching.

5.2.3 Learning outcomes

It was outside the scope of this evaluation to gather effectiveness data through direct assessment of children's learning outcomes in MLE preschools and primary schools compared to children's learning outcomes in non-MLE preschools and primary schools. Nevertheless, approximations of children's learning outcomes can be inferred from several sources.

How likely is it that Indigenous children will become proficient in Khmer?

On a Likert scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely): Mean = 4.90 (range 4.7 to 5.0).

How likely is it that Indigenous children will become proficient in their Indigenous language? On a Likert scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely): Mean = 2.6 (range 1 to 4.2).

Two survey questions that respondents rated on a five-point scale are pertinent here:

These findings suggest that Indigenous children in MLE will be prepared to transition to schooling in the national language, with respondents all stating that it is likely or very likely (with most saying very likely)

¹²⁷ This finding was especially salient in two villages with an MLE preschool and no MLE primary school.

¹²⁸ In some communities visited, children do not start school until pre-adolescence.

that children will become proficient in Khmer. However, they point to a risk that is well known in international MLE research (see Annex 16), that the early exit model of MLE supported by the MENAP may be too brief to establish a foundation for children to become fully capable of speaking, reading and writing their Indigenous language. On average, respondents answered that it was unlikely that children would become proficient in their Indigenous language.

Parent and teacher reports: Indigenous parents and teachers agreed that Indigenous children who were attending school produced samples of written work, mostly in Khmer, but sometimes in their Indigenous language. In most Indigenous communities with MLE primary schools, children, parents and teachers agreed that Indigenous children were learning some Indigenous reading and writing skills.¹²⁹ They noted, however, that these skills were limited and opportunities to develop them were limited by the MLE model requiring a reduction in Indigenous language use each year; instead, emphasis in school and homework was for students to read and write in Khmer.

Children's reports and demonstrations: Indigenous children described learning more vocabulary in their Indigenous language, and some children described learning to write in their Indigenous language. During visits with children, many children demonstrated their writing in Khmer, and some Grade 3 children in some villages could produce a few words or sentences in their Indigenous language.

Findings of studies on MLE learning outcomes in the north-eastern provinces: Studies in Cambodia's north-eastern provinces to date point to some comparative advantages of MLE in terms of academic achievement. In a study commissioned by CARE in 2017 involving MLE primary schools in Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri, the main focus was to assess MLE learners' writing ability. In some MLE classes, over half of the MLE learners in Grade 2 were able to write a sentence in their Indigenous language, while a larger number of MLE learners in Grade 3 could write long or multiple sentences in their Indigenous language. Up to 70 per cent of MLE learners could write multiple sentences in Khmer.¹³⁰ A 2012 study¹³¹ found that MLE learners performed as well as non-MLE learners on Khmer (second language) literacy tasks. Results after four years of a longitudinal study¹³² commissioned by CARE found that MLE learners performed better in mathematics than non-MLE peers and performed equally well on Khmer (second language) literacy tasks compared to non-MLE peers. A study¹³³ using a secondary analysis of a learner assessment database compiled by CARE found that MLE learners performed as well as non-MLE learners in mathematics. This study found that among all learners who had 'regular attendance' in school, MLE learners performed better than non-MLE learners. Basic indicators of reading comprehension, including letter knowledge and familiar word reading, were similar for both MLE and non-MLE learners. This suggests that learning in the mother tongue did not hinder children's emerging comprehension of Khmer, perhaps because the Indigenous language orthographies use the Khmer alphabet. Learning assessments in the latter two studies were done in Khmer language. Studies have not appropriately assessed children's learning using their Indigenous language, which is the main language of learning at least in Grade 1 and part of Grade 2.^{134,135}

¹²⁹ 83 excerpts from qualitative data sources support the perception that MLE students have emergent literacy in their Indigenous language and in the national language by the end of Grade 3.

¹³⁰ The investigators interpreted these findings and indicators as: either MLE students are encouraged only to copy written text rather than to express their own ideas; or they are not being taught to write in their Indigenous language at all, but rather are being given more support to express themselves in writing using Khmer.

¹³¹ Walter, Steve and Carol Benson, 'Language Policy and Medium of Instruction in Formal Education', *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Policy*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2012.

¹³² Lee, Scott, Ron Watt and Jack Frawley, 'Effectiveness of Bilingual Education in Cambodia: A longitudinal comparative case study of ethnic minority children in bilingual and monolingual schools', *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2015, pp. 526-544.

¹³³ Krause, Brooke and Ali Joglekar, 'Preliminary Quantitative Findings on MLE in Cambodia', In Annual Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society, Vancouver BC, March, vol. 9. 2016.

¹³⁴ The need for a learning assessment of MLE students in their Indigenous language was underscored in a survey response by USAID, and has been a main conclusion in all published and non-formal studies of MLE in Cambodia.

¹³⁵ A discussion of a learner outcome assessment in MLE is provided in Annex 16.

5.2.4 Outcome comparisons across provinces

As presented in sub-section 5.2.1, enrolments and regular attendance by Indigenous students in MLE primary schools increased between 2015 and 2018. Compared to the MENAP targets, by 2018 actual enrolment in MLE in Ratanakiri fell short of the target by 22 per cent based on CARE data, or 16.4 per cent based on SED data. In 2018, in Mondulakiri, actual enrolment exceeded the target by 11.4 per cent based on CARE data, or 6.6 per cent based on SED data. In 2018, in Kratie, actual enrolment exceeded targets by 14.7 per cent based on CARE data, or 12.1 per cent based on SED data. In 2018 in Stung Treng, actual enrolment was very close to the target according to both CARE and SED data.

POE officers in Ratanakiri expressed strong motivation to realize the vision of the MENAP, and enrolments in MLE have greatly increased. However, they acknowledged barriers and bottlenecks that resulted in outcomes falling short of targets compared to other provinces. They perceived that having no Indigenous core trainers and no core trainers with Indigenous language or cultural knowledge as significant gaps. Many communities in the highland provinces are hard to reach, especially in the rainy season, and DOEs do not have enough time and resources for sufficient monitoring. Although they have made significant efforts to deliver pre-service and in-service teacher training, there is a shortage of teachers and of funding for teacher training. It is worth noting that Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri have by far the largest population of Indigenous people in Cambodia and are also among the poorest provinces. An education policy budget analysis conducted by Save the Children and other partners recommended that education investment should be increased in all provinces, with a priority on Ratanakiri, Mondulakiri and three other (southern) provinces.¹³⁶

5.2.5 Primary rights holders' satisfaction with the MENAP across provinces

Children, parents, school support committees and local authorities in all communities that have access to MLE preschool and/or primary school expressed strong satisfaction with the opportunity to have relevant content and learning skills taught in a language they understand. There were no instances in any province of community members preferring education in Khmer. The only dissatisfaction expressed was in reference to MLE schools that had closed (DOEs reported these cases were due to declining Indigenous populations) or schools had moved (in one community, the school moved to make way for construction but the teachers did not move and stopped teaching).

Eleven communities provided vivid accounts of children being more brave, confident and communicative in the classroom, and MLE was said to help Indigenous students be more confident when speaking Khmer in public. This was reiterated in two provincial discovery workshops and in the national discovery workshop. A study commissioned by CARE in 2018 found that parents and teachers perceived that MLE makes learning easier and improves communication between teachers and learners. In that study, MLE was said to help students continue in secondary school and in vocational or tertiary education. MLE was perceived as a way to preserve the community's language and culture, and to revitalize words in the Indigenous language.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Save the Children, Education Budget Analysis, Policy Brief, 2017. <https://campaigns.savethechildren.net/sites/campaigns.savethechildren.net/files/Education%20Budget%20analysis%20-policy%20brief%20Final.pdf>.

¹³⁷ Benson, Carolyn J., 'Consultancy Report: Research and Collaboration on MLE Implementation in Cambodia with Special Attention to L1 and Khmer Writing', CARE, Phnom Penh, 2018, p. 5.

5.3 Efficiency

EQ3. How well has the MENAP been managed in terms of the technical and financial resources provided to teachers and school operations?

Summary	
Key evaluation parameter	Key findings
Financial resources for teachers and schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial investment, primarily by CARE, created a basic infrastructure and foundation for implementing the MENAP. • The overall commitment of the government to education in Cambodia averaged roughly 3 per cent of gross domestic product during the first MENAP – significantly lower than successful Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, where commitment is over 5 per cent. • Funds reported by SED for the MENAP totalled US\$ 20,988,¹³⁸ and were provided for 2018 only. Through the conversion of MLE community schools to state schools, government support for MLE schools has been primarily in terms of salaries and budgets. MLE schools have been mainstreamed as part of the Programme Budget provided to POEs. • From 2015–2018, funds reported by CARE for the MENAP totalled US\$ 672,776. • From 2016–2018, funds reported by UNICEF for the MENAP totalled US\$ 748,609. • Facilities for MLE classrooms and schools have been expanded and upgraded through partnerships with local and international donors. • POEs reported that the operational costs for MLE preschools and schools were not substantially greater than for non-MLE schools. • MLE primary school teachers have been converted to contract and state teachers, resulting in higher and more reliable pay. • Financial support to MLE preschools has been problematic, as most depend on commune council funds and are not yet under the management of education offices for teacher salaries. • The government's Sub-Decree No. 245, passed during the tenure of the MENAP, provides the legal framework to increase financial support to MLE preschools in future.
MENAP management in terms of technical and financial resources for teachers and school operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality improvement has been hindered by insufficient financial and technical support for teacher training, retention and monitoring to meet targets in Ratanakiri and to meet growing demand overall. • Sub-national educators identified awareness-raising as a needed strategy in communities. This would reassure teachers that MLE is government authorized, and encourage the public to value diverse languages and cultures as national resources. • Lack of harmonized locations of MLE preschools and primary schools is a significant inefficiency, attributed to a lack of coordination among preschool and primary education decision makers at national and sub-national levels. • The training capacity and high Indigenous student enrolment at PTTCs have not been harnessed to the objective of increased and more qualified MLE teaching capacity. The 30-day MLE teacher training module created by CARE for a fast-track training initiative involving PTTCs prior to the MENAP has not been utilized. • CARE-trained Indigenous teacher trainers have been inexplicably furloughed.
Targets reached within the MENAP timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders uniformly rated successful implementation of MENAP strategies within the past four years 'highly' or 'very highly', indicating high levels of satisfaction. • Community schools were converted to state schools, enabling basic school needs to be met. Teachers and core trainers have received training, although it has been difficult to keep up with demand, and quality gaps remain. School support committees have been the primary strategy for community engagement. Active roles for

¹³⁸ Conversion: 4,050 riels for US\$ 1.

Summary	
Key evaluation parameter	Key findings
	<p>community language networks and Indigenous peoples' organizations have not been explored.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education management information systems have slightly improved, but identifying ethnicity does not yet seem to be possible. Streamlined and digitized data collection from village to national levels has not been achieved. Integrated education and demographic data systems to enable evaluation of MENAP strategies does not yet seem to be possible.
Comparison of the MENAP to alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MENAP has resulted in significant increases in the inclusion of children who have had the lowest participation rates in Cambodia. Its incremental approach in terms of numbers of language groups encompassed has allowed for infrastructure development. • Research is needed to determine the ultimate effectiveness of a short-exit bridging model compared to a longer-term model targeting literacy in an Indigenous language before the transition to Khmer-medium schooling.

5.3.1 Financial resources for implementation of the MENAP

The overall commitment of the government to education averaged roughly 3 per cent of gross domestic product¹³⁹ during the five years of the MENAP. This is a significant increase from previous years but is still lower than successful ASEAN countries, which invest over 5 per cent of gross domestic product.¹⁴⁰ Although it is not known how much is budgeted for core education areas, such as primary, secondary or tertiary education, or for specific initiatives, such as the MENAP, it is generally understood that almost 80 per cent of education costs in Cambodia are for primary education.¹⁴¹ The MENAP did not appear to have a financial plan for its five-year tenure, and activities were not costed. The conversion of MLE community schools to state schools has enabled MLE schools to be financially supported through the government's primary education financing. However, throughout this section, findings indicate insufficient funds for expansion of MLE to meet demand and, in Ratanakiri, to meet targets. There are also insufficient funds to enable activities that enhance quality, including sufficient teacher training, monitoring, curriculum review and revision, and on-going capacity building.

A record of expenditures by the SED from its inception in 2016 until the evaluation data collection closing date in October 2018, and key contributions by CARE and UNICEF, appear to represent the main financial resources for implementation of the MENAP 2015–2018.

Financial resources from government: Funds for implementing the MENAP have been contributed by the government and have been leveraged through partnerships with a number of donors. CARE was by far the most significant contributor to establishing the foundations for MLE in Cambodia, starting in 2002. CARE contributed significantly to implementing the MENAP through its on-going financial contributions during the MENAP years and through its legacy of MLE teacher training modules, MLE curricula for Grades 1 to 3, supplementary books for MLE, and intensive capacity development over nearly two decades. Shortly after the inception of the MENAP, CARE began to transition out of the role of primary implementer and the transition to government ownership began.

According to summary information provided by SED (created in 2016 as the implementing department for the MENAP), it received US\$ 20,988 from the government in 2018 only, specifically targeted for teacher training in Ratanakiri and Monduliri. Beyond this, SED has relied on UNICEF to fund and/or carry out activities related to MLE.

¹³⁹ Royal Government of Cambodia, 'National Strategic Development Plan 2014–2018'.

¹⁴⁰ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 'Education Strategic Plan 2014–2018', Phnom Penh, 2014, p. 8.

¹⁴¹ Save the Children, Education Budget Analysis, Policy Brief, 2017.

<https://campaigns.savethechildren.net/sites/campaigns.savethechildren.net/files/Education%20Budget%20analysis%20-policy%20brief%20Final.pdf>.

Financial resources from CARE: With the endorsement of the MENAP by the government, CARE began to plan its exit as the main implementer and to draw down investments to key activities. Table 7 shows project expenditures for MLE from 2015 to 2018 reported by CARE for this evaluation.

