MALAYSIA Country Report
Language Education and Social Cohesion (LESC) Initiative
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Malaysia Country Report: Language Education and Social Cohesion (LESC) Initiative

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This report contributes to the PBEA Programme’s global outcomes 2 and 5: to increase institutional capacities to supply conflict-sensitive education; and to generate and use evidence and knowledge in policies and programming related to education, conflict and peacebuilding, respectively.

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Acronyms

ASEAN Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CSOs Civil Society Organizations
EAPRO East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF)
LESC Language, Education and Social Cohesion (EAPRO)
MLE Multilingual Education
MoE Ministry of Education
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
NUCC National Unity Consultative Council (Malaysia)
PBEA Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme (EAPRO)
SJK(C) Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina) – primary and secondary level Chinese-medium schools
SJK(T) Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Tamil) – primary level Tamil-medium schools
WASH Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
UN United Nations

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Resilience

Both within UNICEF and among its partners, programming that contributes to the resilience of children, communities and institutions in contexts of increasing shocks and stresses (disaster risk, climate change, persistent conflict/violence, epidemics and global fuel and food price hikes) including in regions of high vulnerability, has in recent years gained much attention. This in part is due to increasing evidence that shocks are impeding and reversing development gains and creating greater vulnerability particularly amongst the already marginalized and excluded (e.g., girls, children with disabilities, children in indigenous communities). UNICEF defines resilience as, “The ability of children, communities and systems to withstand, adapt to, and recover from stresses and shocks advancing the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged.” (UNICEF definition of resilience [draft])

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding involves a multidimensional range of measures to reduce the risk of a lapse or relapse into conflict by addressing both the causes and consequences of conflict. Peacebuilding can be transformative, changing or transforming negative relationships and institutions and strengthening national capacities at all levels for better management of conflict dynamics and in order to lay the foundation for supporting the cohesiveness of the society and building sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding is multidimensional (including political, security, social and economic dimensions), cuts across sectors (education, WASH, health, nutrition, child protection, gender) and occurs at all levels in a society (national to community levels), and includes governments, civil society, the United Nations system, as well as an array of international and national partners.

Education and Peacebuilding

Education may be a driver of conflict, but it also can play a significant role in supporting peacebuilding. Education is not a marginal player in peacebuilding, but a core component of building sustainable peace (UNICEF 2011). While the relationship between education and conflict is recognized, education’s role in peacebuilding is not fully realized. Education as a peace dividend is accepted. However, education can contribute to other dimensions of peacebuilding, such as conflict prevention, social transformation, civic engagement and economic progress (UNESCO 2011). For example, education can contribute to improved governance by addressing underlying inequities that fuel conflict, providing education and employment opportunities to disenfranchised youth, empowering adolescent girls and women as actors in the peacebuilding process, imparting civic and political education, and modelling democratic participation and decision-making. Creating an enabling environment for education to contribute to peace requires a long-term view that includes education sector system building and strengthening. Practices of good governance, conflict-sensitive education policy (that which is delivered in a way that does not exacerbate social cleavages or cause conflict), transparent collection and use of information, and equitable distribution of education resources and materials are important signals of strengthened institutional capacity and are crucial to the peacebuilding process.
The Contribution of Peacebuilding to Resilience

While every individual, community or system has a natural level of resilience, some are more resilient in withstanding and recovering from adversities. Violent conflict reduces the resilience of people, communities and systems by undermining or breaking down interpersonal and communal relationships and trust. It can erode social capital and undermine values and norms that promote cooperation and collective action for common good. Communities in conflict-affected and fragile situations often face multiple risks, have weaker institutions, and are more vulnerable to risks and shocks. Peacebuilding helps individuals, communities and systems become more resilient to conflict. Over the long term it strengthens local capacities for managing conflict, building peace and promoting social cohesion in conflict-affected contexts. When people, communities and societies are able to anticipate and manage conflicts without violence, and are engaging in inclusive social change processes that improve the quality of life, then they have truly become resilient.

Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding

Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding are not new to UNICEF. Helping children live in peace has been at the core of UNICEF’s work since its founding. UNICEF has remained committed to protecting the rights of children in situations affected by conflict and violence. UNICEF’s current investment in these countries is considerable, and UNICEF’s work on peacebuilding has become widespread. In order for UNICEF to integrate conflict sensitivity into its programmes and support peacebuilding in a more strategic and effective way, understanding the relationship between conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding is essential. They are closely related, and both begin with conflict analysis and a robust understanding of conflict causes and dynamics. Yet they are also quite distinct in concept and practice in important ways.

Conflict Sensitivity is the capacity of an organization to understand its operating context, understand the interaction between its interventions and the context, and act upon this understanding to avoid negative impacts (‘do no harm’) and maximize positive impacts on conflict factors.

Key elements of Conflict Sensitivity:

- Understand the context in which it operates;
- Understand the interaction between the organization’s interventions and the context; and
- Act upon the understanding of this interaction, to (a) avoid negative impacts (do no harm) and (b) maximize positive impacts.
- Constantly reflect on the implications of its interventions.

Peacebuilding (defined above)

Key Elements of Peacebuilding:

- Peacebuilding explicitly aims to address the affects and underlying causes of conflict.
- Peacebuilding focuses at the individual, community and systemic level.
- Peacebuilding programming articulates a clear vision that is aimed at building long-term sustainable peace.
- The goals and objectives of such initiatives can be integrated into other programme areas.
- Or programming can be stand-alone initiatives.
The EAPRO Language, Education and Social Cohesion (LESC) Initiative is a component of UNICEF’s ‘Learning for Peace’ – the Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) Programme – a four-year global initiative (2012–2015/16), funded by the Government of the Netherlands. The goal of the programme was to build resilience, social cohesion and human security through strengthened policies and practices in education (UNICEF 2014, p. 3). The programme strove for five outcomes based around education and peacebuilding:

- Outcome 1: Integrating peacebuilding and education
- Outcome 2: Building institutional capacities
- Outcome 3: Developing community and individual capacities
- Outcome 4: Increasing access to conflict-sensitive education
- Outcome 5: Generating evidence and knowledge (see UNICEF 2014, pp. 22–54)

The PBEA programme implementation at UNICEF EAPRO has been anchored on Outcomes 2 and 5. The overall vision has been to strengthen policy and resilience in society, to foster social cohesion and human security in countries at risk of conflict, experiencing conflict or recovering from conflict. The strategic result and primary objective is to improve the lives of children in post-conflict, conflict-affected or conflict-prone contexts.

This report is an analysis of the LESC Initiative in Malaysia, premised on the belief that by providing the research methods and intervention tools to articulate how to promote peace and foster understanding, education and especially language education can function as a means to increase social cohesion, ethnic and cultural understanding, as well as economic and health benefits in conflict prone areas. The activities undertaken through this initiative sought to explore the belief and hypothesis that deliberated processes of language problem solving can be a tool for promoting social cohesion, or restoring positive social relations that have been ruptured through conflict. The findings of this process as reported here present new understandings of linkages between language and social cohesion, and make specific recommendations for further work along these lines in the Malaysian context.

The LESC initiative in Malaysia was informed by rich, participatory research and fieldwork activities. These include bilateral meetings, interviews, consultations and Facilitated Dialogues with over 150 individuals belonging to over 100 organizations, institutions and governmental departments across Malaysia. Three Facilitated Dialogues were held in Kuala Lumpur (Peninsula Malaysia), Kota Kinabalu (Sabah) and Kuching (Sarawak), while site visits were conducted at the Sekolah Wawasan Vision School, Subang Jaya, the Kampung Numbak Learning Center, Sabah and at Multilingual Education (MLE) Preschools in Sarawak.
Among many positive outcomes, the dialogues revealed a strong conviction of the need for an indigenous language policy, supported by a conference on indigenous languages and multilingualism for Sabah and Sarawak in 2016–2017. A key observation has been that the programmes and initiatives that currently make up the bulk of the activity of national unity promotion are essentially motivated by an ethos of overcoming existing problems, and only occasionally comprise of problem prevention. Tackling problems is important. Yet the LESC Initiative found that Malaysia needs to move towards an ambitious programme of social inclusion, fostering a sense of participatory citizenship, educational equality and cultural democracy reflected in its language policy.

### 1.1 Findings

The following findings and actions are essentially generalizations drawn from the work of Professor Lo Bianco and UNICEF Malaysia. These points are elaborated specifically in relation to Malaysia in Section 10 below. A key point is to emphasise that when language questions are discussed in Facilitated Dialogues they can lead towards the formulation of language policies that promote social cohesion, national unity, respect for differences and economic modernization. The 10 findings and actions below are intended for researchers, policymakers and community activists involved in language rights and social cohesion:

1. There is a large gap in understanding between perceptions of minority groups and officials on questions of language, in education specifically and across other social domains.
2. In such cases where language issues, in education and beyond, are a cause of disagreement, tension, conflict and overt tension can be relieved, greater understanding promoted and, in many cases, a working consensus can be achieved, through focused and well-prepared interventions.
3. Collaborative decision-making informed by research evidence selected for its relevance and applicability to local problems and language disputes has proven very effective in the Facilitated Dialogues.
4. A wider public acceptance that language is a complex and multi-faceted resource needs to be promoted so that language policies can include bottom-up processes as well as top-down delivery of decision-making on language.
5. All Facilitated Dialogues should be preceded by detailed and linguistically informed situation analysis to determine what local language problems can be most effectively dealt with in Facilitated Dialogues.
6. There is an urgent need for locally focused success stories to be documented and shared to encourage curriculum innovation, local problem-solving and greater involvement of community stakeholders in language policy writing.
7. There is an urgent need for widespread and sustained public education on multilingualism in education and society.
8. There is an urgent need to complement official top-down decision-making about language use in government administration, especially in health and legal domains, with processes of local bottom-up language planning to inform government decision-making.
9. Language planning to foster social cohesion needs to be an ongoing activity, and revisited regularly to ensure that policies are informed by new research and respond to new and emerging needs.
10. The most productive focus for language policy and planning is to include domains beyond education in a comprehensive approach to address all social, economic and educational questions linked to language.
1.2 Recommendations

While some of the dimensions of the above are beyond the scope of the LESC Initiative, the need for comprehensive language planning is the strongest single conclusion of this work. Comprehensive language planning should build on the promising outcomes reported here, and should address the vitality and secure presence of the indigenous languages of all citizens, the unresolved tensions deriving from the disparate and un-integrated vernacular-national school systems of the major ethnic groupings.

