



Evaluation of the Multilingual Education National Action Plan in Cambodia

May 2019

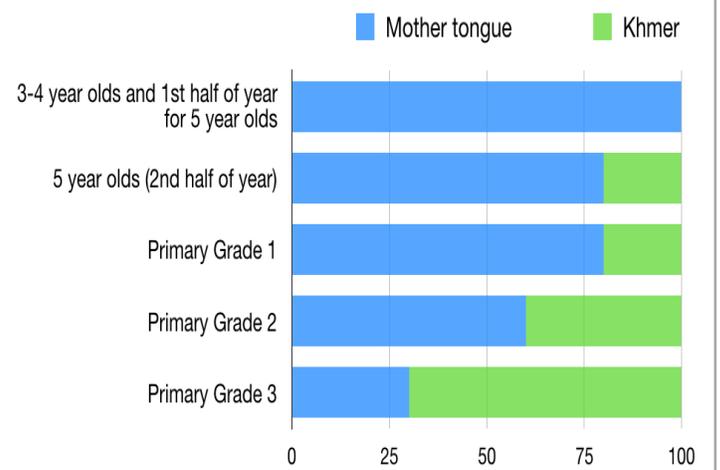
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Evaluation Brief

The 2014-2018 Multilingual Education National Action Plan (MENAP) was launched by the Royal Government of Cambodia in 2015. The plan has been implemented by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, in collaboration with UNICEF Cambodia and Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE), and in consultation with other stakeholders in Cambodia. The goal is to increase access to meaningful education of Indigenous girls and boys by providing them with multilingual education in preschool and in the first three years of primary school. A multilingual education curriculum is available in five Indigenous languages (Bunong, Kavet, Kreung, Tampuan, and Brao). It is offered in Mondulkiri, Ratanakiri, Kratie, and Stung Treng in preschools and primary schools where there are high numbers of Indigenous children. It is also offered in six preschools in one district in Preah Vihear. The initiative uses a bridging model whereby children begin learning in their Indigenous language while slowly transitioning to Khmer, the national language of instruction, and the national curriculum in Grade 4.

The plan is unprecedented in Southeast Asia for its government commitment to using Indigenous languages to promote equity. It is consistent with the Government's strategic development priorities and with numerous international rights frameworks and supported by international research evidence of the positive contributions that multilingual education can make to children's participation in education and society. This plan is a bold and well-informed step that is a first among countries in the region.

FIGURE 1: MENAP BRIDGE: A SHORT EXIT TO EDUCATION IN KHMER



Over a four-year period, the plan aimed to expand opportunities for children to access education in their mother tongue plus Khmer by increasing demand for multilingual education among children, parents, school committee members and local authorities, and by building the capacity of national, provincial and district education officials and teachers to manage, deliver, and monitor multilingual education. When the plan concluded its term in July 2018, UNICEF Cambodia, on behalf of the Ministry of Education, commissioned an independent evaluation of how well the plan has been implemented. The evaluation focused on the four provinces where the plan has been implemented in both preschools and primary schools.

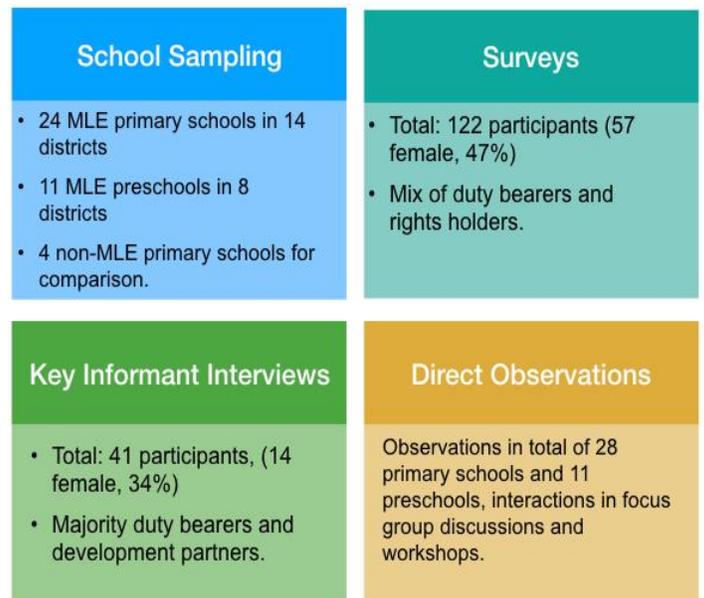


Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation was rights-based and theory-based, and used a non-experimental, mixed-methods, iterative-inductive approach that allowed for triangulation of data from a variety of sources. Methods included a desk review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, survey questions, and outcome harvesting workshops. These involved a total of 696 participants, including 317 girls and women (45 per cent). Data were collected from multilingual education schools and preschools based on a maximum variation sampling strategy.