Table 7. CARE expenditures on MENAP activities 2015–2018

Project name	Amount expended (US\$)	Per cent total
EEM-ANCP	282,007	41.92
CCOSC	95,940	14.26
MLE teacher training	94,637	14.07
PCTFI fund	58,932	8.76
Technical MLE assistance	50,422	7.49
Bending Bamboo	33,205	4.94
MoEYS technical assistance on child-friendly schools for EM	24,265	3.61
ECED technical assistance	17,477	2.60
Consultancy on MLE	15,892	2.36
Total	672,777	100

Financial resources from UNICEF: UNICEF is among the top three financial contributors to education in Cambodia.¹⁴² Following the transition from CARE to MoEYS as the implementer of the MENAP, between 2016 and 2018¹⁴³ UNICEF Cambodia contributed to capacity development, secondary school scholarships for Indigenous students (based on DOE identification), monitoring, and teacher salary top-ups. UNICEF expenditures are summarized in Table 8 in order of largest to smallest areas of investment. A breakdown within the main categories is provided in detail in Annex 8, where these expenditures are also represented graphically.

Table 8. UNICEF expenditures on MENAP activities 2016–2018

Category of support	Funds spent (US\$)	Per cent total
MLE teacher training in four north-eastern provinces	265,600	35.5
Education scholarships for Indigenous students	258,908	34.6
Monitoring of MLE	80,984	10.8
Capacity development for sub-national education officials	77,472	10.3
Incentives ¹⁴⁴ (salary top-ups) for MLE teachers	34,451	4.6
Partnership engagement with non-government orgs	23,171	3.1
Planning for new MENAP	8,022	1.1
Total	748,608	100

¹⁴² Education Congress Report, 2017, p. 8.

¹⁴³ The years for which expenditures were provided for the evaluation.

¹⁴⁴ The term incentives is used in UNICEF documents and refers to top-ups.

5.3.2 Management of the MENAP in terms of technical and financial resources provided to teachers and school operations

5.3.2.1 Findings about management of financial resources for teachers and school operations¹⁴⁵

According to POE and DOE officers in all four provinces, operational budgets¹⁴⁶ for MLE schools are similar to any other school.

For both MLE preschools and primary schools, POEs have leveraged partnerships with local NGOs (mainly United World Schools, Global Partnership for Education, We World) to provide new buildings and classrooms for MLE primary schools and some MLE preschools. Development partners have also improved school infrastructure and, as noted, provided salary top-ups to teachers.

The budget for the MLE programme is a small part of the government budget. Most of the budget focuses on training teachers. The rest of the budget is the same as any other school. But more needs to be invested in building MLE expertise in order to ensure quality.
– POE director

MLE primary schools

POEs reported that they had created annual operational plans and budget strategic plans, and provided a budget for each MLE primary school. This enabled them to purchase more teaching and learning resources than before the MENAP. The annual operational plans, budget strategic plans and school budgets were not made available to the evaluation team. For MLE primary schools, there is a reported financial interdependence between the POE and PED, and on-going uncertainty about budget approval from the Ministry of Economy and Finance. However, the MENAP has increased the reliability of teachers' salaries: POEs have provided regular payment of salaries to primary school teachers since they were recognized as contract teachers or state teachers.

MLE preschools

The MENAP has contributed to remote Indigenous communities having preschools where there were none. The government reportedly created new infrastructure and financial support for these preschools. MLE preschools have been financially supported and administered through an integrated plan involving commune councils and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), and POEs have provided technical support.¹⁴⁷ Preschool teachers on the government payroll reported being paid regularly, but communes pay nearly all MLE preschool teachers. There were numerous reports of salaries varying in amount, and frequently being delayed, sometimes up to one year. Education officials frequently cited the difficulty in retaining preschool teachers who receive low pay and often do not receive regular monitoring or mentorship as a key reason they hesitate to invest in preschool teacher training. They reported that financial support from the government for training is inadequate and they depend on UNICEF funds, creating an uncertain situation.

5.3.2.2 Findings on the management of technical resources for teachers and school operations

MLE primary schools

Interest in ensuring a continuing, adequate supply of training for MLE teachers following the exit of CARE can be seen as a positive impact of the MENAP. POEs and DOEs have provided in-service training to teachers, but the training courses are often behind schedule, due to insufficient funds. Although POEs and DOEs have a management plan in place for in-service training and on-going

¹⁴⁵ Confirmed by 163 excerpts sourced from all types of actors, mostly from teachers, DOE/POE, MoEYS and mixed Phnom Penh. Eleven of these were specifically about resources; 26 excerpts refer to efficiency.

¹⁴⁶ As noted in Section 4, budget and expenditure data available to the evaluation team was sparse and did not include provincial data of any kind. The team encountered difficulties connecting with provincial officers who presumably hold financial data, and there was no follow through on requests for financial data.

¹⁴⁷ Confirmed by 22 excerpts sourced from community, teachers, DOE/POE, mixed Mondulakiri, mixed Ratanakiri, mixed Kratie, MoEYS and NGOs in Mondulakiri.

teacher support, they reported insufficient understanding of MLE pedagogy and too few officers who are Indigenous or who have Indigenous language capacity. These were the most outstanding capacity gaps identified by POEs and DOEs and were confirmed by stakeholders at all levels of the education system, from community to national duty bearers. Education officers explained that this motivated continued calls upon CARE, especially for training new teachers.¹⁴⁸ SED also reported recently depending on ICC for Indigenous language training for MLE teachers. SED reported making monitoring trips to each of the four provinces once per year in 2017 and 2018, covering 27 MLE primary schools and 26 MLE preschools. Teachers, school directors and school support committees reported a need for more in-service training and technical support on MLE pedagogy. Senior education officers pointed to the potential of the PTTCs to contribute to teacher pre-service and in-service training.

Since the MENAP, MoEYS, POEs and DOEs visit MLE primary schools regularly to monitor teacher attendance, learn from teachers, provide resources and support teachers. High teacher turnover was frequently identified as a barrier to efficiency and was attributed to job insecurity, low salaries and isolation in remote villages without regular mentoring or monitoring support. In Stung Treng, low teacher education qualifications were also noted as a factor driving teachers to resign, as they were not able to teach the curriculum content.

We spend a lot of time and money training teachers and then, when they nearly reach their qualifications, they quit. The reasons are the insecurity of the position, which is subject to annual renewal by the commune council, the low salary, and their feeling alone and not confident.
– DOE, Stung Treng

MLE preschools

The evaluation team struggled to gather a coherent picture of the management or impacts of technical support for MLE preschools. Many visits arranged with preschool teachers and parents resulted in no-shows. DOEs were unable to provide financial or education data about the preschools. Some of the MLE preschool teachers expressed uncertainty about whether they should be using the Indigenous language, and pointed to a lack of clear instruction or resources for doing so. One MLE preschool teacher was unaware that her programme was a designated MLE site.

There appears to be an uncertain approach to training MLE preschools teachers (which may be understandable considering the relatively new concept and structure of early childhood education in the four provinces). Low retention of MLE preschool teachers was cited by POEs as a reason they hesitate to invest in training preschool teachers. POE and DOE visits to preschools were not as commonly reported. All stakeholders identified an immediate need for more support of all kinds to sustain the quality of MLE preschools. Before SED was established, ECED was responsible for MLE preschool teacher training. It used a four-day MLE teacher training curriculum created by CARE, in addition to the standard community preschool training. Since the establishment of SED, training appears to have involved a combination of efforts from ECED, SED, UNICEF, POE and others. Primary duty bearers agreed that there is no one actor responsible for MLE preschool training. A problem noted by all MLE preschool teachers and many educator officers is that MLE preschool teacher training is provided in Khmer. According to officers in PED, many preschool teachers have limited proficiency in the use of oral and written Khmer language. In many cases, those who read in Khmer are not able to translate from Khmer into their Indigenous language, so they teach children in MLE preschools in Khmer. All stakeholders identified an immediate need for more support of all kinds to improve the quality of MLE preschools.

¹⁴⁸ Confirmed by 61 excerpts in all provinces, by community members, teachers, education officials at all levels, universities, development partners, and others not part of the MLE system. All discovery workshops discussed and expressed consensus on the issues.

5.3.2.3 Findings about general support for MLE teachers and schools

Education officers' support for MLE was found to be variable. The pivotal roles of school directors in MLE was underscored in all the provincial discovery workshops, attributed to their detailed knowledge of the communities and their relationships with primary rights holders.

When I became a school director, I saw that they were teaching MLE and I didn't know why. I didn't know how to help. Then, I received training about MLE and I knew how to support MLE. I could help share about the value of this! It was clear that the teachers were starting to recognize their value. The parents as well were getting involved. You could see it in the environment—we were meeting together with the parents and they were getting involved. The children were sharing with parents and it became a very strong situation. The biggest change that we have seen in the village during the time of the MENAP is the level of cooperation that the children have reached. There is no discrimination, which is reflected in the community. [...] I want to support the teachers who want to have MLE until Grade 6. I know that when parents are giving advice because they love their village that makes us all succeed! I do my work not just to have a job.

– School Director, Monduliri province

DOEs often described how their support for MLE had grown incrementally over the four years of the MENAP, as they came to understand that the government is committed, and that children and parents strongly support it.

In addition to on-going improvements, some DOE officers described having restricted capacity to affect quality. They attributed this to limited financial and technical resources, difficulty in reaching village schools, and no time during school visits to meet with parents to find out how children were doing or why some children were not in school. Some DOEs expressed a view that improvements in non-MLE schools would be sufficient to solve education problems for all children. In all communities with no MLE primary school, school support committees reported repeated unanswered requests to the DOEs to have MLE.

When it comes to the capacity building, it's not like in the past, when we ignored them [indigenous children]. Now we are able to pay attention to them. We didn't worry much about them in the past. We were interested, but we didn't meet their needs. Now in MLE we really do try. – DOE officer

Education officers in all four provinces uniformly emphasized an outstanding need for more technical and financial support to:

1. Strengthen MLE expertise throughout the education system, including teachers, administrators, school support committees and non-formal educators in local NGOs. Indigenous organizations also needed to understand MLE
2. Enable more frequent monitoring visits to schools, especially for remote schools where costs and conditions of travel and accommodation are barriers to sufficient monitoring and mentoring
3. Improve data collection systems
4. Increase the quantity of teaching and learning resources in both preschools and primary schools.



Road conditions prevent regular visits by POEs to MLE schools
© UNICEF Cambodia/2018/ChemSopheak

5.3.2.4 Awareness-raising of MLE in communities and society

Many school directors were seen by stakeholders as being active in raising awareness about MLE in communities.¹⁴⁹ School directors reported being aware that some MLE preschool and primary teachers were not confident that MLE was authorized by the government, and pointed to the need for more awareness raising.¹⁵⁰ School directors suggested that, in Cambodia, special efforts were needed to help teachers feel secure about innovation. Sub-national leaders in education emphasized a need to convince the public of the value of language and cultural diversity as national resources.

5.3.2.5 Disjunctive locations of MLE preschools and primary schools

The evaluation found that some children have access to MLE preschools and also to MLE primary schools. However, MLE preschool teachers described focusing on teaching children Khmer as quickly as possible, with exposure to the Khmer alphabet and no exposure to written Indigenous languages. They described using Indigenous languages only as needed to orient children in learning Khmer. This would be an appropriate use of an MLE preschool if there was no MLE primary school available for Indigenous children in the community. However, this was not always the case. Some children could continue to MLE primary school. Some children with access to MLE primary school also had access to non-MLE preschool, with a focus on learning Khmer.

Efficiencies would be achieved through co-location of MLE preschools and primary schools. This has only been done systematically in Kratie, which appears to have a coordinated decision-making body that agreed that co-location was efficient and beneficial to Indigenous communities in providing continuous access to education in the mother tongue.

5.3.3 Assessment of targets reached within the timeframe of the MENAP

Responding to the question, “Overall, how well do you think the MENAP has been implemented over the past four years?” as a group, stakeholders (122 participants: 57 female / 47 per cent) rated implementation of the MENAP ‘highly’ or ‘very highly’, on a five-point scale from very low (1) to very high (5) (mean 4.1, range 2.6 – 5.0). This indicated a very positive opinion of how well the MENAP had been implemented.

Findings reported in Section 5.2 showed that the MENAP had achieved its quantitative targets in terms of expanded delivery of MLE and strengthening systems for managing MLE provisions. Findings pointed

¹⁴⁹ Confirmed by 76 excerpts sourced from all types of participants in the evaluation.

¹⁵⁰ Some school directors posted an official letter of permission as a way to reassure parents and teachers that MLE is authorized in MLE classrooms. Even with this support, some teachers expressed hesitation in using their Indigenous language in the classroom.

to system improvements consistent with some of the key MENAP strategies that had been achieved over the four years of implementing the plan, shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Additional MENAP targets and achievements

Target	Achievement
Ensure all community schools are converted to state schools.	This target was achieved and had significant implications for reaching other targets.
Sufficient resources and infrastructure to implement the plan at the national level.	Basic needs were met by the conversion of community schools to state schools, although there were funding shortfalls for materials, especially language and cultural resources.
MLE training for school teachers working in MLE schools.	Training opportunities have been provided to MLE primary and some MLE preschool teachers, as well as to MLE core trainers. The PTTCs have not yet been strategically harnessed to MLE teacher training objectives.
Training on community consultations, community involvement and building the capacity of school support committees.	POEs and DOEs have received training and made efforts to involve community members through school support committees and local authorities. ¹⁵¹ Engagement of community language networks and Indigenous peoples' organizations has not been achieved.
Mapping enrolled and dropped out students, as well as students who have never been enrolled, and conducting one workshop per province to map Indigenous children in and out of school.	Data on student enrolment were available from schools, but (as mentioned) did not indicate Indigeneity. Data on children who had never attended school were generally unavailable. ¹⁵²
Constructing dormitories at secondary schools for students who come from ethnic minority communities, developing strategies for quality improvement of schools, and implementing school improvement plans.	Assessment of these targets was out of the scope of the current evaluation, which focused mainly on preschool and primary school MLE.

In addition to incremental target achievements, especially in terms of quantity of MLE provision and participation, some findings pointed to gaps in the quality of education provision in MLE primary schools and preschools. Stakeholders most frequently attributed these to:

1. Teachers lacking understanding of MLE pedagogy¹⁵³
2. Teachers lacking literacy skills in the Indigenous language and therefore lacking confidence to innovate lessons or create their own materials
3. Teachers with low education qualifications lack general knowledge to teach effectively or to benefit demonstrably from repeated training workshops
4. Out-dated or insufficient Indigenous cultural content in the MLE curriculum.

5.3.4 Comparison of the MENAP to alternative approaches

Based on interviews with school support committees, local authorities and NGOs, it would appear that some additional resources and supports could have been leveraged and some efficiencies might have

¹⁵¹ Confirmed by 102 excerpts sourced from more than three types of actors.