A concerted, sustained and facilitated public conversation based on the participation and voices of policymakers, ethnic and indigenous communities, experts and the wider society (media, Civil Society Organizations [CSOs], and economic interests) is needed to directly address these questions. This public conversation should be guided by a facilitated process of development of a staged public national language planning, inclusive of all of Malaysia’s language communities.

The aim of such comprehensive staged and public language planning should be threefold:

1. To forge a new national language policy dispensation premised on public support and consensus for national bi- and trilingualism, that is, Bahasa Malaysia as the unifying lingua franca of the nation, the mother tongues (Melayu, ethnic vernaculars – Chinese and Tamil – and indigenous languages) as the crucial languages of identity and English, along with other international languages, useful for higher education and commerce in a globalized world;
2. To secure widespread public appreciation and commitment to the new policy vision;
3. To collectively negotiate the administrative, educational and juridical mechanisms for enduring and effective implementation of such a comprehensive, coordinated multilingual national plan.
As part of the PBEA programme, in 2012, UNICEF EAPRO commissioned a desk review of existing documents on the relations between ethnicity (especially ethnic minorities), education (policies and practices related to minorities and minority languages) and social cohesion/peacebuilding in three countries – Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand. Critical to the review was the role of consultations with key stakeholders across governmental and non-governmental sectors in the three countries. In Malaysia, consultations were held with personnel from UNICEF Malaysia, the MoE in Malaysia and with a range of community services organizations from across the nation.

A wide range of issues were canvassed during the consultations, including national unity, Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) and policies and practices relating to ethnicity and education.
More specifically, questions were raised concerning the role of English and Malay as languages of instruction in schools as well as wider issues of educational inequality or underachievement of indigenous students and students in rural contexts. Relating to this were questions about retention rates and other challenges for students of vernacular schools, and the admission of refugee and undocumented children to education. An overarching theme in these discussions was the question of ‘national integration’, and the relationship between ‘language’ and the notions of unity and belonging to the state (See Lo Bianco 2013, pp. 14–17 for further detail).

The LESC Initiative, situated within the PBEA programme, was born out of the reviews in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand and from requests made by the country offices of UNICEF in the three countries which specified the questions they wished to see focused addressed in their setting. While research and ‘intervention’ activities exploring policy and planning, particularly with regard to current practices and prevailing attitudes and values related to language throughout education systems were key points of entry, as the work proceeded individuals and groups expanded the demands made on the research. Central to all activities however, has been the role of language education, civil society, public policy and the labour market, and how under different conditions language and ethnicity issues can change, indicating that these questions are amenable to dynamic processes, including intervention through mediation or deliberation. In other words, past conditions that might cause inequalities and stoke resentment or antagonism are not entrenched and ineradicable, but instead can be shifted by adding bottom-up, citizen and stakeholder centred exploration of alternatives and improvements.
As cited, in the context of Malaysia’s ambitious and careful ongoing education reform, and its extensive initiatives in national unity and integration, the LESC research and action focused on language planning activities. The Facilitated Dialogues were open to participants to place on the agenda for discussion of the problems and issues they felt most urgently required attention. It turned out that there were relations between schooling in vernacular and national streams (Chinese-Tamil-Malay), and the special circumstances of indigenous communities (Orang Asli/Orang Asal children in Peninsular and East Malaysia – Sabah and Sarawak).
Over its duration in many sites across the country a range of consultative and participatory activities, including interviews, consultations and Facilitated Dialogues, were completed. These activities were premised on the belief in language planning processes, not language planning as a technical exercise for experts or officials to impose on populations, but for deliberative activity in education and the official and public role of languages. In this way Facilitated Dialogues can be an instrument for fostering social cohesion, improving national unity and overcoming tension where it exists, and by so doing contributing to the peacebuilding aims of PBEA and the LESC Initiative.

By providing methods and linguistic tools to articulate how to foster understanding of complex technical issues so that public groups of stakeholders can make decisions and write new policies, education decision-making can function as a means to increase social cohesion, ethnic and cultural understanding, and promote other social benefits in conflict prone areas. This is understandably a complex, multi-layered and long-term process, which involves engaging with a range of mechanisms and concepts, and in effect rely on expert local and external facilitators to guide and inform the process.

The following section begins by providing a brief overview of the key mechanisms involved in language planning and policy processes and their relevance to the Malaysian LESC Initiative, before moving to a more detailed description of the Facilitated Dialogues undertaken in Kuala Lumpur (Peninsular Malaysia), Kota Kinabalu (Sabah) and Kuching (Sarawak).
4

Conceptual approach to engagement with LESC activities

4.1 Language status planning

Status refers to the legal standing of a language. Language status questions are relevant to issues of social cohesion in respect of the juridical standing of minority languages and, as such, these issues can be contentious. In Malaysia, the question of language status arises as part of the general absence of a comprehensive communication-wide language planning, and must be considered an unaddressed question of the country’s overall language planning, which is otherwise impressive in world terms. In Malaysia, as elsewhere, there is high demand for English, which is an important factor in language policy in general. The demand for English can potentially destabilize nationalism-based language planning, unless English is brought into a comprehensive national language planning exercise (see Recommendations). Comprehensive language policy represents systematic efforts of collective, dialogue-based, expert language planning, which seeks to address in a single and coordinated process, top-down and bottom-up activities of language decision-making.

4.2 Solving language problems

The LESC programme undertook three specially designed Facilitated Dialogues in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak (see below) to isolate and deal with specific locally identified language problems. These were the entry points for a wider debate, discussion and collaboration towards writing alternative policies, understanding better current ones, reflecting on comparisons and contrasts, and sharpening the goals and expectations of different programme models. As stated above, a key aim of the dialogues is to collectively address a range of language problems and respond to them through evidence-based guided discussion, therefore these are not ‘seminars’ or ‘workshops’ aiming to communicate information, but rather concrete opportunities to make local decisions, and to foster consensus and collaboration. In a more general way, the Facilitated Dialogue experience is also intended to foster a culture of verbal exchange, as applied to contentious language problems and in the process of doing this to experiment with new skills and methods for solving concrete language problems so participants gain the ability to engage in language policy debates in an informed way.
4.3 Training in language planning

Specific training in methods of writing language policies was communicated to officials and community organizations throughout the project. In a regional effort by EAPRO and the University of Melbourne, evidence- and experience-based methodological guidelines for problem-solving local dialogues and a regional strategy for their broader implementation, including a fundraising proposal, will be developed as part of the LESC initiatives in 2015.

4.4 Public education on contentious issues

Methods of dealing with controversial topics were included in all dialogues, talks and meetings. These included practical questions of how to teach multiple languages in a single school or in a district or state; how to sequence between one and another language; how and when to introduce literacy, third languages, and subject content; how to use and draw on community language resources; how to assess learning; and what role English should or could play in ethnically diverse areas. Meetings also addressed the general question of multilingualism in society, the job market, in people's identities and in the global marketplace. Several sessions were held on how to conduct local research studies and how to use the findings of local research to bolster arguments for policy change, and to defend or modify a programme or approach being adopted. Other contentious questions involved how to designate different languages, for example: What is an ‘official’, ‘national’ or ‘regional’ language? What are ‘language rights’? What is the best education for disadvantaged children, for isolated, itinerant, undocumented, or marginalized children? All of these questions should be the focus of public education to ensure that a more language aware population is able to understand the choices being made in education and society and to participate in their adoption or modification as they desire (Hashim 2009).

4.5 Mitigating conflict

Both in Facilitated Dialogues and beyond them the question of conflict mitigation and the role of language planning in this was raised and debated. It formed a major focus of the LESC work. In the most general terms one of the conclusions of the LESC Initiative is that overt disagreement and even conflict between different groups and their positions on questions of language can be assisted by replacing emotional and angry talk which imparts negative motivations to all current policy settings and all proposals for change and development. It is not the aim of the Facilitated Dialogues to interpret political issues, or to engage in political action, but instead to scrutinize policy settings against evidence and research.

It frequently transpires in dialogues that in the absence of information, data and research, some questions which appear controversial, intractably difficult to resolve or incomprehensible, can be allayed, mitigated or redressed through information gathering activity. Conflict can also be linked to symbolic questions as well as pragmatic/practical measures in policy. In the latter category we find a clear connection between
language and slow acting social disparities such as literacy and academic achievement dictated by differential language abilities among learners and social groups. Access to national languages, prestige forms of academic communication and articulate expressive ability are all questions of language which are typically underestimated in public policy, in conflict resolution practices and in activities aiming to foster national unity. The LESC Initiative was therefore active in exploring a wide range of conflict mitigation activities by helping stakeholders to sharpen critical approaches to policy, to citizen participation in debate and to becoming action researchers themselves, able to gather and deploy research evidence in support of policy improvements.