Primary data collection took place from August to October 2018. The evaluation incorporated aspects

FIGURE 3: SAMPLE SIZE



of Indigenous research methodology, including having a national team composed of four Indigenous women and five Indigenous men and using individual and group story-telling to gather reports by Indigenous children and adults about multilingual education experiences. United Nations Evaluation Group standards and the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards were followed throughout the evaluation.

Evaluation Objectives

The evaluation was both formative and summative. Its main purpose was to assess how well the plan has been implemented to inform its future strategic direction.

- Assess the extent to which the Multilingual Education National Action Plan has achieved its objectives and to identify enabling factors, barriers and bottlenecks;
- Review and validate strategies and activities implemented to strengthen multilingual education and retrospectively deduce a theory of change for the action plan;
- Assess national and sub-national support for implementing the action plan, including support by UNICEF and others; and
- Document lessons learned that can inform a new five-year plan and Education Strategic Plan and foster learning throughout the region.

Key users of the evaluation are the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, development partners, and international organizations aiming to learn from the path-finding steps taken in Cambodia to promote equitable access to quality education by ethnic minority children.

Evaluation criteria were: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact with cross-cutting considerations of gender equality and equity.

Evaluation Findings and Conclusions

Relevance:

Children, community members and local authorities strongly agree that multilingual education has produced more engagement in school and meaningful learning. The multilingual education curriculum is much appreciated for its culturally-based content. However, it may be too easy and needs to be enriched, including updated cultural content.

Primary rights holders and some sub-national duty bearers see justification for extending multilingual education to Grade 6, on a small-scale, pilot basis.

Effectiveness:

Targets have been met in terms of expanded quantity of provision.

Multilingual education preschools have not yet shown their potential. Dependence on commune-level funds and lack of systematic connection to primary schools are barriers to effectiveness in three of four provinces. A new ministry proclamation (Prakas no.

245) offers a framework to improve quality and convert preschools to state schools, co-located with primary schools.

Efficiency:

All sub-national duty bearers have been mobilized towards provision of multilingual education in primary schools serving at least 60 per cent of Indigenous children.

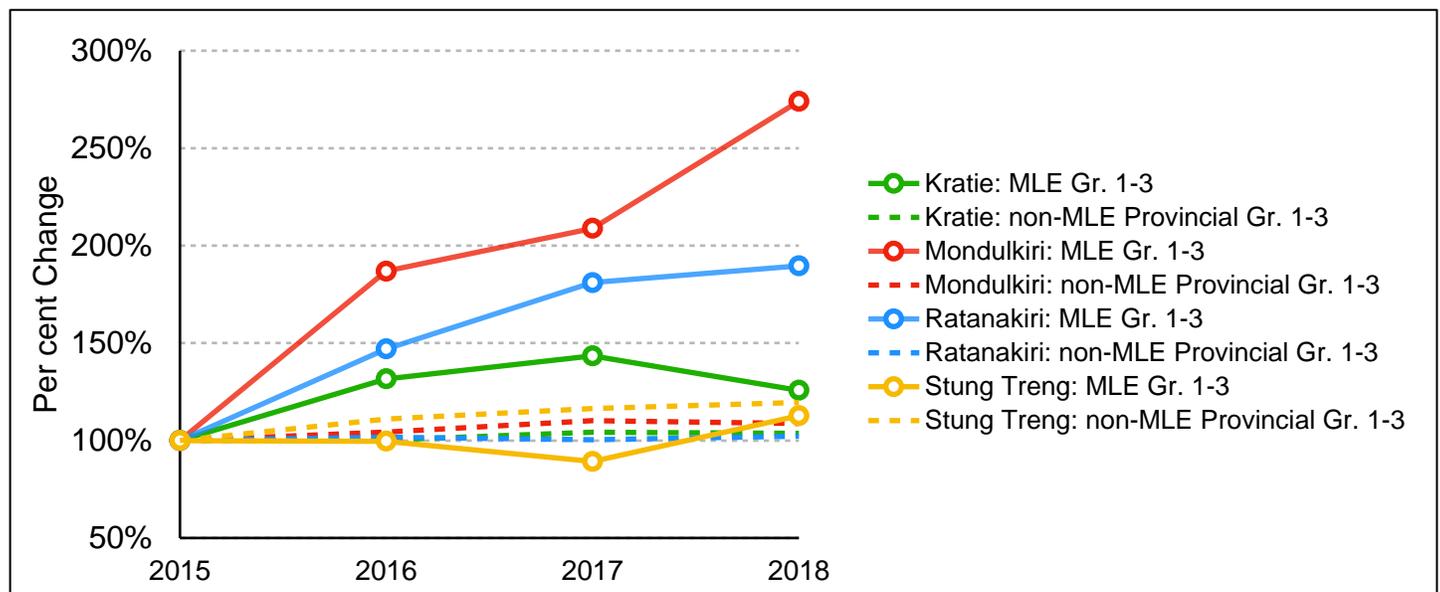
Operational costs are not much more than non-multilingual education schools, but there are reported shortfalls in dedicated funding for language-specific teacher training, monitoring and resources to promote literacy in Indigenous languages. The provincial teacher training colleges have potential that has not yet been harnessed with the goal of expanding access to quality education in both Indigenous and Khmer languages.