¹⁵² Confirmed by 31 excerpts sourced from more than three types of actors.

¹⁵³ MLE pedagogy was a frequently heard term in the provinces and conveyed that stakeholders understand that teaching in a language that is not the national language of education may require some special skills, particularly if a goal is to teach to some extent in both the national language and the local Indigenous language.

been realized if existing resources were capitalized sooner. This included building up capacity and harnessing more support for MLE teacher training at the PTTCs. A partnership with local universities could have been forged for research on MLE learning outcomes, participatory action research on MLE teacher competencies and innovations, and formative evaluation of implementation strategies. Local NGOs with Indigenous language competencies and years of experience with non-formal education in Indigenous communities could have contributed relevant teaching and learning resources.¹⁵⁴ Annex 16 lists the types of resources produced by local NGOs that are untapped resources for MLE. This is especially relevant given the lack of Indigenous language resources for MLE preschools. These provincial organizations could also have helped CARE and now MoEYS to connect with Indigenous peoples' organizations and language networks.

To evaluate cost-effectiveness, stakeholders must determine what each outcome is worth. There are innumerable economic, cultural and social costs to Cambodia of not providing Indigenous children access to education that they understand and which parents value. One way to evaluate cost-effectiveness would be to compare the social and economic costs of out-of-school children with education and economic outcomes for children who complete primary school or beyond. Data were not available on out-of-school children in the communities visited for the evaluation.



Teachers share how the MLE curriculum enables them to provide culturally meaningful education. © UNICEF Cambodia/2018/Jessica Ball

The findings suggest that the MENAP has provided a next-step alternative to the path-finding MLE innovations introduced by CARE. The MENAP is a tool for transitioning MLE from primary development partner support to government ownership. The government has the authority, structures, and means to build on the administrative systems, teaching cadre, MLE curricula and demand within Indigenous communities to create an effective and sustainable specialization within the education system. This would promote equity and advance the Sustainable Development Goals. Stakeholders across the education spectrum agree on this assessment.

¹⁵⁴ International Cooperation Cambodia and Non-Timber Forest Products in particular have largest repositories of Indigenous language reading materials and Indigenous musical instruments and tools, and long-standing strong connections with Indigenous communities.

5.4 Impact

EQ4. To what extent has the MENAP contributed to ensuring that Indigenous children have access to equitable, inclusive, quality and relevant education?

Summary	
Key evaluation parameter	Key findings
Contributions to equitable, inclusive, quality, relevant education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are more engaged in learning in, and beyond, the classroom, with aspirations to continue to higher education. • MLE has created an avenue for retaining language and culture and reducing discrimination against Indigenous people in schools and social settings. There is demand for an extension of MLE to Grade 6. • Demand for MLE in language communities not included in the MENAP 2015–2018 far exceeds current capacity, such that Khmer continues to be used in many communities where more than half of the children have an Indigenous mother tongue. • Some educators believe that MLE calls for separate classrooms, teachers and curricula for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children.
Capacities to manage and monitor MLE implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MENAP has consolidated the basic infrastructure for MLE, built primarily by CARE. • Key capacity improvements include the employment of MLE core trainers at the provincial level, the conversion of community schools to state schools and community teachers to state teachers, the introduction of Sub-Decree No. 245, which will improve management of community preschools, and the introduction of an ethnic identifier in education data collection. • Sub-national educators and local authorities are becoming strong advocates, though all expressed a need to deepen understanding of MLE.
Unintended results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and students are more engaged as communities of learners. • Parents are becoming motivated to learn to read and write in their Indigenous language. • Khmer children and parents in predominantly Indigenous villages appear to be receptive to MLE. • The representation of MLE as a short bridge into mainstream, Khmer-mediated curriculum has inadvertently conveyed an ambivalence about Indigenous languages as valued languages and outcomes of learning in themselves, and created hesitation on the part of some MLE preschool and primary school teachers to fully commit to teaching the Indigenous language using only the MLE curriculum.

5.4.1 Contributions of the MENAP to equitable, inclusive, quality and relevant education for Indigenous children

MLE is sparking children's interest in learning and in their cultural heritage, building confidence in schooling and connecting education to their daily lives. – DOE officer

Positive impacts beyond the classroom: In addition to increased enrolment, attendance and engagement in school, Indigenous girls and boys and their parents reported that children now bring home books to read in Khmer and in their Indigenous language, and bring home the MLE curriculum books to review.¹⁵⁵ More parents are bringing their children to school instead of asking their children to go on their own and leaving it up to children to decide whether to go. Some children go to school even when parents go to the farm.¹⁵⁶ Many children expressed their desire to continue their education and to become teachers, doctors, police and other professionals. Parents and school support committee

¹⁵⁵ Confirmed by 71 excerpts from at least three types of sources.

¹⁵⁶ Confirmed by 38 excerpts from more than three types of sources.

members described these aspirations as showing a new interest in education and work beyond the village—unknown before children had access to MLE. School directors and other education officials described how children in MLE meaningfully engage in learning and can write their own ideas, whereas children not in MLE tend to be limited to rote learning (recitation and copying from provided texts).¹⁵⁷ Despite general recognition of quality gaps and management challenges, many sub-national duty bearers in all four provinces described how their interest in MLE had grown in recent years as they have seen more children from MLE primary schools going on to complete secondary school, obtain jobs, or go on to tertiary education. Incidental to the current evaluation, but illustrating the impact of MLE, POE officers in Monduliri and Kratie reported that a few Indigenous children who had been in MLE primary schools before 2015 had gone on to win ‘most outstanding student’ recognition in lower secondary school.¹⁵⁸ Anecdotal examples were offered of MLE graduates from the period before the MENAP going on to become MLE teachers.¹⁵⁹

Before MLE, in our community we all used to speak Khmer 80 per cent of the time. Now, since MLE, we use Kraol more than 80 per cent of the time. – School support committee member, Kratie

Our culture is progressing, and someone needs to progress alongside the culture. – School support committee member, Ratanakiri

Community members mixed a lot of their culture with Khmer culture, and with MLE they are reviving their own culture. – DOE officer, Monduliri

Positive impacts on cultural retention: School support committee members reported that MLE has impacted cultural preservation and language revitalization. Participants in provincial discovery workshops concurred that MLE has strengthened Indigenous language in the community and positively impacted relationships within and beyond the community. They reported that children can switch between their Indigenous language and Khmer as social situations require. Parents are not as fearful of discrimination by Khmer people, because their Indigenous language has been legitimized in the school system. In communities without MLE there were several reports of discrimination against Indigenous children and parents. The evaluation team observed this first-hand.

Demand for expanded MLE: Many village and commune leaders, school directors and DOE officers reported wanting MLE preschools and primary schools in villages with high numbers of Indigenous children.¹⁶⁰ Some DOEs and most POEs explained that, due to limited capacity, they had set population-based criteria for introducing MLE, ranging from 60 to 90 per cent Indigenous children in a school catchment area. Khmer continues to be favoured even when more than half of the children in a school catchment have an Indigenous mother tongue.

Separate language streams: Some school directors and DOEs said they understood MLE to mean that Indigenous and non-Indigenous children were separated into different classrooms with different curricula, requiring double the number of classrooms and teachers, thereby making the cost of MLE prohibitive. There were clear indications of a lack of understanding about how MLE works within language-integrated classrooms and that MLE can benefit both Khmer and Indigenous children, as they all become at least partially bilingual (to the extent that a short exit programme allows).

¹⁵⁷ Confirmed by 34 excerpts from more than three types of sources.

¹⁵⁸ Confirmed by 27 excerpts from more than three types of sources.

¹⁵⁹ The evaluation team did not have access to information that could corroborate these reports.

¹⁶⁰ In one community where an MLE school had been closed, commune and village chiefs and teachers were assertive in the provincial workshop, demanding that the school be re-opened.

5.4.2 Changed capacities of national and sub-national education officials to manage and monitor MLE implementation

The earlier sub-section on effectiveness discussed the capacities of national and sub-national education officials to manage and monitor MLE implementation.

National capacity: Some initiatives as part of the MENAP were especially salient to stakeholders, including:

1. The Royal Government of Cambodia's Sub-Decree No. 245 for the Management of Community Preschools, issued by the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Economy and Finance and MoEYS
2. Approval to include an ethnicity identifier in the Education Management Information System¹⁶¹
3. Conversion of teachers, which required collaboration among all levels of the education system, where all community primary schools have become state schools, all community primary teachers have become state teachers, and more than 20 community teachers (including 5 female / 25 per cent) have become recognized as qualified state teachers (in 2016)
4. MoEYS-approved employment of MLE core trainers at the provincial level.

At the national level, key informants reported perceived gaps in the capacity of government to lead and manage MLE under the current arrangements. Whereas capacity was built in PED and ECED, it only had limited transfer to the SED, established in 2016. A five-member team within SED (self-identified as the Office of Planning) came to this role with no prior training or experience with MLE or preschool, and no Indigenous language capacity. There is no Indigenous language or cultural capacity on the team. The team described relying extensively on more established capacity, mostly in POEs and development partners. The SED team made a total of 53 monitoring visits during 2017 and 2018. POEs reported that there has been insufficient monitoring of MLE primary schools by SED.

There are gaps in capacity for collection and management of education information and improvements in data collected are needed to enable disaggregation according to ethnicity, first language, gender, age and location.

Sub-national capacity: Leadership for MLE appears to be coming from those positioned most closely to MLE and able to see the positive impacts. Duty bearers at the sub-national level built significant capacity during the period of the MENAP. For example, they are gathering documentation to justify requests for MLE schools, monitoring teachers and students, engaging with school support committees and local authorities, preparing budgets and plans, assigning core trainers, and conducting training.¹⁶² This sub-national capacity was evident at all four provincial workshops, as school support committee members, local authorities, school directors and DOE officers came with clear agendas (often to advocate for new MLE schools or MLE enhancements), practice-based evidence, and a spirit of collaboration. They generally acknowledged their on-going need for more understanding of MLE and more training on how to deliver it. All identified an urgent need for more Indigenous people to join as community-based collaborators and as paid staff at all levels, bringing not only their Indigenous language capacity and cultural knowledge, but also their understanding of how to communicate with, motivate and engage community members.

In all four provinces, primary rights holders reported more frequent visits and improved relationships between MLE schools and DOEs over the past four years. Considering the remote locations of many MLE schools, DOEs made a significant effort to perform their monitoring duties.

5.4.3 Demand for quality MLE among children, parents, school support committees and commune councils as a result of the MENAP

¹⁶¹ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 'Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: Cambodia country study executive summary', March 5, 2015, p.10.

¹⁶² Confirmed by 52 excerpts from communities, DOEs and POEs in all provinces, discovery workshops in all provinces and in Phnom Penh, and by NGOs.

Demand for extended MLE: Some participants expressed a view that quality MLE meant extended instruction in the Indigenous language until at least Grade 6 so that children could become literate in their mother tongue.¹⁶³ During two provincial workshops, stakeholders in varying roles were vocal about the perceived advantages and demand for this among their constituents. Some participants in the national workshop recognized the need to explore this. A presentation from the Joint Technical Working Group Education Retreat in June 2018¹⁶⁴ states this as one of the key issues and action points: “*To have MLE integrated in ECE and primary education, based on scientifically researched learning outcomes of students, would be better if MLE is expanded up to Grade 6.*”

5.4.4 Unintended results associated with the implementation of the MENAP

5.4.4.1 Unintended positive impacts

Many accounts emphasized that MLE teachers attend classes much more regularly than they did before MLE, and more regularly than teachers in non-MLE schools. School support committees reported that MLE teachers came to class more enthusiastic and prepared to teach, and they used culturally relevant content and the mother tongue to support students’ understanding, even after Grade 3. Parents and school support committee members described teachers and students learning together as a community in MLE classrooms, where teachers develop close, positive relationships with children and ‘walk alongside’ them.¹⁶⁵ Previously, in non-MLE classrooms, teachers were seen as having to spend a long time explaining things from textbooks. In MLE there is more of a sense of discovery and more opportunities for participatory and experiential learning.

We would have less work if there were no MLE, but the teaching would be useless. With MLE, students learn and move on to the next levels. Without MLE, there is less work but the same students stay at the same level, not learning, year after year. – Primary education director

Parents reported increased motivation to become literate in their Indigenous language as they saw their children being more engaged in learning through MLE.

Many education officials reported their own, self-assessed need for more training in MLE and the need for additional POE staff who are Indigenous and proficient in their mother tongue.

Khmer children and parents in some predominantly Indigenous villages appeared to be receptive to MLE, dispelling concerns expressed by mostly national-level stakeholders that Khmer families might oppose MLE. Sub-national duty bearers attribute this impact to advocacy by local authorities and school support committees, which helped Khmer parents understand the value of bilingual learning and the fact that children learn the Khmer alphabet and can continue in Grade 4 in Khmer.

5.4.4.2 Unintended negative impacts

Unintended negative impacts are mainly attributable to the marketing of MLE as a ‘bridge’ to learning in Khmer.¹⁶⁶ This is widely interpreted to mean: ‘a bridge to **being able** to learn in Khmer’. Therefore, a significant number of more senior educators, both nationally and in POEs and DOEs, described a rush to help children ‘get over’ their Indigenous language and cross the bridge, not only into Khmer as a foundation for learning, but into a Khmer-language mediated world. Some educators asked the evaluators how much longer MLE would be ‘necessary’ before Indigenous children could speak Khmer in early childhood and start school in Khmer. Some educators expressed doubt about more Indigenous

¹⁶³ Confirmed by 13 excerpts from more than three types of sources.

¹⁶⁴ A brief report by Anton De Grauwe on the JTWG Education Retreat 2018 did not specify expansion to Grade 6.

¹⁶⁵ Confirmed by 55 excerpts from 14 villages, DOEs and POEs in all provinces, and discovery workshops in all provinces.

¹⁶⁶ The perception that MLE is marketed as a short bridge into a Khmer world was confirmed by 43 excerpts from 20 villages, by DOEs and POEs in all provinces, discovery workshops in all provinces, and development partners.

cultural content in the curriculum because “*children should be learning our Khmer culture, and our Khmer ways*”. Several said Indigenous language would not help children to get jobs and be part of “our society”. Two POE directors and several DOE officers said they urged teachers to tell non-Khmer parents to speak Khmer as much as possible at home so that their children could learn Khmer quickly. This understanding of MLE mainly as a means to induct Indigenous children into a Khmer world was felt strongly by many teachers, even though all MLE primary school teachers clearly conveyed a deeper grasp of MLE and appreciation of its many benefits.