4.6 Writing guidelines and developing theory and understanding

A vital aim of LESC has been to develop a new and better understanding of the relationship between language, in its many roles, and various aspects of society. These links manifest between how languages are used in society, in the media, in the economy, the roles of different languages in education, and the official settings and aims of language policy (Haa, Kho, and Chang 2013). These language questions are then linked to the state of social relations, whether these are cohesive or tense, whether there is a tension and conflict or resilience and cohesion, whether there are mechanisms to anticipate deterioration in social relations and in a timely and effective fashion, to respond and restore healthy dialogue and interaction. A deeper understanding of the complex interaction between language and conflict in multi-ethnic societies is urgently required under contemporary conditions of rapid and deep globalization of economies, vast mobility of populations and the diffusion of information and networking technologies (David and Govindasamy 2005; Gill 2014). This, however, is a much wider and deeper agenda of research and needs to be conducted in a sustained fashion in different settings.

To facilitate meeting part of this need, UNICEF EAPRO and the University of Melbourne are developing methodological guidelines for problem-solving local dialogues to be released in late 2015 or early 2016. The guide will represent a technical compendium to support UNICEF staff, government and MoE officials, language policymakers, communities and other relevant actors involved in language policy development to engage in more inclusive, participatory and effective language policy planning processes and to use relevant participatory methodologies influenced by the practices of the Facilitated Dialogues to effectively support stakeholders to negotiate shared policy settings.

4.7 Extensive research into written documents

It is critical that a credible research and evidence basis for informing the LESC Initiative and any public policy outcomes be established. This has taken the form of a literature review of documents including legal texts, educational jurisdiction documents, academic sources, supra-national sources (e.g., documents produced by UNICEF, Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN] and non-governmental organizations [NGOs]), documents from CSOs, and public media, among other materials.
LESC activities: Facilitated Dialogues

Facilitated Dialogues are essentially a form of guided purposeful discussion. Similar approaches are sometimes referred to as deliberation, mediation, or deliberation conferencing. The specific method of Facilitated Dialogues was developed during field research in several countries by Prof. Lo Bianco to improve the effectiveness of language planning. It is an unfortunate reality that the majority of government management of language decisions is very poor. The need for a new approach is based on the very poor track record of most language planning. In research on ethnic strife in 15 countries across Asia, Brown and Ganguly (2003) found most language policy is a technical failure and often a political disaster, in all but two of the 15 cases governments dealt with ethnic language issues either ‘poorly’ or ‘disastrously’.

The design of Facilitated Dialogues is partly based on theories of deliberative democracy, meaning the central role of discussion and debate in decision-making. The essential aim of dialogues is to canvas policy alternatives for problems already being debated and which are the cause of conflict, tension or policy paralysis. The initial concept note for the LESC Malaysia Facilitated Dialogues contains a detailed report of the orientation and related activities under the initiative. The provisional aims for the Facilitated Dialogues in Malaysia, taken from the original concept note (Appendix 5), are as follows:

5.1 Facilitated Dialogues and outcomes

Under the initial LESC contract, the following Facilitated Dialogues were conducted.

b) Language, Education and Social Cohesion. Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia, 7–8 May 2014 (46 participants).

All three Facilitated Dialogues had broadly similar aims, although each Dialogue focussed on different, localized communities and issues. The broad aims of the Dialogues were to develop a framework for a language policy and planning framework for the specific setting, within the wider Malaysian reality; to address locally named language problems; to address these in a procedure of guided but locally based refinement of the problem; inject at strategic points research data or evidence, and if not
available to design a research programme that would be required to address the question at hand; to link the specific language issue or problem being debated to wider questions in society; to infuse the discussion with perspectives from a range of participants so that all participants could see their personal and organizational interest being represented while at the same time being fused with others into a multi-authored approach.

One key point of this process is to build a sense of collective ownership of a growing decision process across the differences present among the participants, so that each could engage in ‘perspective taking’, and comprehension of divergent points of view. In these and other ways the Facilitated Dialogues aim to foster unity, cohesion and collaborative social relations among the participants. More specifically, they aim to promote understanding of the forms and possibilities of language planning for fostering human rights, improved education and social cohesion; to identify, define and examine problems that require special attention, and to identify areas of capacity development in language planning; improvements in language learning, and make a contribution to enhance and improve the educational lives of children (See Appendix 5 for the original concept note for the Facilitated Dialogues).

5.1.1 Kuala Lumpur

The general aim of the Kuala Lumpur Facilitated Dialogue was to address the above language problems and challenges for national unity and social cohesion with specific reference to the vernacular/Malay question. This involved looking at Chinese and Tamil language maintenance and Malay language learning, as well as the specific challenges in language, literacy and academic achievement for Peninsular Orang Asli students. The Dialogue was attended by 41 participants from 34 organizations, including government officials from a range of departments in the MoE, as well as the Department of National Unity and Integration of the Prime Minister’s Department; researchers and academics
from Malaysian universities; the Malaysian human rights organization; CSOs, including indigenous, women's, youth, child rights, refugee, parent, teacher and peace groups; as well as representatives from NGOs.

The broad history of language planning in Malaysia since independence formed a key backdrop to the Facilitated Dialogues, necessitating a focus on the role of English. In the broadest language policy terms, therefore, the Dialogue aimed to debate prospects of a new national language dispensation in education, social and cultural life; the economy; law and health domains. By all reports provided after its conclusion, evaluations, and requests for repeats, as well as the written and agreed decisions of the two days, the outcomes were positive. A deeper understanding of how language policy can be designed to both foster national unity and respect minority rights, social justice and improvements in the achievements of minority populations was achieved.

Another positive outcome was a strong sense among participants that they had experienced effective training in how language policies can be written, the scope and components of what constitutes a policy and the functional role of languages in a multilingual society, while increased consensus was reached on the benefits of MLE (see Appendix 6 for the Dialogue agenda).

5.1.2 Kota Kinabalu

The general aim of the Kota Kinabalu Facilitated Dialogue was to address issues in language specific to the context of the state of Sabah, linked to the wider context of challenges for national unity and social cohesion. As a result, a specific focus on language maintenance for minority indigenous languages (See Appendix 7) formed the bulk of the content and process of the Facilitated Dialogue. The Dialogue was attended by 46 participants from 32 organizations, including government officials from the MoE, as well as the Department of National Unity and Integration of the Prime Minister’s Department; researchers and academics from Sabah universities; the Malaysian human rights organization; CSOs, including indigenous and women’s groups; as well as representatives from NGOs.

Feedback from participants at the Facilitated Dialogue in Sabah was overwhelmingly positive. Participation was enthusiastic and engaged. The knowledge, preparation and effective communication of the facilitator in creating a positive learning environment was highlighted in most responses. The group sessions were the most popular and the participants appreciated interactive activities organized by the facilitator. Group problem solving on language planning and policy writing activities were voted the high point. Comments made stressed that activities which concentrated on “writing up policy” with “input from trainer and other group members”, were especially helpful to learn how to “relate to officials” and to seek “change for our children” to make education better for indigenous people.

Other aspects of the Dialogue that were applauded by participants included sessions on isolating language problems and specialist input on the roles of multilingualism, mother tongue-based learning and bilingualism in education and broader society. Activities that were less successful included writing a policy preamble and preparing material to lodge with the minister. This was mostly due to limited time, combined with a need for more sense of ‘security’ as to how best to articulate themselves in such a task. Suggestions for improvement largely focused on the provision of more time, repeated Facilitated Dialogues to deepen understanding and build confidence, presentation
The most positive outcomes included increased understanding of language policy processes and writing; increased consensus on the benefits of MLE; and the training and information exchange on language policy writing and development. The proposal from the states of Sabah and Sarawak Dialogue sessions was the recommendation for UNICEF, together with other stakeholders, to consider organizing a conference on ‘indigenous education’ in Malaysia (including mother-tongue and bilingual education) in 2016–2017.

5.1.3 Kuching

As with the Sabah Facilitated Dialogue, the specific and general aims of the Kuching Facilitated Dialogue linked national and state questions, local problems, grievances and issues on language problems and challenges with the context of national perspectives. There was a specific focus on maintenance and inter-generational transmission of indigenous languages. The Dialogue was attended by 44 participants from 17 organizations including government officials from the MoE, as well as the Department of National Unity and Integration of the Prime Minister’s department; Sarawak government officials from a range of departments; a representative from the Malaysian human rights commission; CSOs, particularly indigenous groups; as well as representatives from NGOs.

The participants in the Kuching dialogue were emphatic in their feedback concerning the preparedness and general competency of the facilitator in creating an effective and productive positive learning environment. In general, the feedback indicated that all participants were very satisfied with and pleased by the content and delivery of the Dialogue. One hundred per cent of participants agreed that the meeting was very good or excellent in its content and delivery. Of particular relevance to the participants were questions relating to the use of mother tongue as language of instruction, as well as bilingualism more generally and the need and possibility of a state-specific approach to language problem solving. As one participant articulated, “the session on bilingual education” was particularly valuable, “because of its widespread relevance and application.” This was supported by other participants who enjoyed learning about how children acquire languages and the importance of mother tongue-based learning for cognitive development.