Sub-national education units have the motivation and organizational capacity to deliver training, monitoring and support for multilingual education if provided with sufficient financial and technical support at the national level.

Sustainability:

Demand for multilingual primary school education appears to exceed the supply of qualified Indigenous teachers and core trainers to train the multilingual teachers.

The Special Education Department, who manages multilingual education, is in a very early stage of technical capacity development, leadership and advocacy, and lacks the Indigenous language capacity needed to motivate, monitor, mentor and expand the teaching corps.



The view of some duty bearers that multilingual education is a short-term strategy only intended as a 'bridge' of minority children into the Khmer mainstream poses a risk to sustainability.

Impact:

Multilingual education has provided meaningful education to Indigenous children with the result that primary rights holders have increased their participation.

Indigenous adults are now seeking support to become literate in their language.

Low attendance during planting and harvesting seasons calls for innovative responses. Flexibility by

education authorities to allow piloting of decentralized calendars could be considered.

Human rights and gender equity:

Multilingual education works towards fulfilling Indigenous children's rights to meaningful education and provides employment and roles in communities for Indigenous women as teachers and school support committee members.

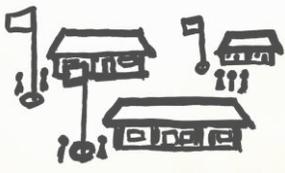
Girls show slightly more participation in multilingual education, mirroring the national trend.

Girls are reportedly more active participants in classroom activities when they can understand and relate to the teacher.

Key Conclusions



Relevance: Indigenous girls and boys have increased access to education in a language they can understand, teachers they can relate to and curriculum that resonates with their cultures.



Effectiveness: The national and sub-national education system can expand delivery of multilingual education, though ensuring quality requires strategies that were not well delineated in the inaugural Multilingual Education National Action Plan. A system for costing data capture and standardized reporting needs to be established by the unit responsible for implementation.



Efficiency: Sub-national education units are motivated and have the organizational capacity to deliver training, monitoring and support for multilingual education if provided with sufficient financial and technical support.



Impact: Clear messages of government support for ethnic minority languages in education through a clearly communicated plan, engagement with Indigenous organizations, and media campaigns strongly encourage ethnic minority parents and children to value schooling.



Sustainability: Visible leadership and capable management at the national level and increased support for sub-national units are needed to ensure that increasing the quantity of provision does not outpace improvements in quality.

Sustained commitment by duty bearers and the public depends on raising awareness of the potential of multilingual education to promote social harmony as well as inclusion in education.

Key Lessons Learned

The following lessons are more widely applicable for implementing multilingual education.

Relevance: Indigenous teachers and culturally-based curriculum are keys to Indigenous children's participation in school and parents' support of education.

Effectiveness: Sub-national duty bearers and Indigenous teachers are strongly motivated to expand access of multilingual education to more children and language communities, but this depends on sufficient financial support for more Indigenous engagement, including Indigenous core trainers, teachers and involvement of Indigenous organizations.

Efficiency: Educators are strongly committed to ensuring education for all, but must be given in-service training in multilingual education and extra financial support to expand equitable opportunities for meaningful education in often hard-to-reach Indigenous communities.



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Impact: The use of ethnic minority languages in education increases inclusion in education, provides opportunities for all children to become bilingual, promotes social harmony, and sustains languages and cultures.

Non-government organizations with experience in non-formal education in ethnic minority communities can help government actors to respond to demand for multilingual education teachers for primary schools and adult literacy education in Indigenous languages.

Sustainability: A specialized department within the Ministry of Education has the potential to concentrate effort and accountability for achieving equity for ethnolinguistic minority children. However, interdepartmental collaboration is essential to ensure needed technical capacity and resources from relevant departments.