Many MLE primary school teachers described responding to their own perception that MLE was seen by some authorities as a short bridge that children should be hurried across as quickly as possible. These responses are noted below:

- MLE teachers in one province expressed fear that MLE was not really authorized by the government, but rather was ‘only a CARE project’. The exit of CARE as the primary implementer of MLE stimulated a pulling away from MLE in some areas. Hearing that CARE was exiting MLE, the teachers asked why they should continue teaching a programme that they perceived was going to end. One MLE trainer explained that teachers feared they could get into trouble if they used the CARE curriculum or Indigenous language in their classrooms.
- Teachers reported that education officers at different levels were telling them that they had to keep teaching the Khmer curriculum in addition to the CARE MLE curriculum.
- Some teachers, aiming to fulfil perceived government expectations, described a need to test children only in Khmer at the end of the school year.
- Citing similar reasons, some teachers reported that they try to limit the use the Indigenous language even in Grades 1 and 2.
- Some teachers encouraged Indigenous children to speak Khmer at home, because of their understanding that the purpose of MLE was only to attract and familiarize Indigenous children with schooling and then get them ready to learn in Khmer, and not to support them to become proficient (fully fluent and literate) in their Indigenous language.
- In the preschool context, some MLE preschool teachers explained that they did not use the Indigenous language much or at all, especially if children could communicate in Khmer. Many explained that they needed training in what they referred to as ‘MLE pedagogy’, saying it was not a simple task to take the mainstream training for preschool teachers and know how to make this relevant and meaningful when using more than one language. Some explained that, as the children would need to know Khmer for primary school, they were focusing on Khmer. Posters and decorations in preschool classrooms displayed only the Khmer alphabet and words.

5.5 Sustainability

EQ5. What are the key enabling factors, barriers and bottlenecks towards achieving sustainability of the MENAP for a new five-year term (2019 to 2023)?

Summary	
Key evaluation parameter	Key findings
Positive steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management capacity and functional relationships have been created among some key actors at the sub-national level to support expansion of MLE.
Enabling factors, barriers and bottlenecks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All MLE primary schools have been converted to state schools. • There is commitment to include primary school teachers as state teachers. • Sub-Decree No. 245 on the Management of Community Preschools provides a mechanism for ensuring a living wage that is reliably paid to preschool teachers. • The government has committed funds for implementation, but sub-national duty bearers say the amounts are not sufficient to meet training needs, monitoring, and quality improvements.

Summary	
Key evaluation parameter	Key findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SED is beginning to build capacity as the implementing department at the national level but lacks a functional mechanism to ensure inputs from other relevant departments in MoEYS. • Divergent views of the purpose of MLE is hampering full commitment of some senior leaders at national and sub-national levels to Indigenous languages and cultures in education and society. • Partnerships with PTTCs and Indigenous language organizations have yet to be developed as sources of Indigenous teachers and Indigenous language expertise.
Potential for a new MENAP with full government ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government has the capacity to assume full ownership of a new MENAP if the capacity of the SED is strengthened and a process is institutionalized to ensure collaboration with other relevant departments.
Financial ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out the full spectrum of functions for MENAP implementation requires a greater financial commitment from government.
UNICEF's role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF has a continuing role to: support the development of a new, costed, actor-focused, results-oriented MENAP; to support Indigenous organizations and local NGOs to become key actors; to facilitate a mechanism for inter-departmental collaboration within MoEYS; and to support research and development.

5.5.1 Positive first steps towards sustainability

Provincial and district level stakeholders reported significantly improved relationships with and among school support committees, teachers and local authorities, while parents and teachers reported improved relationships and more frequent visits from school cluster leaders and DOE officers. School support committees described establishing relationships with parents to promote enrolment and attendance, and relationships with teachers to improve classrooms and school buildings. These can be taken as indicators of an emerging, coordinated system for sustained delivery of MLE and its associated strategies.

5.5.2 Key enabling factors, barriers and bottlenecks towards achieving sustainability of the MENAP

Table 10. MENAP sustainability: Key enabling factors, barriers and bottlenecks

Enabling factor	Barrier/bottleneck
The government has contributed a Programme Budget to SED to implement the MENAP and to POEs for school facilities, operating the school and providing materials.	Barrier: Sub-national duty bearers perceive that the government has not committed sufficient funds to support MLE primary schools and preschools in these early stages of the government's implementation of MLE. There is a need for refreshed curriculum, more teachers, training and regular monitoring visits.
A team within SED has been identified as the primary party responsible for the MENAP.	Barrier: The team within SED needs to strengthen its capacity and add Indigenous language capacity. The SED team is aware of its capacity gaps and describes out-sourcing many functions that are presumably the responsibility of implementing departments within MoEYS.
All MLE primary schools have been converted to state schools.	None found
There is commitment to convert more MLE primary school teachers to state teachers.	None found
Sub-Decree No. 245 on the Management of Community Preschools provides a mechanism	Barrier: A functional system including national and sub-national duty bearers is needed to expand, manage and

Enabling factor	Barrier/bottleneck
for ensuring a living wage that is reliably paid to preschool teachers.	monitor MLE preschools, and assist them to meet eligibility criteria for conversion to state preschools.
CARE built capacity within PED and ECED for MLE.	Bottleneck: Capacity in PED and ECED did not transfer or was not retained in SED when SED was formed and mandated to implement the MENAP. There is no visible structure or process with senior leadership to bring together personnel from key departments, which is essential in any education system, in particular: PED, ECED, curriculum development, teacher training and non-formal education. This is discussed further in this sub-section.
A working group for MLE within MoEYS has been reported.	Barrier: This working group does not appear to be functional and has only one permanent member. ¹⁶⁷
Education authorities in all four provinces included in the evaluation are strongly committed to the inclusion of Indigenous children in education.	Barrier: 'Inclusion' has been taken to mean access and success in the national education system with a Khmer medium of instruction and a Khmer-focused curriculum after Grade 3. Some Indigenous parents and local authorities have questioned why inclusion in mainstream education is the only choice after Grade 3, asking whether mainstream education will be relevant to Indigenous livelihoods or help children become literate in their mother tongue. Some teachers and government officials encourage Indigenous children to speak Khmer at school and at home, thereby actively speeding the process of 'Khmerization' ¹⁶⁸ and eroding the sustainability of Indigenous languages.
Indigenous peoples' organizations (e.g., Cambodian Indigenous Peoples' Organization and CIYA) and Indigenous community organizations in the provinces are available to partner with national and sub-national entities on all aspects of implementing the MENAP.	Barrier: CARE consulted Indigenous people extensively in processes leading to the creation of the MLE curriculum, but since the transition to MoEYS, Indigenous people and organizations have not been asked to collaborate in MLE.
Indigenous people in communities and organized groups have cultural knowledge and want to contribute to MLE curriculum revision, updating and expansion.	Barrier: MoEYS has not forged working relationships with Indigenous people in communities or organized groups.
There is a system in place for training teachers.	Bottleneck: There are insufficient funds to deliver the amount of training to meet demand.
There are PTTCs available to train teachers, with over half of all teacher candidates having Indigenous identity.	Bottleneck: PTTCs have not been involved in MENAP implementation and report having no capacity in MLE pedagogy.
CARE has contributed a fully developed curriculum for training teachers in MLE pedagogy and for teaching children from Grades 1 to 3 using an MLE-specific curriculum with culturally relevant content and culturally specific supplementary books.	Barrier: SED is currently expressing doubts about the usability of these curricula, citing the difficulty of using them, especially because SED has no team members with Indigenous language and culture capacity. SED team members said they would prefer a curriculum for MLE that was more similar to the national curriculum.
The possibility of a continuous experience of MLE from preschool (age 3 to 5) until the end of Grade 3 provides an opportunity to Indigenous children to start school in a language they understand and to acquire a	Barrier: The current model is an early exit, short bridge to inclusion in Khmer-only schooling. Research is equivocal about the ultimate success of early exit MLE: education outcomes for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children could secure longer-term success with a late-exit bridging model of MLE ending in Grade 6.

¹⁶⁷ There was no support to convene a meeting of this working group for the MENAP evaluation.

¹⁶⁸ 'Khmerization' refers to a social preference for or dominance of Khmer culture, language and forms of interaction. It is the combined impact of several forces, including language-in-education policy and in-migration of Khmer families into formerly ethnic minority communities, which results in either acculturation of ethnic minorities into Khmer society or the shrinking of ethnic minority influence, while Khmer influence grows.

Enabling factor	Barrier/bottleneck
degree of oral proficiency and emergent literacy in their mother tongue.	

5.5.3 Potential for implementing a new MENAP with full government ownership, technically and financially

5.5.3.1 Technical ownership

The team within SED expressed its commitment to implementing specific activities of the MENAP focused on training and monitoring. Some SED team members expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to be effective, as they lacked Indigenous staff on their team, did not thoroughly understand MLE pedagogy, and found the MLE curriculum too complicated. They expressed some doubt that the MLE curriculum was really necessary and wondered whether teachers could instead translate the national curriculum or use a curriculum similar to the national curriculum. In contrast, all stakeholders in the provinces agreed that the most important determinant of the success of the MENAP to date had been the MLE-trained teachers and the MLE curriculum.

Many stakeholders perceived the separation of MLE from the PED and ECED into the SED as risky. They explained that capacity for MLE had been built in those main departments and that capacity did not transfer to SED. Officers in various MoEYS departments questioned whether MLE was unique in all its aspects, sufficient to warrant housing it in an entirely unique managing department. These officers said that many elements of delivering MLE were similar to non-MLE early childhood and primary education, warranting keeping MLE in the mainstream departments where normative functions such as teacher training, monitoring, and education information data collection and analysis could remain consolidated.

The evaluation found that many of the tasks involved in delivering, expanding and improving MLE were carried out at the sub-national level. For example, POEs propose their own budgets to the Ministry of Economy and Finance, including requesting support for MLE. POEs conduct in-service training. DOEs conduct monitoring and mentoring visits and collect education information data from school directors and commune leaders.

Some stakeholders perceived it as advantageous to involve the Non-Formal Education Department in developing links with local NGOs that have been delivering non-formal education in Indigenous language and culture for many years.

5.5.3.2 Financial ownership

The government's main financial contribution to implementing the MENAP has been through the conversion of community schools to state schools. This has been part of a nationwide initiative, not specific to MLE schools. It is not known whether MLE schools were given priority. A search for the monetary value of conversions of MLE schools yielded no information. The department charged with implementing the MENAP (SED) reportedly received US\$ 20,988 only in 2018, and only for activities in two of the five provinces covered by the MENAP. There are many strategies and activities in the MENAP that have no visible financial support from government.

5.5.3.3 UNICEF's contributions to enhancing sustainability of the MENAP

The findings confirmed UNICEF's pivotal role in developing a system to support the sustainability of the MENAP. UNICEF supported MoEYS to institutionalize a planning tool and set of strategies that have resulted in the elaboration and, in some areas, consolidation of structures that can support on-going delivery, expansion and improvement of MLE. UNICEF strengthened public and government understanding of why children were out of school, including children not going to school due to language barriers, and the promise of MLE to promote inclusion for Indigenous children. UNICEF mobilized international research evidence and growing awareness of the effectiveness of MLE to fulfil children's right to access meaningful education. It also contributed to capacity building within SED to begin to

build confidence and competence to fulfil its responsibilities as the lead government department implementing the MENAP. UNICEF has liaised with key actors involved in the MENAP, advocating for changes necessary for sustainability.

5.6 Equity, gender equality and human rights

EQ6. To what extent and how does the MENAP ensure an equity focus?

Summary	
Key evaluation parameter	Key findings
Age and gender disaggregation in MLE data systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data systems disaggregated by age and gender.
Integration of an equity-based approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous language and culture in education has created a more meaningful experience of schooling for Indigenous children and parents. Cultural content in curriculum has increased relevance, but parents and children seek a greater focus on contemporary livelihoods.
Equity gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boys' attendance is particularly affected by a school calendar that does not account for seasonal livelihood demands. Few Indigenous people have been employed in senior education leadership roles. Indigenous peoples' organizations and networks have not been centrally positioned in MENAP planning and implementation. Indigenous identity and language are not included in education management information systems.
Promotion of the rights of girls and boys and women's rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education by Indigenous teachers and use of Indigenous language has created a safer environment, especially for girls, resulting in their more active participation. MLE has provided employment for Indigenous women and men as teachers. Khmer continues to be the only language of instruction for many ethnic minority children.

5.6.1 Age and gender disaggregation in MLE data systems

The Education Management Information System in Cambodia disaggregates data by age and gender.

5.6.2 Integrating an equity-based approach to implementing the MENAP

5.6.2.1 Evidence of an equity-based approach

The MENAP is inherently an equity-based initiative: its vision is to provide equitable access to quality education for ethnic minority girls and boys. Indigenous children are part of a population that has been excluded, as they and their parents generally do not understand the language used in the national education system. In community visits where there was no MLE, there were many reports of girls and boys who never enrolled in school or who had dropped out because they could not understand Khmer.

A commune leader where there is no MLE said Indigenous children *"are simply ignored until they finally stop coming to school"*.

A village leader described how *"children in the village learn more and feel safer going to farms with their families than going to school"*.

A school director acknowledged that Indigenous children in schools *"without MLE have to work extra hard to learn the language in order to be promoted"*.

Coupled with this, the national curriculum reflects little of their culture, while parents and local authorities

do not see the benefits to their livelihoods. MLE provides equal rights for Indigenous girls and boys to learn in their first language, on par with Khmer children's right to learn in their language.

An equity-based approach has been used to favour the employment of primary school teachers who are Indigenous and have Indigenous language skills. In most cases, this has required exceptions to the standard education criteria to become a teacher (some teachers have as little as Grade 4 education; most have completed Grade 9). Some MLE teachers with low education qualifications have been supported to increase their general knowledge in order to pass Grade 9 equivalency tests, enabling them to gain recognition as state teachers.