The areas for improvement varied among participants with no deficiencies in the seminar’s delivery. Points for improvement included additional handouts, further reach and frequency of Facilitated Dialogues conducted for NGOs in conjunction with civilian representatives and government officials. While some sessions, including those focused on writing policy and the impact of bilingualism were less interesting to some, the overall feedback from participants requesting more Facilitated Dialogues of this kind showed that the Dialogue was a useful and insightful process for the majority of its participants.

Positive outcomes from the Dialogue included a strong conviction of the need for an education conference for indigenous learners in Sarawak and Sabah to meet the specific state contexts in education and the unique demographical and sociolinguistic reality of the Borneo states.
5.2 Site visits

While many site visits, consultations and discussions were held throughout the activity, only selected ones are reported here because of their particular relevance: the Sekolah Wawasan Vision School, Subang Jaya; the Kampung Numbak Learning Center, Sabah and several MLE Preschools in Sarawak. A significant number of meetings with teachers, public officials and others were also held both directly and in group sessions.

5.2.1 Sekolah Wawasan Vision School

The purpose of the visit to was to become familiar with the unique Malaysian approach to national integration which locates autonomously functioning vernacular and national schools on a single campus. Introduced in 1995, the Vision school concept involves the placement of Malay-, Mandarin- and Tamil-medium schools on the same campus, sharing common physical amenities, school events and some curriculum. The conceptualization of Vision schools was based on an understanding of the importance of bringing together Malaysian children from different ethnic and language backgrounds. The key assumption was that physical co-location would facilitate interaction among the students from different groups, with the intention of fostering natural friendship-making processes, common activities and ultimately make a contribution to national integration (Malakolunthu 2010).

The visit to the component schools and interaction with their teachers and administrators, along with MoE officials, was very illuminating for the possible options that could be pursued in social cohesion planning more generally. From subsequent discussions, research and reflection it became clear that while co-location of different schools onto the one campus has many advantages, and the general idea has an inspired and important purpose, significantly less interaction appears to occur than might...
be anticipated. In effect the concrete level of interaction activities and fostering of opportunities for students from different racial and language backgrounds is rather limited. A more robust process of curriculum exchange, joint curriculum co-production, sports, media and shared subjects could substantially strengthen what is in effect a very admirable initiative that both allows continual development of unique and ethnicity-based learning, first language maintenance, with cross-ethnic interaction and national identity building. Two extended discussions with officials of the Department of National Unity and Integration of the Prime Minister’s Department explored the official views of the initiative and allowed the consultant to make a series of proposals about ways to strengthen and extend both the number of such schools and their internal levels and degrees of interaction.

5.2.2 Kampung Numbak Learning Center, Sabah

This learning centre is supported by UNICEF in partnership with the Malaysian MoE, the Sabah Special Task Force, the Teacher Foundation and the community. The centre was set up to provide basic access to education for children who, although born in Malaysia, do not have appropriate documentation and birth registration and therefore are not permitted access to state education. These are effectively ‘out-of-school’ pupils, and include both refugee and undocumented children. They are however provided some access to the national curriculum, with an emphasis on reading and writing, mathematics, Islamic studies and life skills (UNICEF 2013) via non-state provision.

The aim of the visit was to learn of the work of the school and its role in providing education for children whose official status within Malaysia is insecure. There are many such children on plantations across the country as well as specific groups linked to refugee entrants from diverse parts of Southeast Asia and further afield. The school operates under very difficult conditions, both physically and administratively. An extended session of meetings with state education officials discussed the general and specific situation of such children, and allowed the consultant the opportunity to express a range of views and suggestions for better links with state schools, with children attending those schools nearby and with other aspects of the operation of the learning centre.

Greater effort in fostering learning and integration is needed as there is little interaction between children obtaining limited education in the Center and mainstream children, some of whom lived close by or even in the Kampung (a Malaysian term meaning village) itself. A more systematic interaction with local schools and local children would reduce the sense of isolation and marginalization prevailing in the Kampung. It was recommended that a much more robust investment be made in language and literacy education of such children across the country, a proposal made to central authorities as well.

5.2.3 Multilingual Education (MLE) Preschools in Sarawak

MLE preschools have been set up in Sarawak, as well as in other areas of Malaysia, providing mother tongue-based or first language multilingual instruction, with the aim of assisting children to develop initial thinking, reasoning and conceptual skills in their first language(s), prior to transition to the national language and later English.

Visits to these preschools aimed at familiarization with the operating conditions prevailing in them, their philosophies and pedagogies, and the views of parents, teachers and community leaders on the future development of indigenous education across the Borneo states and in this case specifically
Sarawak. The visits proved very useful in grounding the work of policy advising in the concrete experience of education delivery and the challenges of delivering minority language education in remote and often very isolated environments. Preschool education is a key focus of the national unity approach adopted by the Malaysian central government. However, many people associated with community-based preschools were unconvinced that the central government’s approaches are sufficiently neutral in an ethnic, linguistic or religious sense and some suspect central government moves into preschool education as assimilationist in intent. These questions were explored at length with officials from the local offices of the Department of National Unity and Integration of the Prime Minister’s Department.
Submission to the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC)

The Facilitated Dialogues and site visits involved considered and generous collaboration from a diverse range of organizations and individuals across Malaysia. The contributions of all participants has shaped and informed the findings in this report, which in turn has informed the development of the Country Programme Document for the UNICEF Malaysia Country Office, as well as informing a broader regional outcomes report on the LESC Initiative. These have in turn informed a further undertaking between Prof. Lo Bianco and the UNICEF Malaysia Country Office, which resulted in the production of three reports.

These reports are intended to facilitate the petitions of the UNICEF office to the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC), who are currently charged with the development of a National Blueprint on Unity for Malaysia (see Appendices 2–4). How Language Education can Support National and Social Cohesion in Malaysia (Appendix 4), developed with extensive feedback and collaboration with the UNICEF Malaysia Country Office, represents the submission to the Chairman of the NUCC, Yang Berbahagia Tan Sri Samsudin Osman for NUCC’s consideration in their development of the National Blueprint on Unity.

Further consultations are being arranged between the UNICEF Malaysia Country Office and NUCC to deliberate on how to take forward the recommendations in the report.
7.1 Malaysian management of social relations

In general terms, Malaysia enjoys a sophisticated and multi-faceted approach to the management of ethnic relations, combining substantial efforts in research, policymaking and critical interventions. In this respect it is almost unique in Southeast Asia. However, the discussions, debates, Dialogues and research examination reported above suggest some areas of needed development. In particular it is proposed that Malaysia is uniquely well placed to take a bold step towards a fuller resolution of a chronic unresolved tension in its language policy. It can only attain this with substantially increased research investments, specifically in public and dialogue based language planning.

Much of the current framework of Malaysia’s language policy is the result of immediate post-independence stress of building and strengthening Malay, to allow it its rightful place as the key language of unity in the nation, to extend its use into domains of law, health and throughout public life. At the time concessions to the large ethnic communities were also granted, especially in primary education. Later accommodations to an increased global and domestic demand for English modified and impacted on the general shape of the policy, and still later recognition of indigenous language needs and rights have begun to be recognized, though they are far from fully developed.

In light of the deep and pervasive effects of population mobility caused by the rapidly consolidating global trading and economic context, expressed by the large number of undocumented, refugee and displaced persons in Malaysian territory, the mobility of Malaysia’s own citizens, its own rapid and impressive economic development, it is clear that a new environment exists now for language planning. While nations are still much as they were in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, economic, technological and communications transformations have led to emerging global and transnational ‘networks’ which, though not fully understood, do require increased communication and twenty-first century skills for all future citizens. Some, such as those managed by ASEAN and its various activities impinge directly on Malaysia, while others, such as the ever more deeply integrated financial markets of global commerce are less clear (Gill 2014).

In light of such deep transformations, older notions of national identity and belonging can be revisited with a more contemporary sense of the transnational realities of economy, technology, mobility and work, as well as rapidly developing ideas of ethnic and indigenous rights. Sober multidisciplinary examination of ethnic relations in the context of nation is therefore required (Haa, Kho, and Chang 2013). While we cannot predict all future communication needs, one clear consequence is likely to be
a widespread requirement for literate multilingualism, which is likely to present itself as an essential, rather than an optional, outcome of all schooling for ever larger numbers of citizens.

Malaysia is fortunate to enjoy relatively high degrees of social cohesion marked by the absence of overt public hostility between ethnic groups. However, the absence of overt conflict does not mean that palpable tensions do not exist. Indeed, the reading, interviews, observations and dialogues conducted as part of the LESC Initiative, all demonstrated that Malaysia still struggles for an inclusive sense of a united national citizenry and questions of language remain deeply implicated in the dilemma this problem poses for the nation. The events of 1969 (in May of that year race riots occurred) are invariably cited as the moment that stimulated the focus on searching for an inclusive approach to public citizenry. However, today this internal concern for cohesion must be supplemented by the clear need for a cohesive presence of Malaysia in the global marketplace as a unified and pacific state. In light of its plural ethnic, religious and linguistic context, Malaysia is in fact well placed with its home grown multicultural resources of language, culture and identity.