Securing the future for Indigenous languages in education depends upon clearly communicated government commitment to ethnic minority children's rights to meaningful education and to minority languages as national treasures and avenues for social harmony.

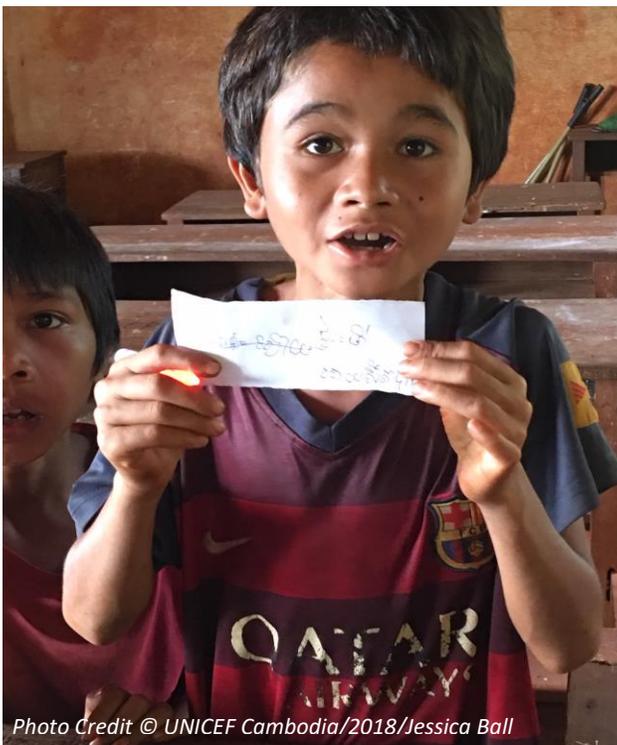


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Overall: Cambodia is leading the region in demonstrating an institutional approach to promoting ethnic minority children's inclusion in education through the use of Indigenous languages, the national language and culturally-based curricula. This approach makes starting school more child-friendly. It makes lessons understandable and relevant for children who often live in rural and remote farming communities where many families do not speak the national language.

Key Recommendations

Recommendations based on evidence from the evaluation are listed here in order of priority. The primary actors are the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport with support of development partners, working in collaboration with national and sub-national duty bearers, research institutions, local authorities, non-government organizations and primary rights holders including Indigenous organizations, children and parents.

INCLUSION

1. Plan for inclusion: Renew the Multilingual Education National Action Plan from 2019-2023 with costed strategies and activities and scheduled accountability, reporting, and evaluation. Expand gradually to include more Indigenous languages and consider possible innovations to continue to improve.

QUALITY

2. Strengthen system capacity: Strengthen Special Education Department technical capacity and systems for implementation of the plan. Increase financial and technical support to Provincial Offices of Education for teacher training and monitoring. Introduce an active structure with senior leadership within the Ministry of Education for ongoing interdepartmental collaboration.

SYSTEMS

3. Meet preschool quality criteria: Enhance multilingual education preschool quality and harmonization. Help preschools meet quality criteria under Prakas No. 245 to be annexed to multilingual primary schools and then converted to state preschools.

TEACHERS

4. Build teaching capacity: Increase the quantity, quality and retention of multilingual education primary school teachers and Indigenous core trainers by enhancing financial and technical support to sub-national duty bearers for training, monitoring, adding Indigenous core trainers and outreach to Indigenous organizations. Prepare provincial teacher training colleges to support Indigenous teachers to deliver multilingual education.

CURRICULA

5. Refresh multilingual education teaching and learning curricula: Review and renew multilingual education curricula and resources to enhance the curriculum, enrich cultural content, and incorporate resources produced by non-government organizations. Involve Indigenous children, community members and organizations in ongoing teaching and learning resource development.

PROMOTION

6. Communicate the value of ethnic minority languages: Raise awareness about child rights and the social value of ethnic minority languages and cultures as an important strategy in increasing participation in public education, embracing diversity, protecting cultural resources and promoting social harmony.

DATA

7. Improve information systems: Improve education information management systems, including disaggregation by gender, ethnicity and language, relevant denominators to determine service reach to priority populations, digital data capture and standardized reporting.

RESEARCH

8. Enable research and development: Develop partnerships between education research centres to support evidence-based decision making about multilingual education to fulfil ethnic minority children's rights and to share lessons learned locally and globally.

Professor Jessica Ball & Mariam Smith (Co-leaders)

Assisted by Cambodia team members: Srom Bunthy, Samorn Lamy, Pleuk Phearom, Srey Mao, Kao Nom, Thuk Bun, Chuen Kham Phin, Chab A, Pim Kheav