Expanding MLE during the period of the MENAP contributed to Indigenous students going on to higher education, as more Indigenous children were entering the education system and completing primary school. While this was found for both girls and boys, slightly more boys were enrolled in MLE primary school and more boys were enrolled through to Grade 6. Many community members commented that although fewer girls were enrolled, girls were more likely to attend and be active participants in a classroom where the teacher was Indigenous and spoke the girls' language. Girls felt safer in that environment. They also commented that boys were less likely to attend school regularly, as many families need their boys, more often than their girls, to work on family farms, and on harvesting and selling non-timber forest products.

Although the government already provides scholarships to poor students to enrol in secondary school, UNICEF has complemented the government scholarship programme of US\$ 60 for poor students with top-up scholarships of US\$ 90. This is for Indigenous students already receiving government scholarships to attend lower and higher secondary school. A council of local authorities and educators establishes eligibility for scholarships, including Indigenous identity. Stakeholders at national and sub-national levels identified these scholarships as a significant enabling factor for Indigenous students (from MLE and non-MLE schools) to continue beyond primary school.

The use of an alternative calendar is another example of an equity-based approach. This practice was found in only one district in Stung Treng. However, in all four north-eastern provinces, the seasonal demands of farming reportedly account for intermittent school attendance by Indigenous children, especially boys. Many parents and teachers, and some DOEs, in all provinces suggested that the feasibility and mechanics of an alternative calendar should be explored.

A well-known occurrence in Cambodia that presents financial hardship for families is when teachers urge parents to send children to fee-for-service classes outside of school hours. There were no reports of extracurricular classes required or offered by teachers in any communities with MLE.

5.6.2.2 Evidence of equity gaps

Equity gaps found by the evaluation are noted below.

1. No SED staff are Indigenous or have Indigenous language skills.
2. Few core teacher trainers are Indigenous and few have Indigenous language skills.
3. Few POE officers are Indigenous.
4. The MLE curriculum does not have as much culturally specific, contemporary content as children, parents and teachers wish. Several community members noted that the persisting high numbers of Indigenous children not in school is not primarily due to poverty, but rather to lack of resonance of curriculum content with the needs, goals and lived experiences of Indigenous people. They expressed a desire for more cultural content that reflects the dynamic nature of their culture and the rich differences between each of the language groups, as well as the ways that Indigenous people adapt to the pressures of modern life. They contrasted this with the current content about ancient crafts, traditions and ceremonies.
5. Indigenous people, who are the primary rights holders in relation to the MENAP, are not positioned in decision making or consulting roles in any aspect of implementing the MENAP. Indigenous people were not identified as actors in any MENAP strategies or activities. The evaluation found no evidence from national level actors that, after the transfer of responsibility

for MLE from CARE to MoEYS, Indigenous people had been consulted on decisions regarding the curriculum, language mapping, teacher training or other matters. This gap was conspicuous to many stakeholders. Commune leaders and DOEs explained that inclusion of Indigenous people in visible roles, including mobilization, mentoring and monitoring, would send a positive message to communities about government commitment to the MENAP as an equity-based approach.

6. The Education Management Information System in Cambodia currently does not support meaningful tracking of students in MLE programmes or planning to meet the language learning needs of ethnic minority students. This is because ethnicity and languages used in lower primary are not identified.¹⁶⁹

5.6.3 Promotion of the rights of girls and boys and women's rights through the MENAP

From a gender perspective, the effectiveness of MLE on girls' inclusion appears to be particularly significant. In seven communities with MLE, parents and school support committee members said that, before MLE, girls were shy and particularly reticent about going to school if the medium of instruction was Khmer, as they could not communicate. Now, most communities with MLE primary schools visited for the evaluation reported having nearly equal numbers of girls and boys attending and actively participating.¹⁷⁰

Employing the language and culture of the Indigenous people contributes to the ability of children and women to participate in matters that concern them, including education. In Cambodia, because women typically stay closer to home than men, they typically do not have the same opportunities as men to acquire Khmer. One village in the evaluation reported a 100 per cent increase in the enrolment of girls since the inception of MLE. However, local authorities reported that girls in school were more likely to be over age for their grade. Parents reported that more girls were malnourished and stunted than boys, and as a result, they tended to keep their girls home longer. In MLE, where there is an Indigenous teacher forming close relationships with children, some parents expressed feeling more comfortable with sending their younger girls to school. The quantitative findings of this evaluation showed that in MLE girls' enrolment was slightly lower than boys. Anecdotal evidence suggested that gender distribution varied from village to village. When more boys than girls were reportedly enrolled in primary school, school support committees attributed this inequality to more nutritional deficiencies in girls, making them more tired and feeble, and more gender-based safety risks for girls, increasing the likelihood of parents keeping girls at home.¹⁷¹ Across all communities, parents and teachers reported that girls attended more regularly, whereas boys were more often absent due to work on family farms and in forests. Teachers reported that, in general, girls were as equally engaged as boys in classroom activities.

MLE has provided jobs for many Indigenous women. Currently 103 (42 per cent) of the 247 teachers in MLE primary schools are women,¹⁷² due largely to the MLE pedagogy training extending their capabilities. However, over half of MLE teachers, core trainers and schools directors are men, and over half of DOE and POE officers are men. Half of the SED team leaders are men.

¹⁶⁹ To target scholarships to Indigenous students for secondary school, MoEYS reportedly works with school directors and other local people who identify students as Indigenous based on personal knowledge rather than education data.

¹⁷⁰ As an incidental finding, a school support committee in Ratanakiri reported that before MLE, no girls attended school; currently, 10 girls who attended MLE (before the period of the MENAP) have completed Grade 9 and one has completed Grade 12.

¹⁷¹ A trend towards increasingly early marriage (age 13 to 14 years) was described in one village, where most children do not start Grade 1 until age 10 or 11 years.

¹⁷² Data on the gender distribution of MLE preschool teachers were not made available for this evaluation.



*Parents were eager to hear their children's views on MLE.
©UNICEF Cambodia/2018/Samorn Lamy*

Education in the four provinces where the majority of Indigenous people live in Cambodia continues to favour the fulfilment of Khmer children's right to 'quality' education (assuming that quality, which was not defined in the MENAP, minimally means understandable and meaningful). MoEYS officers and some development partners expressed that it was 'unfair' for Khmer children to end up in MLE schools. Most school directors, DOEs, and all POEs reported that when they made decisions about where to introduce MLE in a primary school, they prioritized communities with a high proportion of Indigenous children. However, they reported that the supply of financial and technical resources falls short of demand. They also reported a lack of capacity to train teachers and provide operational budgets for as many MLE primary schools as communities request. Most POEs and DOEs described having to set a criterion whereby Khmer children need to be a very small minority in order to select a community for MLE. Though there are realistic challenges, a lack of resources for supply to meet demand is a significant bottleneck. This results in inequity for Indigenous children—children whose first language is not Khmer must adapt socially and academically in classrooms where Khmer is the only language of instruction, even when a majority of students and their parents do not understand Khmer.

6. Conclusions

The evaluation provides an evidentiary basis to renew the MENAP for another five-year term from 2019 to 2023. The vision and strategies of the MENAP are congruent with aspirations towards decentralization and deconcentration and with plans for education reform, including the ESP and the NSDP (2014–2018), which has been a top priority for the Royal Government of Cambodia in recent years.

The evaluation points to enabling factors as well as barriers that must be overcome to improve infrastructure, the quality of instruction, and agreement on the purpose of MLE. The MENAP included a vision that encompassed all ethnolinguistic minority children in Cambodia and several strategies. Between 2015 and 2018, the overwhelming effort has been on one strategy, namely MLE, in the four north-eastern provinces. Financial and technical resources have concentrated on expanding the cadre of MLE teachers, classrooms and enrolments of children who speak five Indigenous languages to receive education in their mother tongue. A new five-year plan should be guided by an explicit theory of change to guide a costed, results-oriented plan to engage Indigenous groups and language networks, including non-formal education. It should also improve the quality of MLE, monitoring, evaluation and information systems needed to sustain achievements to date and provide access to MLE for ethnolinguistic minority girls and boys.

6.1 Relevance

The MENAP is a relevant and well-suited mechanism for transitioning MLE from the path-finding work of CARE to government ownership. Indigenous children and parents are vocal proponents of MLE as an opportunity that allows them to understand and participate in school in a way that is safe and meaningful. Many more indigenous children are enrolling, attending regularly and continuing in primary education. Children and parents feel a greater sense of belonging in the nation, and parents are more involved in their children's education and on school support committees. Other ethnolinguistic minority populations are beginning to understand the possibility and potential of MLE, and demand for MLE in additional languages is growing. Yet, as parents and local authorities observed, there remains an indeterminate number of Indigenous children who never enrol or who attend only when it is not planting or harvesting season.

Indigenous cultural content in the curriculum is highly valued by Indigenous children, parents, teachers, school support committees and local authorities. Primary rights holders are asking for expanded, updated and more contemporary content. Currently, there is an emphasis on cultural traditions, ceremonies and crafts.

The MLE curriculum created by CARE for primary school has contributed to successful implementation of the MENAP. There is, however, a need to understand the problems raised by many MLE teachers who described teaching both the MLE curriculum and the national curriculum. Teachers explained that the MLE curriculum does not fill up the school year. They also believe that the government prefers students to learn in Khmer language and follow the national curriculum. This perception justified their practice of excluding children's knowledge and skills in their Indigenous language in performance assessments, which are all done in Khmer. It also influenced promotion decisions. This practice communicates to children and parents that the real 'currencies' in primary school, regardless of MLE, are the national language and curriculum.

There is limited opportunity for and evidence of Indigenous children's development of proficient writing skills in their Indigenous language. Across all four provinces, there was an appeal among primary rights holders and some duty bearers for an extension of MLE until at least the end of primary school. There was also a call for more innovative strategies to recruit, deploy and retain well-educated Indigenous teachers who are literate in an Indigenous language and who can therefore provide support for children to become literate in their mother tongue. Teachers reported testing children's literacy in Khmer, but not in the mother tongue. Development of mother tongue-based literacy assessment tools is needed to gain a complete picture of the effectiveness of the bilingual pedagogical model adopted in the MENAP. This could be a target of partnerships between national and international technical experts in learner assessment during the next MENAP, supported by development partners. MLE preschools are a new concept and are in the process of institutionalizing elements to be effective. MLE teachers are often unprepared for their roles and need dedicated training, mentoring and resources to gain confidence and skills in MLE pedagogy. In only one province, MLE preschools and primary schools are co-located. This harmonization appears to be due to good communication and joint decision making among POE department heads.

Implementation activities from 2015 to 2018 focused on the expansion of MLE teachers, classrooms and enrolments. Other key objectives, such as monitoring and evaluation, community involvement, and on-going development of culturally relevant teaching and learning materials were not prioritized, which was reflected in findings of less positive change in these areas. The MENAP was not based on an explicit theory of change that identified intermediate outcomes, with activities to achieve them. No actors were identified as being responsible for any activities, for a structure to export activities, or for the accountability of activities to achieve the objectives. The next MENAP should have an explicit theory of change that is discussed and agreed upon by primary rights holders and primary duty bearers. It should be costed and should include a medium-term, results-based formative evaluation plan and a summative evaluation planned for the end of a five-year term.

6.2 Effectiveness

The MENAP has achieved its main target of increasing opportunities for ethnic minority children to access MLE in the first three years of primary school, building on the foundational infrastructure and successes achieved by CARE. MLE expansion from 2015 to 2018 prioritized five Indigenous languages; there are many more ethnic minority groups whose needs could be addressed in a future MENAP. Experiences of the enabling factors and challenges of scaling up MLE have been similar across provinces, but there were more challenges in teacher recruitment, retention and monitoring encountered in Ratanakiri. This was reflected in enrolment shortfalls compared to targets.

The MENAP was implemented during a period when conditions were generally improving economically and in the education system in Cambodia, resulting in increased school enrolment and overall retention. However, gaps persist in the quality of education for all children, and many families struggle with poverty. These factors no doubt contribute to high numbers of out-of-school children and low achievement: local authorities and others emphasize the need to view the successes and challenges of the MENAP in this broader context. An alternative school calendar for children whose parents are farmers, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, is a potentially promising practice. In the only district where this had been trialled, the main challenge was how to deliver an equivalent number of classroom hours as the traditional calendar. There was also a need to double the number of teachers and classrooms over fewer months when children were not going to farms with families.

Finally, the Faculty of Education at the Royal University of Phnom Penh has emerging capacity to develop appropriate assessment tools for MLE, potentially in partnership with international education units with expertise in MLE. The Education Research Council is an untapped resource for improving learner assessment tools.

6.3 Efficiency

Primary rights holders and duty bearers uniformly agree on successful implementation of the MENAP, referring in particular to increased MLE classrooms, teachers and enrolled students. Facilities for MLE primary classrooms and schools have been improved and expanded through financial contributions by local and international donors and in-kind contributions by school support committees.

The MENAP covered a period of significant transition from CARE to government ownership. For the first two years of the MENAP, CARE and UNICEF played the primary implementation roles and contributed the largest share of financial and technical resources to develop systems for implementation, leadership development, teacher training, monitoring, curriculum resources, salary top-ups and scholarships. For the final two years of the MENAP, implementation shifted to the SED in MoEYS. The MENAP was not costed, and there was no evidence of a coordinated system for budget planning or tracking expenditure by financial contributors to implementation activities.

The Programme Budget for implementation of the MENAP in the four north-eastern provinces is insufficient for the full range of activities that have been carried out by development partners. Building on significant prior achievements in research and development, primarily by CARE, POEs report that the operational costs for MLE preschools and primary schools are not substantially greater than for non-MLE schools. However, there are significant steps to be taken to ensure quality, continue scale up, and strengthen infrastructure. This requires a larger share of the education budget and continued technical support from development partners.

In terms of efficient use of human resources, teachers are acknowledged by children, parents, local authorities, DOEs and POEs as having the most direct impact on inclusion of ethnic minority children in quality education. MLE primary school teachers were generally perceived as strongly committed and doing their best with limited resources. Yet, education officers described the difficulty of recruiting preschool and primary school teachers who are well educated, proficient in an Indigenous language, and willing to work for low wages in often remote and difficult circumstances. Ensuring quality requires strategies and activities not well delineated in the first MENAP. Most core trainers are not Indigenous,

and many identified this as a serious limitation to their ability to support quality MLE. Experienced core trainers who are Indigenous were inexplicably furloughed when MLE transitioned from CARE to MoEYS: their reinstatement should be an immediate priority in the next five-year term. Before the MENAP there was a successful fast-track training initiative connected to the PTTC in Stung Treng, involving a customized, 30-day MLE training module. This is a promising approach that could harness the potential of large cohorts of Indigenous teacher trainees at the PTTC to enable scaling up MLE. A system of salary top-ups for graduating teachers may result in more Indigenous teachers choosing placements in MLE schools.