7.2 Malaysia’s language pluralism

The living linguistic diversity in Malaysia is astonishingly rich in world terms, represented by 138 living languages, although a substantial number of these, nearly 100, are considered currently endangered. Immigrant languages include Burmese, Rohingya, Eastern Punjabi, Telugu, Malayalam, Western Cham, Sylheti and Sinhala (Lewis, Simons, and Fennig 2015). As stated above, the national language, Malay, in its various names, and today used in its most ambitious attempt at inclusion, as Bahasa Malaysia, has been pivotal in the project of nation building. Bahasa Malaysia represents the concept of adat-istiadat (traditional Malay cultural practices) and has been used “as a vehicle for bonding citizens within the multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and multi-ethnic nation-state across ethnic, religious, and class lines” (Rappa and Wee 2006, p. 37).

Together with Chinese and Tamil, Malay is used as the key language of education. English is the second official language in Malaysia, taught from Grade 1 as a subject and has also been adopted at times, such as in the initiative from 2002 to 2009, to use as the language for teaching science, mathematics and technology subjects (Lo Bianco 2013). The demise of that programme is further indicative evidence that improved language planning should be a priority for the Malaysian state. Well-conceived, evidence-based language planning can circumvent the problems that beset and ultimately defeated that initiative.
Following independence in 1957, substantial modernization work, corpus language planning tied to status language planning, was needed to develop Bahasa Melayu, as it was then known, so that it could be taken “seriously as an intellectual language and to truly gain educational capital” (Gill, Nambiar, Ibrahim, and Tan 2010, p. 182). The establishment of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in 1956 represents an ambitious and highly focused language planning strategy to coordinate Malay language development in Malaysia and Brunei. Operating initially under the MoE, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka is responsible for great strides in the development and refinement of the language. Today, there is a case for supplementation of these historic and inherited language planning experiences into a coordinated and comprehensive cultivation of all the language resources of Malaysia, a nation of many languages. The specific circumstances and needs of the ethnic/indigenous groups across all parts of the nation should be a major focus of this reinvigorated language planning.

At the last census in 2011, the population of Sarawak was 2,420,009, recording over 40 ethnic groups with distinct languages and cultures. The major ethnic groups of the Iban (29 per cent), Chinese (24 per cent), Malay (23 per cent), Bidayah (8 per cent), Melanau (6 per cent) and Orang Ulu (5 per cent) (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2011) represent a particular configuration of needs. Hence, within the recommended language planning approach, a targeted state effort is warranted. This is also true of Sabah. In 2010, the population of Sabah was 3,117,405. With the employment of hundreds of thousands of foreign workers in the plantations of Sabah, 27 per cent of the population are foreigners. The largest ethnic minorities are the Kadazan-Dusun (17.8 per cent), Chinese (9.1 per cent), Bajau (14 per cent), Brunei Malay (5.7 per cent), and Murut (3.2 per cent). The other indigenous peoples of Sabah account for 20.1 per cent of the population (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2011). Similar to the case in Sarawak, the Sabahan setting warrants a particular focus for language planning deliberations. Both of these received extensive support in Facilitated Dialogues held in Kuching and Kota Kinabalu.

7.3 Malaysia’s language education system

The Malaysian education system is framed by the Education Act of 1996, which stipulates that Bahasa Melayu, now Bahasa Malaysia, be the medium of instruction and that all schools must utilize a single national curriculum. Education is centralized through the national MoE and policy implementation is supported by 14 state education departments. Schooling is compulsory at the primary level and is free for students aged 6 to 18 in public (Malay-medium) schools (EUEAS 2007).

Progression through the education system differs slightly depending on the type of school students attend. The main types of schools in Malaysia are:

- National schools (primary and secondary Malay-medium schools)
- National-type Chinese school (SJK(C)) – Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina) (primary and secondary level Chinese-medium schools)
- National-type Tamil school (SJK(T)) - Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Tamil) (primary level Tamil-medium schools)
- Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan (SABK) and Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama (SMKA) – government aided primary and secondary religious schools, and
- International Private schools
In 2011, there were 5,848 national schools, 1,291 SJK(C)s and 523 SJK(T)s (LLG Cultural Development Centre and Tamil Foundation 2012).

### 7.4 Mother tongue education

After independence and the emergence of the Federation of Malaysia, mother-tongue education was provided some protection through the Education Ordinance of 1957, which allowed for mother-tongue education at the primary level. However, the existence of vernacular schools has repeatedly been under challenge as the Federal government has occasionally pursued notions of national unity through much more singular language and education understandings. The outcomes for Chinese- and Tamil-medium schools have differed significantly due to differential funding models, varying socio-economic profiles, differences in political power and capacities to develop their education systems, among other variables. As a result, the Tamil education system generally serves the lower income, rural Tamil families, with the middle to upper income Tamil families moving into the national school system.

Arumugam (2008) argues that the marginal role of the Indian political party in the ruling government, the neglect of Tamil schools, the negative perceptions of middle and upper class Tamils towards the vernacular system, discriminatory practices in the provision of education, the high number of untrained teachers, dilapidated buildings, and a lack of appropriate teaching resources have all led to poor performance by Tamil students and high drop-out rates. Nevertheless, Tamil schools educate over 100,000 students, around 53 per cent of the Indian school-going populace. Arumugam (p. 146) argues that the Tamil schools are bound to stay as it is an issue of pride and dignity for a majority of Indians and to dismantle the mother tongue education system would be to disrupt “the cultural and religious fabric that has provided an identity and belonging”.

Chinese vernacular schools, on the other hand, have enjoyed significant financial and political support from the Chinese community in Malaysia and students perform better than ethnic Malay students in mathematics and science (Gill 2010). Indeed, an increasing number of ethnic Malay parents send their children to Chinese schools, with around 80,000 ethnic Malays attending SJK(C)s in 2012. Overall, about 20 per cent of Malaysian primary-aged children attend SJK(C)s in 2012 (Zainul 2012).

To promote integration of the different schools, attempts were made to house Chinese, Tamil and Malay schools in the same compound through the ‘Integrated Schools’ and ‘Vision Schools’ strategies in 1985 and 2001 (see 5.2.1). Presently there are five Vision schools, but their philosophy has been resisted by some Chinese school providers who see them as an attempt to eliminate their own schools (Lee 2012). Rather than greater integration, the vernacular and national schools systems are experiencing greater ethnic stratification. In 2011, 96 per cent of Chinese primary-aged children attended SJK(C)s, up from 92 per cent in 2000. Also in 2011, 56 per cent of Indian primary-aged children attended SJK(T)s, which is also up from 47 per cent in 2000 (The World Bank 2013). Lee (2012, p. 175) argues that “a majority of Chinese parents have come to view the increasing Malayization and Islamization of the national primary schools as intolerant of and discriminating against Chinese students in the schools.”
The majority of students at vernacular primary schools attend national secondary schools. For Tamil speakers, there are no Tamil-medium schools beyond the primary level. For Chinese speakers, the challenge lies in the limited number of Chinese-medium secondary schools (60), as well as the requirement that students must take examinations through the national school system in order to access the Malay-medium post-secondary and tertiary system. In recent years, extensive changes have occurred throughout the tertiary system, particularly with the development of the private education system, where enrolments are composed of predominantly Chinese speaking students. In fact, in 2007, enrolments in private institutions (507,438) were greater than those in public institutions (365,800). For the Chinese in particular, the private tertiary sector has provided more equitable access to further education. While the academic standards of private post-secondary institutions vary, as long as students are able to afford tuition fees, they are generally admitted. An indicator of the effect of this is that ethnic Chinese students currently comprise 83.7 per cent of enrolments in degree programmes in private institutions (Lee 2012).

Broader to the changes in the tertiary education system, a system-wide review is underway across the education spectrum. The National Education Blueprint 2006-2010 and National Education Blueprint...
2013-2025 are both important policy documents for Malaysia and aim to identify and improve on weaknesses across the education system. For example, the 2013-2025 Blueprint has identified a number of achievement gaps, particularly between urban and rural students, with 16 out the 20 lowest-performing districts in the UPSR (primary level tests) and 10 out of 20 of the lowest-performing districts in SPM (secondary level tests) in Sabah and Sarawak (children in plantations will be discussed further in the situational analysis). Secondary dropout rates are also higher in rural areas (16.7 per cent) than in urban areas (10.1 per cent). The Blueprint identifies 11 shifts which need to occur across education in order for all students in Malaysia to attend school from primary through to upper secondary level by 2020.

The LESC Initiative in Malaysia, through observations, dialogues, interviews and reading, has revealed that the relations of the vernacular and national schools are at a critical point. The only productive future development is for national and vernacular school interests to be included in a collective educational change process, for which sensitive language planning focused development is critical. Facilitated Dialogues, as explored within the LESC Initiative, are ideal instruments for such a process.
The relationship between language and conflict

Evidence accumulated from multiple sources of information gathered throughout the LESC research has shown a multi-faceted set of relationships between language and conflict, some of which are discussed below in specific relation to Malaysia. It is clear that conflict is a ‘multi-causal’ phenomenon (Brown and Ganguly 2003), especially in multi-ethnic societies, and so the responses to conflict must be broad based. Language plays a key role, it is sometimes implicated in original conflicts, some conflicts are exclusively about language and many conflicts have a language dimension. As has been argued above, language is also a key vehicle for the resolution and addressing of conflict.

8.1 Language policy formulation

There is considerable evidence that language is often associated with conflict, and in many cases choices that societies make about language status and language education are the direct cause of tension. As was pointed out earlier in this report, unlike some other sources of tension, especially religion, ethnicity and socio-economic disparities, language-based tensions are more amenable to resolution. Individuals and communities can acquire multiple languages and belong to different language communities at the same time. In addition, there is a strong empirical research base that allows a more ‘scientific’ way to address language problems compared to other areas of conflict. However, the track record of language policymaking, in Malaysia as elsewhere, suggests that significant modification of the process of language planning is required to convert the potential of language as an instrument of conflict mitigation into reality. The key way to do this is through structured deliberation and dialogue.

The content and process of language problem alleviation in the general interest of enhancing social cohesion, resilience and fostering national unity can be achieved through focused and well-prepared interventions. Collaborative processes of decision-making informed and guided by research evidence are urgently needed and have proved very effective. Bottom-up and expert-guided processes of language planning need to be enacted. The aim should be to achieve deeper consensus on language policy than has hitherto been possible. Despite its impressive historical and technically expert experience of language planning on behalf of its main national language, Malaysian practices of language policy formulation have failed to achieve durable public consensus. New methods and practices of language planning are urgently required to foster national unity, methods which go far beyond ‘consultation’ as a modality of seeking endorsement or compliance of populations. There is serious disparity between the perceptions of minority groups and officials as to the aims and experience of language education. This
appears to be equally present in East as in Peninsular Malaysia, though the specific issues around what kind of consensus needs to be reached often varies. The most general claim therefore, from the present research, is for a drastic need of evidence-based consultative processes of decision-making on disputed issues of language, as well as on the general activity of language policymaking.

8.2 Implementation processes – language policy and planning

Practical methods for resolving language tensions can be very effective. However, with regards to improved processes of formulation Malaysia suffers from relatively high levels of scepticism about its language policy aims. The Facilitated Dialogues have shown an extremely high level of success in addressing these problems by a method of examining realistically achievable objectives against policy declarations. It is an odd feature of language policy formulation that some specific questions of dispute are about symbolic representations of language, and others are about the presence of language as an almost silent or invisible aspect of social inequalities. We might contrast these as the ‘standing’ or representative nature of languages (what they are called and perceived to be, national, official, ethnic, regional, global, or indigenous identity, etc., and other appellations), on the one hand, and the abilities produced by schooling and higher education that make possible high levels of educational attainment, employment and professional material success, on the other. Language questions span this vast range and therefore only a subtle and comprehensive approach to the content of language policy, as well as its effects, can aspire to realistically address language problems.

The evaluations of these Facilitated Dialogues show a very high appreciation of the effect of consultative and guided language decision-making. The great majority of participants acquired an enhanced awareness of language problems and insight into how to tackle these problems. Many issues of dispute, such as arguments about when to introduce minority languages or when to replace them as language of instruction with the national language, can be resolved with a focused attention to local resources, policy alternatives and different models of practice.

Practical methods of language planning should involve all stakeholders in a participatory way to address areas of tension, replacing emotional, contested and disputed aspects of language education with evidence-based solutions. In the Facilitated Dialogues participants engaged in writing policy principles, discussed and classified a range of language problems, and commenced the work of drafting inclusive and evidence-based policies with an appreciation of what is realistic and what is symbolic. Participants often expressed surprise at how
much progress is possible in collaborative and guided facilitation. The involvement of government officials, community representative and experts has ensured that all groups come to understand the perspective and priorities of other groups better and participate in policy writing exercises taking account of each other’s needs and interests. This is not to imply that these processes are a magic solution, much more extended effort is required to transform these beginnings into durable solutions.

8.3 Language in society

A key generalization from the LESC research is that some aspects of language are implicated in virtually every conflict, and some kinds of conflicts involve many aspects of language. Communication in general, meaning language in use, is a major aspect of conflict, since political, ethnic, social, religious and racial disputes arise in speech and can only be successfully resolved through peace-finding dialogue. Aspects of language use directly produce conflict, such as prejudicial generalizing, hate speech, incitement to violence and ways of speaking about who is included and who is excluded from a community. Citizenship is best advanced through discourse that is attentive to the needs of all members of a society.

As noted earlier, there is a more slow-acting nature to language and social inequalities that contribute to conflict. This is in how literacy achievements in schooling have a direct impact on the general lives of people, whether in employment prospects or their social, health, legal and other status. Language policies and language education need to take account of the need for all students to: i) gain full access to the knowledge and skills imparted through the curriculum; ii) gain full literacy and speaking competence in the mother tongue, the national language and English; and iii), gain the awareness to conduct conversations in an inclusive and harmonious way that recognizes the rights and opportunities of all people.

8.4 Social cohesion

The term ‘social cohesion’ is used with a range of different meanings, but three elements are common. According to recent discussion of this field, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2011, p. 17) identifies these common elements as social inclusion, social capital and social mobility. They argue that “a cohesive society works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility.”

The following schematic representation suggests some of the links between language, conflict and social cohesion which have come to the attention of the researchers in the course of the LESC Initiative.

Language can serve as a symbol of togetherness and unity and language can have the effect of bonding people into a sense of common political citizenship. In this way, language that fosters belonging and inclusion can result in people of different ethnic origins having a similar experience of citizen life. This often occurs through shared narratives of belonging together, whether and how different component groups in a society imagine themselves actually being linked together as equal citizens. However, language also has a deep impact on the economy as discussed briefly above, and this may foster social
cohesion or erode and damage social cohesion. When literacy abilities and educational attainments are persistently unequal for different groups, not for single individuals but for large or majority sections of particular groups, and if such inequalities persist over time, language choices and language in education can directly inhibit social cohesion. Literacy and access to the mainstream and occupationally powerful curriculum are influenced by whether or not children can succeed in schooling – often depending initially on being able to learn in and through the mother tongue and later in schooling on having age-appropriate abilities in the official or national language.

In recent years Malaysia, among other Asian societies, has achieved impressive economic growth, moving up the development scale from developing to developed nation status. With each new stage of development all societies face new challenges and demands and in the case of Malaysia these have compounded unresolved questions of ethnicity and language. As Malaysia has achieved its commendable and impressive economic aims, there have also been identified rising income inequalities, structural transformations that unsettle traditional accommodations among social groups, and the need to meet citizens’ rising expectations of standards of living and access to opportunity. The emerging middle class in all societies compares itself with peers in advanced economies, and its patterns of consumption and demands for quality services can be expected to change.

Social cohesion in multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-faith societies poses special problems in addition to economic ones, though poverty and marginalization always affect health, income and other kinds of social cohesion. Specifically focused on this dimension of social cohesion is its conceptualization by the Canadian Federal government:

**Figure 1: Links – Language, conflict and social cohesion**

![Diagram showing links between language, conflict, and social cohesion]

*Source: J. Lo Bianco*
Social cohesion is defined as the willingness of members of a society to cooperate with each other in order to survive and prosper. Willingness to cooperate means they freely choose to form partnerships and have a reasonable chance of realizing goals, because others are willing to cooperate and share the fruits of their endeavours equitably (Stanley 2003, p. 5).

We can readily see that this understanding of social cohesion places a considerable burden on civil collaboration. If we were to adopt a definition of this kind a particular challenge arises for Malaysia in both effective communication and networks of social discourse to facilitate the needed level of civil cooperation. The schematic representation in Figure 1 above depicts some of the links between language, conflict and social cohesion which have arisen in the course of the LESC project in Malaysia.

### 8.5 Future directions

Further questions to arise from the LESC Initiative demonstrate the importance of exploring connections between mother tongue abilities, comprehension and acquisition of Malay language capabilities, and knowledge of and literacy in English. Such an inquiry should be tracked against employment and higher education destinations to the extent that the data sets available allow such analysis. Additional questions for exploration include the role of language as ‘narration’, that is, the role of language in national story telling that includes and allows distinctive and legitimate space for all constituent elements of the Malaysian population in full citizenship. Other questions include the health and well-being of indigenous minority populations, intergenerationally endangered languages of indigenous groups, violence reduction and prevention, and specific ways in which peaceful co-existence and national unity can be diffused throughout schooling, and finally questions of inter-ethnic communication.
Collaborative processes of decision-making informed and guided by research evidence are urgently needed and have proved very effective in the LESC Initiative. Bottom-up and expert-guided processes of language planning need to be enacted. The aim should be to achieve deeper consensus on language policy than has previously been achieved. Despite impressive historical and technically expert experience of language planning on behalf of the main national languages, significant challenges remain in Malaysia for minority languages (David and Govindasamy 2005).

The LESC Initiative has shown that there is serious disparity between the perceptions of minority groups and officials. New methods and practices of language planning are urgently required to foster national unity – methods which go far beyond ‘consultation’ as a modality of seeking endorsement or compliance of populations. These outcomes must be integrated into main planning documents of the government. The most general claim therefore, from the present LESC research, is for a drastic need of evidence-based consultative processes of decision-making on disputed issues of language and on the general activity of language policymaking. Recommendations for such activities are outlined in Section 10.