MLE preschools have not yet realized their potential. Dependence on commune-level funds and, except in Kratie, a lack of systematic connection to primary schools are barriers to effectiveness. In addition to low and often unreliable remuneration, preschool teachers reported inadequate training and monitoring. As a result, there is high turnover among preschool teachers, which leads to a continuous need for capacity (re)building. A new Sub-Decree (no. 245) provides a framework for preschool teachers who qualify to be placed on the government payroll, to convert preschools to state schools, and to co-locate preschools with primary schools, depending on preschools meeting criteria such as a suitable facility and other requirements.

All sub-national education officers are involved in various ways in raising the awareness of MLE. Some duty bearers voiced a need to ensure the common sense of the purpose and pedagogy of MLE. They also frequently identified a need to have Indigenous people employed as POE staff, including as core trainers, and to connect with Indigenous community networks who could help them understand Indigenous families and their education needs. Indigenous organizations, community groups and school support committees have gained strength in the past four years, but were omitted as agents of change in the MENAP and have not been engaged as actors in implementation.

Partnership development remains a largely untapped approach to optimizing already existing capacity and resources, creating efficiencies and promoting sustainability through community engagement. Local NGOs (International Cooperation Cambodia, Non-Timber Forest Products) with Indigenous language competencies and experience in non-formal education in Indigenous communities are potential partners for MoEYS, particularly to: contribute resources for MLE preschools and primary schools; provide teacher assistance; develop new Indigenous language resources; and respond with non-formal education to requests from Indigenous parents for support to develop literacy in their Indigenous language.

A generally inefficient education management information system makes it difficult to determine, in quantitative terms, the relative contributions of the MENAP compared to alternatives. School cluster leaders and district education officers collect relevant education data but need an electronic system to streamline data capture and standardized reporting. Data gaps include a lack of demographic and socio-economic data on family members within communes, data on out-of-school children, data that disaggregates Indigenous children in education, and other key variables. Source data for this evaluation came from 80 schools and were likely handled by various organizational entities involved in data management (e.g., cleaning the data, harmonizing data across sources, data aggregation and reporting). Issues invariably arise in any complex data access/management/aggregation workflow. In this evaluation, different versions of same-source data and version-control problems found in education summary reports obtained were impossible to reconcile. This difficulty underscores the need for agreement across levels of management of the MENAP about data requirements, methods for valid data collection, and systems for coordinated input, analysis, output and reporting of data to support evidence-based decision making and evaluation of MENAP strategies and activities.

6.4 Impact

The benefits of MLE include Indigenous children enrolling more, attending more regularly, actively participating, and aspiring to further their education to an extent not seen before MLE. Indigenous children and others value the MENAP as a means of retaining their culture and promoting Indigenous

children's cultural identity. Khmer children and parents in predominantly indigenous villages appear to be receptive to MLE. MLE has encouraged language retention and interest in literacy in Indigenous languages, at home and in the community. The MENAP has created community demand for enhanced MLE curriculum, more teachers who are literate in the mother tongue, extension of MLE through primary schools, community interest in adult literacy in an Indigenous language, and education officials' desire to deepen understanding of MLE.

Duty bearers at the sub-national level have consolidated the basic infrastructure for MLE that was built primarily by CARE prior to and during the first two years of the MENAP. For example, they are gathering documentation to justify requests for MLE schools, monitoring teachers and students, engaging with school support committees and local authorities, preparing budgets and plans, assigning core trainers, and conducting training. This sub-national capacity was evident at all four provincial workshops, as participants came with clear agendas (often to advocate for new MLE schools or MLE enhancements), practice-based evidence, and a spirit of collaboration. POEs in all provinces expressed their willingness to collaborate with SED, recognizing that SED is in the early stages of building functional relationships. New initiatives are particularly salient to duty bearers at the provincial and national levels, especially: Sub-Decree No. 245 on the Management of Community Preschools; approval of an ethnicity identifier in the Education Management Information System; conversion of teachers from community teachers to contract teachers; conversion of contract teachers to state teachers; and MoEYS approval of core trainers.

Some senior education officials at the sub-national and national level are reluctant to fully support the intent of MLE, favouring a quick transition to Khmer language even before children reach school age, thereby negating the need to sustain MLE over time. Some educators prefer Khmer language and culture in education to such an extent that Indigenous languages are not encouraged in the classroom or at home. Some school directors prefer to have language-separated classrooms rather than bilingual education, as intended by the MLE model. This lack of firm commitment to MLE may account for doubt between MLE preschool and primary school teachers about whether MLE has the full support of the government. This doubt leads some MLE teachers to hasten children's transition to Khmer and to teach both the MLE and national curricula. It could be concluded that Khmer children in MLE schools are not missing out on opportunities to develop their Khmer language proficiency by attending MLE. Indigenous children, on the other hand, are given limited opportunities to develop their Indigenous language proficiency as they progress in school. MLE teachers and school directors requested a more visible confirmation that MLE is government-authorized, such as a laminated poster in MLE classrooms confirming government authorization of MLE, including the non-standard curriculum.

6.5 Sustainability

The MENAP has institutionalized a mechanism for authorized use of Indigenous languages in preschool and lower primary school. Commitment, capacity and relationships are being built among primary rights holders and duty bearers at sub-national levels. UNICEF and CARE have contributed strategically towards sustainability by strengthening capacity at all levels of the system. All stakeholders support continued expansion of MLE to the extent that the supply of financial and technical resources will also improve the quality of education.

The demand created by the MENAP among primary rights holders, including Indigenous children, parents, school support committees and local authorities, can be expected to grow to encompass more Indigenous languages and other ethnolinguistic minority groups, and to include extension to Grade 6 to support children's literacy in their mother tongue. At the same time, Indigenous parents and local authorities described growing pressure on their communities due to in-migration of Cham-speaking and

Khmer-speaking families, which they refer to as ‘Khmerization’.¹⁷³ Local authorities perceive this as a potential threat to the sustainability of MLE in general or to MLE in particular locations.

The government is in the early stages of taking ownership of the MENAP. MoEYS has the authority and means to build on the administrative systems, teaching cadre, MLE curricula and demand that has been created within Indigenous communities. Stakeholders are aware of the recent transition from CARE to MoEYS ownership, and except for teachers who expressed a lack of confidence that MLE was authorized, most stakeholders see POEs as having assumed responsibility for MLE school facilities, operations and materials.

While government support and ownership of the MENAP increases, the concentration of responsibility for the MENAP in a new department (SED) poses some risk. Insufficient human resources within SED were noted at the provincial level and by SED officers, who identified a need for added capacity in Indigenous languages and cultures, and additional staff to enable adequate monitoring in often hard-to-reach communities. Sub-national duty bearers expressed support for SED, recognizing that it takes time to build both financial and technical capacity. Increased financial support for SED is needed to add human resource capacity to the small team within this department and to provide the means to carry out the number of activities required to keep pace with expansion of MLE, especially training and monitoring. At the national level, many stakeholders expressed concern that separating MLE from mainstream departments, including the PED and ECED, could separate Indigenous teachers and children from the resources available to all other teachers and students, whose education is the responsibility of PED and ECED. As some stakeholders advised, a functional inter-departmental working group with strong senior leadership could provide a mechanism for optimizing the capacities of all departments relevant to MLE preschool and primary school, including primary education, early childhood education, non-formal education, curriculum development and teacher training. A functional working group would need strong participation from local, district and provincial levels of the education system who are most aware of the impacts of MLE and most experienced with implementation requirements.

6.6 Equity, gender equality and human rights

The MENAP provides equity of opportunity for a meaningful transition from home to school for children whose first language is one of the five Indigenous languages included in the MENAP with government approved orthographies: Brao, Kavet, Krung, Tampuan and Bunong. Yet many ethnolinguistic minority children in Cambodia do not have access to MLE and demand is far exceeding supply.

Indigenous children and their parents identified the positive outcomes of MLE as improving access to meaningful education, resulting in increased participation, a safer environment for girls, and a sense that their languages and cultures are valued by government. Overall, enrolment of boys slightly exceeded enrolment of girls in both MLE preschools and primary schools, although girls were almost uniformly described as attending more regularly and engaging more actively than boys. The greater burden on boys to participate in family livelihood activities suggests the need for innovative approaches to ensure equity of opportunity, such as a flexible school calendar to accommodate the planting and harvesting seasons and amplified curriculum content focused on livelihood skills.

Indigenous children, parents and local authorities emphasized the ever-changing and contemporary nature of their cultures and asked to have updated as well as amplified cultural content in the MLE curriculum, offering to contribute directly to ensuring validity and currency. Local NGOs, Indigenous peoples’ organizations and especially province-based language networks are eager to and capable of contributing to periodically refreshing the curriculum. In contrast to the unanimous valuing of MLE by primary rights holders, some national and sub-national government and development partner officers

¹⁷³ Khmerization refers to a social preference for or dominance of Khmer culture, language and forms of interaction. It is the combined impact of several forces, including the language-in-education policy and in-migration of Khmer families into formerly ethnic minority communities, which results in either acculturation of ethnic minorities into Khmer society or the shrinking of ethnic minority influence, while Khmer influence grows.

perceive a need for Indigenous children to learn Khmer earlier in life so that MLE will no longer be needed. In-migration by non-Indigenous Cambodians into traditionally Indigenous communities is seen as advantageous for this purpose. These officers also emphasize the need for Indigenous children to learn 'our ways', including Khmer songs, poems, stories, values and lifestyles. These views are inherently antithetical to the goals and rights of Indigenous people in Cambodia.

Regarding gender equality within the MLE workforce, female MLE teachers, education officers at sub-national level and senior leaders in MoEYS, including SED, are actively participating and shaping MLE practice in Cambodia. This is an achievement because leadership roles in Cambodian society are predominantly occupied by men. MLE provides an avenue for girls to get a good start in school, while indirect evidence suggests that girls who complete MLE in primary school are more likely to continue their education.



Left: An indigenous boy proudly reads his writing in Tampuan. Right: Indigenous children in Stung Treng share their desire for more years of Indigenous language use in school. ©UNICEF Cambodia/2018/ Mariam Smith

7. Lessons learned

The evaluation created lessons learned based on the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, impact and equity, gender equality and human rights. These lessons learned provide insights into MLE in general, and the MENAP in particular, and can be extrapolated to similar programmes in other countries that are aiming to provide more educational and cultural opportunities for Indigenous communities.

MLE is a sound method of attracting and retaining Indigenous children in school

The MENAP 2015–2018 in Cambodia is unprecedented in Southeast Asia for its proactive specificity and for its ability to attract and retain Indigenous children in school. The evaluation has shown that MLE can be a powerful attractor for children who speak a minority language to attend school and engage actively over time, and for parents to actively support children's education.

However, MLE is not a cure-all and learning outcomes for MLE students and high numbers of Indigenous children who remain out of school or leave early must be considered within the broader context of education and the economy. The next MENAP should explicitly cross-reference key parallel plans, especially the ESP and NSDP.

Preschool planning and decision making will require further work

To become more relevant, effective and efficient, preschool MLE needs to be planned, delivered and monitored as part of, or in close collaboration with, lower primary education. Harmonization can yield efficiencies in teacher training, resource sharing, monitoring and evaluation, and development of a community of MLE practitioners. It can ensure continuity of early learning experiences for children. MLE preschool teachers need specific training in MLE and instruction, as well as resource support to create teaching and learning resources that are linguistically and culturally appropriate. This training could be done jointly with in-service training for MLE primary teachers.

Decisions about where MLE preschools are located need to involve community consultation and take into account the location of MLE primary schools. Co-location is ideal in some settings, though not all. As with MLE primary schools, the overarching goal of MLE preschool is to respond to local needs and resources. Where there is no opportunity for children to transition to MLE primary school, children may benefit from a very abbreviated bridging model that prepares them for primary school in a new language.

MLE is culturally valuable and contributes to equity

Customizing a curriculum so it is Indigenous is often understood superficially to mean placing emphasis on ancient customs, ceremonies and crafts. There is often a misperception of homogeneity across Indigenous cultures. In many countries where inclusion of Indigenous children has become a priority, there has been a deepening of understanding of the contemporary, everyday nature of culture and Indigenous ways that can be integrated into culturally based curricula. This is to enhance accuracy, relevance and meaning to children and parents. A comprehensive plan for quality MLE includes support for and inclusion of Indigenous peoples' organizations and community language networks to consolidate their cultural knowledge and to participate actively in defining education objectives, training teachers about their Indigenous cultures and culturally based pedagogy, contributing to cultural curriculum development and periodic curriculum reviews. Their capacity may initially be hampered by urgent, competing priorities such as protecting land-based resources, health, and economic development. Development partners also have an important role in this community-engaged research and development process.

Not only is MLE a method to preserve customs, traditions and languages, it is also a means to fulfil children's right to education in a safe environment in a language they understand. Opportunities to go to school in a language one understands and with teachers who are recognizably members of one's own ethnic group create a safer environment for both girls and boys, making it more likely that parents will send their children, especially their girls, to school. It also fulfils the right of Indigenous people to

transmit linguistic skills, cultural identity and belonging to a cultural community for the youngest generation. The potential of MLE to realize the rights of Indigenous peoples, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and to promote social harmony is being demonstrated in Cambodia and elsewhere and needs to be well understood by duty bearers and the public. Culture is lived, and the curriculum needs to reflect this dynamism in order to keep it relevant and useful to young learners. Parents and other cultural knowledge holders can contribute to customizing the curriculum.

MLE can provide opportunities for Indigenous peoples to upgrade their education and gain vocational training and employment, including women as teachers, school support committee members, and in managerial roles.

There is a need for greater investment in teacher training and curriculum development

Teachers, the MLE model, and the MLE curriculum they use are key determinants of the success of a plan to promote inclusion of ethnic minority children in quality education. Ensuring teaching quality requires sufficient financial and technical support for teacher training, retention and monitoring to meet the demand resulting from MLE expansion and to compensate for high teacher turnover, as well as to conduct enough timely monitoring visits, especially to schools in remote villages.