The LESC Initiative has demonstrated that a range of shared and common mechanisms for addressing social cohesion/language problems can be effectively harnessed to alleviate language tensions. Generalizable findings from the initiative are as follows:

9.1 When language education is a cause of tension, this tension can be relieved through focused and well prepared interventions

Social conflict based on ethnic, religious, or economic tensions or antagonism is often more difficult to influence than language-based conflicts. Facilitated Dialogues have shown that it is possible to achieve a high level of agreement about language education goals in a relatively short period of time if the discussions are guided by research evidence, professional mediation and good will. While some kinds of human identities exclude others, for example, racial and religious identities, by contrast, language identities are much more flexible. Because it is possible to foster and produce high levels of bi- and trilingualism through appropriate language education planning, because language can be used as a means for bringing about better social relations, and because language has tangible material impact on an individual’s performance and competitiveness in the economy at a time of rapid globalization, more effort should be invested in language policy development.
9.2 Collaborative decision-making informed by research has proven very effective in the Facilitated Dialogues

A key aspect of the success of the Facilitated Dialogues has been the full involvement of affected parties. Community representatives are able to listen to the perspective of public officials and incorporate this into their claims and requests for education change. Public officials respond to and accommodate the perspective and interests of community-based representatives. Both are influenced by the research presented. When properly digested and applied to practical problems in education, research can have the effect of replacing subjective, opinion-based disputes with a more feasible, costed and effective set of models, understandings and designs for action, and in this way can improve the quality of decisions that are taken. It is crucial to manage and mediate these interactions between the perspectives of community-based organizations, public officials charged with managing public programmes and dispersing public funds, and academic researchers whose focus is on knowledge gathering and publication.

9.3 Bottom-up language planning needs to be supported to achieve more consensus on language policy

Governments have tended to neglect the importance of seeking and negotiating consensus for language policy. Processes of bottom-up planning are those in which teachers are not seen as mere implementers of policies already taken by government, and in which the community is not merely represented as passive beneficiaries observing or benefiting from policy. When teachers and parents, as well as community and

Figure 2: Impact of the LESC Initiative in Malaysia
professional CSOs, are active participants in shaping policy development, the result is more understanding of policy aims and less constraints on what can be achieved, resulting in more commitment and sense of ownership to the goals and aims of policy. Given that the LESC Initiative found a serious disparity between the perceptions of minority groups and officials, it is critical that this issue is addressed through consultative processes for seeking consensus and common aims, as well as the devolution of decision-making and implementation so that through their actions, people and groups at the local level can effectively implement sustainable and long-term changes.

9.4 There is a large gap between perceptions of minority groups and officials on language education

The LESC research has exposed a serious gap in the perceptions of language policies, especially as they manifest in education policy in the three participating countries. This is a major problem because across the board, indigenous groups expressed alarm at the neglect and occasional disrespect they perceive is directed towards their ancestral languages. There is also substantial scepticism about the overall aims of language-related decision-making, and of the concrete experience of schooling. While significant progress and consensus has been achieved in the Myanmar context and further initiatives have been enacted, much more effort is required to alleviate language-related tensions and contested policy settings in Malaysia and Thailand.

9.5 There is a need for evidence-based consultative processes of decision-making on some key disputes

Some key disputes identified through the bilateral meetings, Facilitated Dialogues and site visits, are amenable to resolution through Facilitated Dialogues with expert content. These vary across contexts, but broadly include issues surrounding the name of the national language and how it is used and how and when to introduce a national language to children with other mother tongues. Further questions include how to assess competence in national languages as part of both primary and secondary school decision-making, how and when to introduce English, as well as what particular multilingual programme models produce high levels of spoken and written language outcomes.

Content and language integrated learning in specific subjects is also potentially very useful to further language policy decisions, as are a multitude of diverse delivery modes, including various kinds of short-term immersion. The role, place, duration and point of introduction of indigenous mother tongues, and when and how to
transition to national languages and English, are also critically important considerations. Higher education language policy, both in technical and general academic streams, especially in subject domains where English academic discourse dominates, is another question that would be responsive to evidence-based consultations. These, and related questions, are amenable to technical resolution, meaning that research can help resolve the choices and costs/benefits of different decisions. These questions can be negotiated through collaborative facilitated dialogues in order to win public support for the policy choices that are taken.

9.6 There is an urgent need for locally focused success stories to be documented and shared to encourage curriculum innovation

Evidence-based decision-making means drawing from the best and most disciplined research in the world. However, this evidence requires localization to make it convincing and applicable. The LESC report found evidence of Malaysian education initiatives of the highest calibre; these need to be better documented and used to encourage improvement through light-house modelling of excellence.

9.7 The issue of multiple languages is badly misunderstood, it is relatively easily solved, yet is often used to present language rights as impossible to achieve

The LESC research uncovered many instances in which education officials and local communities expressed the view that it is impossible to meet all the language needs of the community. Prof. Lo Bianco has heard commented on numerous occasions that there are too many languages, they are of uneven intellectual and literary development, and that these socio-linguistic facts make language support for children and youth from those language communities impossible to implement and support. In fact, across the Asia and Pacific region, and also globally, there are many models of effective responses to the challenges of meeting multilingual needs in administratively efficient and cost-effective ways.

9.8 There is an urgent need for inclusive, democratic, language planning to take account of all communication needs of the communities

Malaysia should invest in producing a distinctive national language planning activity that addresses, in a comprehensive way, the totality of its communication needs. These include the needs of all major groups but also of small minority communities. Deaf and blind communities and the communication needs of special populations (such as children with special needs and persons with disabilities) should be incorporated into a single coherent process of national language policy writing. Multilingualism is a resource upon which long-term health and vitality should be cultivated. The learning of economically and strategically important foreign languages should form a natural part of this endeavour.
The reasons for and advantages of a comprehensive approach are many, one of the most important relates to the fact that the activity itself will be widely seen as responding to the needs of the overall community and not merely to single groups, and because it can be more efficient and effective to incorporate a wide focus rather than a narrow one. There are also ample opportunities for mutual learning and exchange. The multilingualism of which Malaysians are justly proud is a resource whose long-term health and vitality should be cultivated. The learning of economically and strategically important foreign languages should form a natural part of this endeavour.

9.9 Current language planning activities are often fragmented, uncoordinated and partial and should be reinvigorated

A comprehensive approach to language planning also allows for more efficient and effective implementation, better use of limited resources, and ensures that contradictions and inconsistencies can be resolved. Combining a focus on all aspects of a society's communication ecology also sends the public message that the activity of language planning aims to make the best use of national communication resources, and to coordinate and integrate education, health, legal and other domains which have an impact on language, meaning the national language, ethnic languages/mother tongues/indigenous languages and international languages. In effect the LESC research has shown the benefit and feasibility of comprehensive, evidence-based and facilitated policy, with bottom-up elements, added to win support and understanding from the community, but linked to top-down endorsement and authorization. Current policy processes in all three countries are needlessly fragmented and overly politicized.

9.10 Language policy involves areas well beyond education, and comprehensive language planning should address all related areas of concern

The LESC research produced ample evidence that when a more inclusive approach is taken there is an increased likelihood of community understanding of other citizens’ language needs and rights. Beyond education, language policy involves areas such as the status of languages in a multi-ethnic society; the official recognition of minority and regional languages; access to literacy and mother tongue teaching, access to prestige international languages; learning of the national language; script policy and the special communication needs of disabled children, and of sign language, public signage, use and training of interpreters and translators; among others. Reaching beyond education into civic and economic life also has the benefit of supporting national unity and pride in the nation that would take its citizens’ unique communication needs seriously. In this way language policy processes can promote social cohesion by responding to the claim by some groups that the priority must be to stress national unity and cohesion at the same time as supporting minority, indigenous, migrant and disadvantaged populations who often are seeking redress for injustices, repression, marginalization and exclusion.
Malaysia stands at an important phase in its development as a sovereign, stable, independent nation. In recent years Malaysians have been right to celebrate their economic and social progress, which has been remarkable in world terms, elevating the nation in economic, technological, scientific and productive fields. This enviable success and its many benefits have transformed the physical infrastructure of the country and elevated its research, economic productivity and international competitiveness. All this is worthy of congratulation.

However, alongside these impressive achievements, there are persisting social cleavages, some serious, that appear impervious to policy action. Whilst Malaysia proudly displays its multiracial credentials in its education system, its tourism recruitment and in its national imagery, all acknowledge that social cohesion is at times fragile, and that much more needs to be done to convert the absence of overt social conflict into a true sense of being a unified, multiracial, multilingual and multi-faith society.

The absence of overt social tension is precisely the time for a strenuous effort of forging the affiliations, sense of shared destiny and citizenship that are indispensable to guarantee enduring national unity. A crucial component of achieving full national unity is to bring about a strong and widespread commitment to language, as discussed above, involving language status, language education and language use. This will require a concerted effort to tackle intractable difficulties of language, especially the endangered status of indigenous languages, and a more collaborative and integrated public education in languages.

The overriding sense that strikes the well-disposed outsider in relation to questions of language and ethnicity in Malaysia is one of a persisting unresolved burden on the full development of the society, its cultural unity, its educational standards and its social cohesion. A key observation has been that the programmes and initiatives that currently make up the bulk of the activity of national unity promotion are essentially motivated by an ethos of overcoming existing problems, and occasionally comprise of problem prevention. Tacking problems is important but Malaysia should move beyond this in its language policy, towards an ambitious programme of social inclusion, fostering a sense of participatory citizenship, educational equality and cultural democracy. While some of the dimensions of this are beyond the scope of the LESC Initiative, the need for comprehensive language planning is the strongest single conclusion of our work.

This comprehensive language planning should build on the promising outcomes of LESC, addressing the vitality and secure presence of the indigenous languages of all the citizens, and the disparate
and un-integrated vernacular-national school systems of the major ethnic groupings. A concerted, sustained and facilitated public conversation based on the participation and voices of policymakers, ethnic and indigenous communities, experts and the wider society (media, CSOs, economic interests) is needed. This public conversation should be guided by a facilitated process of development of a staged public national language planning, inclusive of all of Malaysia's language communities.