Implementation of an enabling policy and planning for MLE is often stymied by an inadequate supply of teachers who are fully proficient (literate) in designated minority languages to meet demand. A common misconception is that merely living in an Indigenous community or speaking the language conversationally means that one can read and write in that language. This can misguide decision makers to expand MLE too quickly or for too many languages, skipping the step of investing in adult literacy in the target languages and sacrificing quality for quantity. Strategic recruitment and technical and financial support are needed to build a cadre of core trainers and teachers who are orally proficient and literate in Indigenous languages and who have the teaching and learning resources needed to deliver quality MLE. This effort should focus on members of the ethnic communities covered by MLE policies and plans. They are more likely to have at least rudimentary language skills, identification with the culture, local learning needs related to livelihoods, and connections to community networks that could be mobilized to support MLE teachers and promote community members' interests in schooling.

Awareness raising and capacity development remain important to furthering MLE

On-going capacity development of national and sub-national leaders in education, adequate financial support by government, technical support by development partners, and inter-departmental collaboration within and across relevant government departments is critical for the MLE primary implementing team to carry out its central role and to ensure an accurate understanding of MLE pedagogy. MLE can sometimes be misunderstood as requiring separate classrooms, teachers and curricula for minority and non-minority children. This approach is costly, reduces the potential benefits of MLE for all children, and risks an unwanted lack of social harmony in schools. Another common misconception is that MLE requires parents to decide on one language for their children in school. This risks unwarranted resistance to MLE by Indigenous and non-Indigenous parents. Awareness-raising is needed to ensure that MLE is well-understood by both rights holders and duty bearers and that MLE yields the benefits documented in research, including improved cognitive and linguistic skills for all children and enhanced social cohesion.

Government ownership of a new MENAP depends on being able to defend MLE against critics. One of the most common misconceptions perpetrated around the world to dissuade governments and the public from supporting MLE is that children will be disadvantaged by only learning a language spoken by a small minority of people and that the country will suffer because these children will not be equipped for jobs to support the mainstream economy. Yet, MLE is by definition an approach that multiplies children's language and literacy skills and their ability to function in more than one culture, as it includes two or more languages. Children, parents and education authorities do not need to choose one 'obscure' language over a more widely used, nationally favoured language. To sustain political support for MLE, vigorous efforts need to ensure that government actors internalize an accurate understanding

of what MLE is and is not. Sustained investment in public awareness campaigns about the value of linguistic diversity and the multilingual and multicultural outcomes of MLE can animate political will to support MLE. Development partners can play key roles in promoting government and public awareness of the potential of MLE to promote social harmony, as well as inclusion in education.

Building and implementing policies and systems is key to the success of MLE

In many countries, policy support for MLE stimulates activities to provide opportunities for MLE to many language groups in disparate settings, while investment in strategies and activities to ensure quality are secondary. Building the commitment and capacity of duty bearers to implement MLE is a challenging first step. After this capacity has become functional, the next step should focus on building a sound system to ensure quality, including: building consensus about the value and purpose of MLE (more specific than awareness raising); improved education management information systems; and partnerships with local and Indigenous organizations.

Implementation of MLE involves multiple inter-connected and collaborative activities among actors at many levels, including primary rights holders and primary and secondary duty bearers. Scaling up MLE requires a theory of change linking goals, objectives, strategies, activities, impacts and effects. It requires identifying actors, their inter-relationships and their responsibilities in order to achieve intended impacts and effects. A costed, results-oriented plan with clear indicators for success is critical for stakeholders to engage in on-going self-reflection, and formative and summative evaluation.

In addition to the costs and capacity to develop the human resources, curriculum and facilities for MLE, significant investments are also needed for administration and management, monitoring and evaluation, partnership engagements, communication with parents and children, research and development. Evaluating the cost-effectiveness of the MENAP requires stakeholders to put a monetary value on comparative outcomes. In addition to tracking capacity improvements and achievements in MLE expansion, relevant education, economic and social development data should be gathered from government departments. This would enable cost-benefit analyses to show the social and economic costs of not implementing the strategies. A comprehensive but readily usable system for capturing education management data and standardized reporting needs to be established by the unit responsible for implementation.

The modality of MLE implementation could be flexible, depending on current need

The relevance of MLE to children and their parents depends not only on how well it is delivered, but on the vision that drives it and the model chosen. In Cambodia, by using a three-year 'short bridge' (or 'early exit') bilingual learning model, Indigenous children are much more likely to become literate in the national language than their mother tongue. Proficiency (which includes literacy) in the mother tongue requires a 'long bridge' (or 'late-exit') model, with at least half of classroom instruction in the Indigenous language until the end of Grade 6. In resource-limited contexts, demand to provide MLE to more language groups may be more pressing than demand to extend MLE to Grade 6. An insight-generating first step could be to implement a pilot project in a few schools in one language. Development partners and education research institutions can play a useful role in ensuring a robust methodology for assessing the late-exit model.

The traditional academic calendar was found to limit inclusion for some. Overcoming the resourcing challenges of introducing a flexible or seasonal school calendar may yield more regular attendance by both students and teachers, and increased enrolment by boys, as has been found in some rural settings elsewhere. More teachers, classrooms and textbooks are needed for a more intensive school year, and education administrators must accommodate reporting schedules.

8. Recommendations

Recommendations were developed based on triangulated findings from data collection, conclusions and lessons learned from evaluating the MENAP 2015–2018. The recommendations were also informed by a review of international research on policies and strategies for including ethnolinguistic minority children in meaningful education, and studies pointing to effective approaches to MLE.¹⁷⁴ The recommendations were prioritized in collaboration with UNICEF. Throughout data gathering, stakeholders at all levels provided well-articulated needs and goals, examples of barriers to be overcome, solutions to inform the recommendations, and hopes for renewal of the MENAP with costed, actor-specific activities and periodic accountability checks. Recommendations were refined and validated by the reference group members, who advised on the evaluation. This section carries forward these perspectives into actionable recommendations that are presented in order of priority, based on the strength of the evidence, stakeholder perceptions of needs and goals, and likelihood of impact.

8.1 Renew the Multilingual Education National Action Plan (MENAP) for 2019–2023 (MENAP 2)¹⁷⁵

A renewal of MENAP for a five-year term is warranted on the basis of primary rights holders' needs for education that includes Indigenous languages of instruction and consideration of the successes of the inaugural MENAP. The new 2019–2023 MENAP (MENAP 2) should define quality, add new elements, provide more explicit intermediate outcomes, and include costed, actor-focused, time-bound, results-oriented activities and accountability indicators. A greater commitment from government for the Programme Budget to support implementation of the next MENAP is required to ensure government ownership and fulfillment of the vision.

Actors: MoEYS leadership and implementing department(s), with support from development partners, language resource units, POEs, DOEs, Indigenous communities, NGOs (e.g., ICC), school directors and commune leaders.

Timeline: Immediate – by mid-year 2019

8.1.1. Consultation by MoEYS and development partners with primary rights holders and sub-national leaders in education will help to deepen understanding of the potential of MLE and its purpose within the context of broad national priorities, including education reform, decentralization and social harmony. Consultation will yield priorities for strategic action in the next MENAP. The purpose of the MENAP 2015–2018 was to promote preschool and primary school enrolment of ethnolinguistic minority children by providing instruction in the mother tongue and to bring them quickly into the national education system through an 'early exit' (three-year) bilingual programme. The next MENAP should respond to increased demand by primary rights holders for a stronger commitment to promoting literacy in the mother tongue and learning culturally relevant knowledge and skills, with a possible extension to Grade 6 explored through a pilot project in a small number of interested primary schools.

8.1.2. MoEYS should develop on-going collaborative relationships with primary rights holders including Indigenous children, parents, Indigenous organizations and language-specific community networks, not only as beneficiaries but also as active contributors and partners in MENAP design, implementation and evaluation. It should ensure wide understanding that MLE is a government-authorized and supported approach to education in Cambodia.

¹⁷⁴ See Annex 14 in this report and UNESCO, 'MTB-MLE Resource Kit, Including the Excluded: Promoting Multilingual Education', Paris/Bangkok: 2016.

¹⁷⁵ This is a working title for the purposes of this evaluation. Confirmation of the name of a possible new plan rests with the government.

8.1.3. MoEYS should seek a greater commitment of funds for implementation of the next MENAP. While the proportion of education spending allocated at the national and provincial level has increased in recent years (around 12.3 per cent), only about 3 per cent of gross domestic product is invested in education overall. ASEAN integration and the aspiration of Cambodia to become a middle-income country by 2030 requires considerably more investment in education. As noted in the ESP 2014–2018, well-qualified human and financial resources are required.¹⁷⁶

8.1.4. A fully costed plan will improve planning, implementation, accountability and evaluation of the MENAP 2. Details should include costing for research, development and delivery of MLE to each additional language group, strategies to retain trained teachers, such as salary top-ups, mentoring and other opportunities for professional development. Expenditure for implementing each strategy should be accounted for annually.

8.1.5. The design of the MENAP 2 should be based on an explicit, actor-focused theory of change that will increase the clarity of collaborative efforts among actors, provide a tool for reflection, a framework to anticipate risks and adjust assumptions, and accountability for time-bound, results-based tasks. An actor-focused theory of change, grounded in evaluation findings of the current status of MENAP implementation, is provided in Annex 18.

8.1.6. MLE should be scaled up incrementally to include more Indigenous language populations in a way that ensures quality while increasing quantity.¹⁷⁷ Decisions about expansion to additional language groups should be based on a costed analysis of resources needed to support quality MLE, demand by primary rights holders, self-assessment of sub-national capacity to provide technical and financial support, and an assessment of the potential supply of teachers who are proficient¹⁷⁸ in the language under consideration. A first priority is Jarai,¹⁷⁹ which the government has approved¹⁸⁰ for inclusion in MLE.

8.1.7. Support should be provided to the Royal University of Phnom Penh, the Royal Academy of Cambodia, and local NGOs such as ICC and Non-Timber Forest Products to develop orthographies, produce teaching and learning materials, and consolidate existing Indigenous language resources for MLE.

8.1.8. For each language added to the MENAP, the implementing department within MoEYS should create new curriculum elements and supplementary teaching and learning resources, in consultation with knowledge holders in the respective language communities, to support the delivery of relevant MLE.

8.1.9. A structure within MoEYS should be created that will enable permanent coordination of key departments to support the lead role of the SED as it builds its capacity to take responsibility for the full scope of activities involved in implementing the MENAP. A supportive structure would be an inter-departmental working group with senior government leadership (e.g., director general) with several permanent members, including representatives from SED, PED, ECED, the Non-Formal Education Department and Indigenous peoples' organizations. This group would bring capacities in primary, preschool, special needs and non-formal education. The working group should develop a scheduled series of meetings to collaborate on the design of the MENAP 2 and develop an action plan that

¹⁷⁶ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport 'Education Strategic Plan 2014–2018', MoEYS, Phnom Penh, 2014, p. 12. Highly successful ASEAN countries have grown in part as a result of the high level of education investment, often in excess of 5 per cent of gross domestic product.

¹⁷⁷ Expansion to non-Indigenous communities involving larger language groups (e.g., Cham) is premature. This should be a goal for subsequent MENAPs, depending on successful implementation of MENAP 2. A different but similar planning tool and set of policies could be considered for Cham (including both Arabic and Old Cham scripts), in consultation with representatives of different Cham language communities.

¹⁷⁸ Proficiency implies being literate at a level of being able to read to learn in the language.

¹⁷⁹ A pilot of Jarai in non-formal education by ICC in Ratanakiri indicated a need for community decision making about adjustments to make the orthography more conducive for literary purposes.

¹⁸⁰ Education retreat and Joint Sector Working Group PPT, CARE 2018.

distributes tasks and activities across key MoEYS departments, with SED having primary responsibility in a leadership and coordinating role.

8.1.10. The scope of the MENAP 2 should be expanded to encompass adult literacy in Indigenous languages supported by partnerships between the Non-Formal Education Department and local NGOs with expertise in Indigenous languages.

8.1.11. Decentralized decision making about the school schedule should be authorized by MoEYS and POEs, while requiring a standard number of school hours per school year. DOEs should consult primary rights holders to determine an optimal school calendar to maximize student and teacher attendance. MoEYS and POEs should be flexible regarding submission of student results (e.g., promotions) recognizing different start and end dates of the school year in different locations. POEs should negotiate with teachers to incentivize their flexibility in the schedule of teaching duties.

8.1.12. Scholarships should be provided to MLE alumni who have completed primary school to incentivize their enrolment and completion of secondary school, and for those who wish to become preschool or primary teachers to attend teacher training at a PTTC.

8.2 Develop MoEYS capacity, systems and institutions for improved MLE service delivery

The emergent capacity of MoEYS to assume responsibility for the MENAP should be incorporated into the design of the 2019–2023 MENAP.

Actors: MoEYS, development partners (UNICEF, CARE, others).

Timeline: Intermediate – Conduct a formative assessment of capacity in 2021

8.2.1. Development partners should continue to support MoEYS to implement strategies, tasks and activities for the 2019–2023 MENAP on a results-oriented, accountable, costed basis. This includes: technical support for MoEYS efforts to forge connections with Indigenous organizations and community groups; improving knowledge within the implementing department about MLE pedagogy; finalizing and implementing monitoring and evaluation systems; improving data collection systems; supporting MLE practices to realize child-friendly schools; and promoting understanding of the social and educational purpose of MLE at senior levels of government.

8.2.2. MoEYS and development partners should agree on demonstrable competency targets identified by the departments involved in capacity development activities, and linked to an agreed schedule for departmental team self-evaluation of capacity achievements. This can be expected to promote reflective practice and ensure that MoEYS has the information needed to make adjustments to team composition and competencies as needed.

8.2.3. MoEYS should expand the SED team responsible for the MENAP by hiring at least two new Indigenous teachers with proficiency in an Indigenous language. This would be covered by the MENAP 2 and add Indigenous language expertise, cultural expertise and familiarity with community protocols.

8.2.4. Establish specific outcome-level indicators for a more robust monitoring and evaluation system. Provide increased funding to DOEs to increase the frequency of monitoring visits in hard-to-reach communities. Provide teachers and local authorities in remote communities with equipment and skills for digital data capture and e-transmission of data on key monitoring and evaluation indicators.

8.2.5. Senior leadership in MoEYS should convene an inter-departmental working group that will provide permanent coordination of key MoEYS departments to support the lead role of the SED in implementing the MENAP 2. With senior government leadership (e.g., director general), the working group should comprise several permanent members, including representatives from PED, ECED, SED, the Non-Formal Education Department and Indigenous organizations. This group would bring

capacities to primary, preschool, special needs and non-formal education. The working group should develop a scheduled series of meetings to collaborate on the design of the MENAP 2 and develop action plans that distribute tasks and activities across key MoEYS departments. SED would be in a leadership and coordinating role and have primary accountability.

8.3 Enhance MLE preschool quality and harmonization

The emerging potential of MLE preschools can be capacitated through efforts to improve their quality, so that they meet the required criteria for annexation to MLE primary schools. This would align with the Royal Government of Cambodia's Sub-Decree No. 245 on the management of community preschools. Linking MLE preschools to MLE primary schools will provide continuity of opportunities for children to learn in their language.

Actors: MoEYS (SED, ECED, PED), POEs.

Timeline: Long term – incremental improvements to meet criteria under Prakas No. 90 and Sub-Decree No. 245

8.3.1. SED, ECED, POEs and DOEs should focus efforts on improving the quality of MLE community preschools and ensure that they are gradually annexed to MLE primary schools, and then converted to MLE state preschools. This will result in enhanced financial resources for operations and much-needed salary adjustments for teachers, with expected positive impacts on teacher retention, attendance and effort. This initiative should first focus on a small number of MLE preschools and continue incrementally to induct more MLE preschools, as readiness and technical support for this transition is secured.

8.3.2. Salary top-ups (stipends/monthly incentives) to MLE community preschool teachers should be considered to attract Indigenous language speakers and retain teachers who have completed MLE training. This would allow them to improve quality until they meet the standards that would allow access to government funding.

8.3.3. POEs, DOEs and school directors should consult with commune councils to determine where to introduce MLE preschools. They should ensure that decisions consider the idea of co-locating MLE preschools and MLE primary schools to sustain continuity in bilingual instruction and culturally appropriate curriculum. This would allow a formal connection with primary schools, as all MLE primary schools are already state schools, meaning they receive support and are managed by MoEYS.

8.3.4. MoEYS should review the curriculum for training MLE preschool teachers and consider enhancements (either adding to the four-day top-up training or improving the content) to ensure that MLE preschool teachers understand MLE pedagogy and their roles in teaching, resource development and partnerships with parents using the Indigenous language.

8.3.5. SED should work closely with the Department of ECED to ensure that all community preschools meet criteria set under MoEYS Prakas No. 90 and its annex,¹⁸¹ making them eligible to receive government funding for teacher salaries and operations that could be used, in part, to develop linguistically and culturally appropriate teaching and learning resources. This would also help ensure standards are met and would institutionalize MLE preschools within the larger system.

8.3.6. POEs should consult with local NGOs that have large repositories of Indigenous language resources and experience in producing culturally based curriculum materials. The purpose would be to negotiate copyright issues for using books and other learning resources and to establish partnerships for the production and distribution of Indigenous language resources.

¹⁸¹ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Prakas No. 90 states that MoEYS will assess community preschool quality annually, based on community preschool progress and funding availability.

8.3.7. POEs and DOEs should enrich the emerging government-supported preschool resource centres in provinces by equipping them with Indigenous language teaching and learning resources and by facilitating meetings of MLE preschool and primary school teachers for peer exchange of experiences in MLE. This could be done with the aim of establishing MLE-focused preschool resource centres or sections devoted to MLE within general preschool resource centres.

8.4 Enhance the quantity, quality and retention of MLE primary school teachers and Indigenous core trainers

Increased quantity, quality and retention of MLE primary school teachers and core trainers with Indigenous language proficiency should be the convergent goal of a number of strategies and activities undertaken by MoEYS. MoEYS should increase the quantity of MLE teachers to keep pace with expansion to additional communities and language populations. Retention of existing talent and recruitment of more core trainers and frontline teachers who are literate in an Indigenous language should be priorities. Development partners should support the government in on-going efforts to provide and enhance pre-service and in-service training.

Actors: MoEYS (SED, Teacher Training Department/PTTCs, POEs, DOEs, school cluster leaders, with technical support from development partners and Indigenous communities).

Timeline: Long term, 2019–2023

8.4.1. MoEYS should take steps to retain existing MLE teacher corps. A primary strategy is to continue converting contract teachers to state teachers.

8.4.2. MoEYS should continue to provide education upgrading for current MLE teachers with Indigenous language proficiency to enable them to pass Grade 9 equivalency.

8.4.3. MoEYS should increase technical and financial support to POEs to deliver in-service training to MLE teachers (including community and state teachers). The goal would be to improve the quality of MLE and fidelity to the graduated, bilingual model that includes the use of Indigenous language and literacy in all three lower primary grades.

8.4.4. MoEYS should harness the potential of PTTCs by capacitating them to provide an MLE module or stream within the main training programme. This should be coupled with a post-diploma training module in MLE pedagogy for teachers with Indigenous language proficiency (proven through testing) who could be recruited to work in MLE primary schools. MoEYS could consult with CARE regarding an agreement to use the CARE 30-day training package on MLE for fast-track training of Indigenous teacher training graduates.¹⁸²

8.4.5. Development partners should support the adaptation of the CARE 30-day MLE training modules for PTTC pre-service and in-service use and professional development of Indigenous instructors to deliver them.

8.4.6. Indigenous core trainers, who are trained by technical experts supported by development partners, should teach the MLE training modules. To ensure accountability and to build a national cadre of Indigenous MLE core trainers, MLE teacher trainers should be employed and monitored by the implementing department with SED (i.e., seconded by MoEYS to the PTTCs).

8.4.7. Using a phased approach, during the first two years of MENAP 2, this could be introduced in the PTTC in Stung Treng, which reported that over half of trainees are Indigenous from Ratanakiri and

¹⁸² The package was used in fast-track training of roughly 30 Indigenous graduates of the PTTC in Stung Treng who were subsequently deployed by POEs in Monduliri and Ratanakiri.

Mondulkiri. During years three and four of the MENAP 2, this could be introduced in the PTTC in Kratie, and in the final year in the PTTC in Preah Vihear.

8.4.8. MoEYS should increase the Programme Budget to ensure sufficient financial support to POEs for more frequent, meaningful monitoring and mentoring of MLE teachers and programmes using an MLE-informed system of indicators.¹⁸³ This may require an increased number of officers in POEs and DOEs and increased budget for travel to remote communities.

8.4.9. MoEYS should seek development partner support to provide scholarships for aspiring teachers with Indigenous language proficiency to attend pre-service training at a PTTC (including fees and cost of living allowances).

8.4.10. POEs should create and fill positions for Indigenous core trainers who are proficient in an Indigenous language covered by the MENAP within each POE. POEs should consider calling back into action Indigenous core trainers who were decommissioned when the MENAP transitioned to government ownership.¹⁸⁴

8.4.11. POEs and DOEs should forge partnerships with Indigenous organizations and Indigenous language community networks to assist with recruitment, training and support of Indigenous language teachers and teacher assistants, and involvement of teacher-parent partnerships. Local authorities could assist with this.

8.4.12. POEs should convene bi-annual gatherings of MLE preschool and MLE primary school teachers for peer learning, creation and sharing of teaching and learning resources in languages covered by the MENAP 2, meeting with Indigenous organizations and language networks, and participating in tasks scheduled by SED, such as curriculum review and formative evaluation of the MENAP.

8.4.13. POEs should provide financial support to school cluster leaders to convene annual gatherings of MLE teachers for similar purposes noted above (see also Child-Friendly Schools report).¹⁸⁵

8.5 Review and renew MLE curricula and resources

A review of the MLE primary school curriculum would respond to calls by MLE teachers for Indigenous literacy components and by all primary rights holders for a larger amount of, and more up-to-date, culturally specific content.

Actors: MoEYS (SED, PED), development partners, school directors, MLE teachers, children, school support committee members, local NGOs (ICC, NTFP) and Indigenous community networks.

Timeline: Intermediate – 2019–2021

8.5.1. SED, with support from development partners, should convene a process over the first two years of the MENAP 2 where teachers, parents, children and school directors provide feedback on the existing curriculum resources and input on a revised curriculum and supplementary resources. There should be gender equity in the curriculum review process. Attention should be paid to the representation of gender roles in the curriculum. Local organizations should be included in planning and delivering this process to provide cultural and linguistic translation and to ensure that communities can meaningfully participate. School directors should gather and transmit proceedings of these gatherings to DOEs, for collation by the primary education officers in POEs and transmission to SED. Development partners should provide technical support and work with Indigenous representatives to prepare a revised curriculum informed

¹⁸³ A combined MLE/child-friendly schools system of indicators has already been created but this evaluation did not find evidence of its implementation.

¹⁸⁴ Six or more fully qualified Indigenous trainers now unemployed

¹⁸⁵ Shaeffer, Sheldon and Kreng Heng, 'Joint Formative Evaluation of Child-Friendly School Policy Implementation in Cambodia', Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and UNICEF Cambodia Country Office, Phnom Penh, 2016.

by these inputs and other considerations. Findings of an anticipated CARE-sponsored study of MLE student learning outcomes should inform curriculum revisions. Local NGOs with experience creating Indigenous language resources for teaching and learning in non-formal education should also be asked to review and provide input into the MLE curriculum.

8.5.2. Development partners should strengthen Indigenous community networks to build their capacity to serve in advisory roles with duty bearers, including in the curriculum review and revision process, and to promote MLE and related strategies in Indigenous communities.

8.6 Raise awareness about child rights and the social value of the MENAP

To sustain commitment and respond to critics, advocacy and capacity building should promote system-wide understanding of the purpose and potential of MLE not only as a tool to increase ethnic minority children's participation in education but also to embrace diversity, protect Cambodia's cultural resources, and promote social harmony.

Actors: MoEYS (SED), POEs and development partners.

Timeline: Long term – 2019–2023

8.6.1. Reinvigorate efforts to raise awareness across national and sub-national duty bearers and the public that education in a language that children can understand is: (a) a right of ethnolinguistic minority children; (b) a minimum requirement for delivery of quality education; (c) a benefit for all Cambodians; and (d) a programme that has the full support of the Royal Government of Cambodia. Activities can include: wide distribution of Khmer-language editions of UNESCO pamphlets advocating MLE;¹⁸⁶ public service announcements on television and video clips uploaded to YouTube featuring prominent government leaders, media personalities, Indigenous and Khmer children, and Indigenous language leaders celebrating language diversity and encouraging the public to learn about languages in Cambodia;¹⁸⁷ signboards in Khmer and Indigenous languages placed on preschools and primary schools that celebrate their use of MLE; and cultural centres in provincial capitals showing the public the value of culturally diverse knowledge and practices and celebrating diverse languages.

8.6.2. Improve public awareness that bilingual/MLE involves teaching and learning in two or more languages and in shared classrooms and does not require a choice of one over another language taught in segregated language streams in school.

8.7 Improve education management information systems

A robust education management information system will enable mapping and tracking of ethnic minority language teaching, learning needs and progress, enabling evidence-based decision making about expansion and targeted quality improvements in each of the provinces covered by MENAP 2.

Actors: MoEYS (SED, PED, ECED), POEs, DOEs, school directors and commune leaders, with development partner support.

Timeline: Immediate – by mid-2020

8.7.1. An education management information system should disaggregate students' and teachers' gender and ethnicity, and language of instruction in MLE preschools and primary schools. MoEYS

¹⁸⁶ Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education: The key to unlocking SDG 4 – Quality education for all, <https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/mother-tongue-based-multilingual-education-key-unlocking-sdg-4-quality-education-all>.

¹⁸⁷ An example of YouTube for public awareness raising: Five ideas to support Indigenous Language Revitalization in Canada: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C--mu07uhQw>.

should establish a system of tracking movement of data from source to reporting.¹⁸⁸ Counts should be evaluated against relevant denominators to enable estimates of the reach of services into priority populations and comparisons to examine equity issues. A system should be introduced for tracking movement of data from the point of origin to reporting. This will enable the source of inconsistencies to be tracked and will better serve the needs of multiple information stakeholders who may require the data to be aggregated in different ways.

8.7.2. School cluster leaders and DOEs should be equipped with training and tools for electronic data capture and standardized reporting.

8.7.3. Commune leaders should be involved in annually reporting changing demographic information, including children of school age enrolled and not enrolled in school.

8.8 Develop partnerships between local and international universities

The MENAP 2 will benefit from research-based findings about effective practices and learning outcomes. As a noteworthy innovation in the region, evidence of its impacts can inform on-going quality improvements and generate new knowledge about MLE to inform policies and practices nationally and internationally.

Actors: MoEYS (SED), development partners, Education Research Council, Royal University of Phnom Penh, international universities (e.g., Columbia University, others).

Timeline: Long-term – 2019–2023

8.8.1. Collaborative research partnerships should be negotiated between local and international research centres with expertise in MLE in government education systems and longitudinal, language-in-education research methodologies. Interest already expressed by the Education Research Council¹⁸⁹ in Cambodia and the Teachers College at Columbia University, USA, as well as a partnership with the Faculty of Education at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, should be explored.

8.8.2. Priorities for a programme of collaborative, capacity building research in the next five years include:

1. Research to construct and pilot tests of children's learning at each grade level in the Indigenous languages covered by the MENAP 2.
2. Studies of the effectiveness of component strategies of the MENAP 2, including outcomes of MLE and specific innovations (e.g., early versus late-exit models).
3. Cost-effectiveness studies of component strategies of the MENAP 2.
4. Cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of contributions of the MENAP 2 beyond enrolment and promotion, for example: comparisons of education outcomes and life trajectories of Indigenous children with and without MLE, and of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children; Indigenous parents' support for their children's participation in formal education, with and without MLE; Indigenous learners' engagement in knowledge and skill development oriented to lifelong learning, with and without MLE; transmission of culturally based knowledge, such as the science of forest management and non-timber forest products and agriculture, with and without MLE; opportunities that MLE may provide children beyond primary school; comparative studies of children's health and nutrition; children's sense of identity, self-efficacy as learners, academic and vocational aspirations, and sense of belonging to their cultural community and nation.

¹⁸⁸ Schools should be identified by number rather than by name.

¹⁸⁹ ERC was launched in 2015 and institutionalized in 2017. It consists of 30 members, a secretariat, and a 13-member junior research team. His Excellency Dr. Hang Choung Naron, Minister of Education, is the chair, and Dr. Sideth (who has been involved in the Comparative and International Education Society) is head of the secretariat, <http://www.MoEYS.gov.kh/en/erc.html#.WyHDSVMvzv2>