The aim of such comprehensive staged and public language planning should be threefold:

1. To forge a new national language policy dispensation premised on public support and consensus for national bi- and trilingualism, that is, Bahasa Malaysia as the unifying lingua franca of the nation, the mother tongues (Melayu, ethnic vernaculars – Chinese and Tamil – and indigenous languages) as the crucial languages of identity and English, along with other international languages, useful for higher education and commerce in a globalized world;
2. To secure widespread public appreciation and commitment to the new policy vision;
3. To collectively negotiate the administrative, educational and juridical mechanisms for enduring and effective implementation of such a comprehensive, coordinated multilingual national plan.
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<td>Centre for Policy Initiatives (CPI)</td>
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International Youth Centre (IYC)
IPG Kampus Kent
Kadazandusun Language Foundation (KLF)
KDU University
Kementerian Pembangunan Sosial Sarawak
Kiwanis Club of Kota Kinabalu
Kolej Yayasan Sabah
Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall
Malaysia Relief Agency/Rohingyas Community School
Malaysian Child Resource Institute
Ministry of Education Malaysia
Ministry of Tourism, Sarawak
Nada Sepakat Group
National Association of Early Childhood Care & Education (NAECCEM)
Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR)
PACOS Trust
Parent Action Group for Education Malaysia (PAGE)
Persatuan Sino Kadazandusun Murut Sabah
Position/Office
Prime Minister’s Department – Action Plan for the Future of Tamil Students
Sabah Chief Minister’s Department
Sabah State Economic Planning Unit (UPEN)
Sabah State Education Department
Sabah Women Action Resource Group (SAWO)
Sarawak Dayak Iban Association (SADIA) – Kuching
Sarawak Economic Development Foundation (SEDC) Sarawak
Sarawak State Education Department
Seri Mengasih Center, Sabah
SIL International
SOAS University of London
Society for Promotion of Human Rights (PROHAM)
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Appendix 2:
Report: Language, Education and Social Cohesion: Research and Findings

Professor Joseph Lo Bianco
University of Melbourne
UNICEF, Language, Education and Social Cohesion Project
January 2015

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Background: Peacebuilding and Language Education Planning

This report comprises a preliminary analysis and generalization of findings from the Malaysian component of the 2013-2015 Language, Education and Social Cohesion undertaken in Myanmar and South Thailand, in addition to Malaysia, and following a UNICEF ‘Knowledge Sharing Workshop’ held in Yangon, Myanmar 15-17 September 2014. The Yangon meeting was both a knowledge-sharing exercise between countries, as well as a mid-term analysis of progress towards achieving the goals of the Language, Education and Social Cohesion (LESC) initiative of the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional office (under UNICEF’s Global Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) Programme conducted since November 2013 in Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand in this region.

The present report contains an overview of the initiative and analysis of and key presentation of findings that have emerged from the work conducted so far in Malaysia.

Project origins

The overall programme is premised on research conducted by Professors Mario Novelli and Allan Smith published December 2011 on the general relationship between education and conflict. These scholars synthesised work done in Lebanon, Nepal and Sierra Leone on why some conflicts endure for long periods of time, finding that the role of education has often been overlooked in conflict resolution activity. It was found that many aspects of educational practice, including language education and language policy, history teaching and teaching about citizenship-belonging, can exacerbate latent tensions in society. If unaddressed in education such tensions can prevent the full resolution of conflicts and inhibit countries from achieving social cohesion and national unity.

On the basis of this work UNICEF developed a global proposal on Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) Programme which was presented to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the Netherlands in New York in September 2011, resulting in a financial grant made by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs for peace building activity.

The overall focus of the grant was twofold: first to encourage practical intervention (tools and methods) to alleviate conflict and second to support research into conflict analysis (increasing understanding of the ways in which education can hinder social cohesion). The overall vision is to strengthen policy and resilience in society, to foster social cohesion and human security in countries at risk of conflict, experiencing conflict or recovering from conflict. The strategic result and primary objective is to improve the lives of children in conflict-affected contexts though strengthening policies and practices in education for peace building.

LESC objectives

Three UNICEF Country Offices in the East Asia and the Pacific region participated in the LESC initiative, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand. Subsequent to situation analysis comprising desk research, site visits and consultation with education ministries, academic researchers and other agencies the following focus of activities were agreed.
i) Malaysia

In the context ongoing education reform and initiatives in national unity and integration it was decided to focus on language planning initiatives for the main ethnic groups, specifically relations between schooling in vernacular and national streams (Chinese-Tamil-Malay), and an additional focus on the special circumstances of indigenous communities (Orang Asli/Orang Asal children in peninsular and East Malaysia – Sabah and Sarawak).

ii) Myanmar

In the context of the Comprehensive Education Sector Review it was decided to focus on developing skills in and programmes of language planning. Key concepts include language rights in education focused on the main ethnic clusters within Myanmar as well as issues to do with the acquisition of Myanmar language and English. A key part of the methodology to support this research is specific case studies in Mon and Kayin states as exemplars where practical new language education policies could be applied as a Union-wide model. Recent success in these initiatives has since expanded the scope of the activities into a nation-wide inclusive national language planning exercise.

iii) Thailand

The strong preference of all agencies consulted was to focus attention on the Deep South provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, Songkla, Yala and to address questions of language education, bilingualism, orthographic script choice (Thai, rumi, yawi), multicultural curriculum and the status of Patani Malay in the context of Thai language and literacy and English.

What are the specific activities in LESC?

The research and intervention activity for the three countries can be summarised as follows:

i) Language status planning

Status refers to the legal standing of a language. In all three cases language status questions are relevant to issues of social cohesion in respect of the juridical standing of minority languages, or such issues constitute a contentious issue from time to time. The question of the status of languages is addressed in the LESC through general policy work in Myanmar, with the example of the role of Mon and Karen languages. In Thailand an audit is being conducted of the official communication of government departments with local communities as a way to inform development of a regional status for Patani Malay. In Malaysia the question of language status arises as part of the general absence of a comprehensive communication wide language planning, see below, and must be considered an unaddressed question of Malaysia’s overall language planning, which, otherwise is impressive in world terms. In all countries there is high demand for English, an important factor in language policy in general and potentially destabilizing of nationalism-based language planning, unless English is brought into a comprehensive national language planning exercise, as proposed below. Comprehensive language policy represents systematic efforts of collective, dialogue based expert language planning which seeks to address in a single and coordinated process top-down and bottom-up activities of language decision making.
ii) Solving language problems

This activity was taken forward in the LESC programme through specially designed “facilitated dialogues.” Twelve of these facilitated dialogues have been conducted to date, three in Malaysia – one each in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. The aim of the facilitated dialogues is to collectively address a range of language problems and respond to them in evidence-based facilitated seminars, aiming to foster consensus and collaboration. The facilitated dialogue is also intended to foster a culture of dialogue as applied to contentious language problems. An additional aim is to experiment with the new skills and methods for solving language problem so participants gain the ability to participate in language policy debates in an informed way, thereby fostering social cohesion.

iii) Training in language planning

Specific training in methods of writing language policies was communicated to officials and community organisations throughout the project. A guide on National Language Planning processes is under preparation in collaboration with UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, using local examples and success stories.

iv) Public education on contentious issues

Methods of dealing with controversial topics were included in all dialogues, talks and meetings. These include the question of choice of ‘script’ in South Thailand, the question of how to solve the challenge of multiple languages in a single school or in a district or state, the role of English in high ethnic areas, the timing and sequence of new languages in education, the general question of multilingualism, the best age and method to introduce new literacy in a new language. Other contentious questions involve how to designate different languages, for example, what is an ‘official’, ‘national’ or ‘regional’ language, what are ‘language rights’, what is the best education for disadvantaged children, for isolated, itinerant, undocumented, or marginalised children.

v) Mitigating conflict

This has been a major focus of all the work. Reducing conflict is advanced through replacing emotional talk with evidence-based policy processes. It frequently transpires in dialogues that in the absence of information, data and research some questions which appear controversial, intractably difficult to resolve or incomprehensible, can be allayed, mitigated or redressed through information gathering activity. Conflict can be around symbolic questions as well as pragmatic/practical questions. In the latter category we find a clear connection between language and slow acting social disparities such as literacy and academic achievement dictated by differential language abilities among learners and social groups. Access to national languages, prestige forms of academic communication and articulate expressive ability are all questions of language which are typically underestimated in public policy, in conflict resolution practices and in activities aiming to foster national unity.

vi) Writing guidelines and developing theory and understanding

A vital aim of LESC has been to develop new and better understanding of the links between language in use, language education, language in society and language policy and the links of these manifestations
of language with questions of social tension, conflict, mobility, resilience and cohesion. This will take the form of practical guides as well as academic writing. A deeper understanding of the complex interaction between language and conflict in multi-ethnic societies is urgently required under contemporary conditions of rapid and deep globalisation of economies, vast mobility of populations and the diffusion of information and networking technologies.

**Research and problem solving activities**

The following list outlines the entire range of research and problem solving activities for the LESC initiative.

**i) Malaysia**
- General Research (interviews, observations, document analysis)
- Facilitated Dialogues (Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, Sarawak)

**ii) Myanmar**
- General Research (interviews, observations, document analysis)
- Facilitated Dialogues (Mawlamyine, Mae Sot, Naypyitaw)
- Specific Studies (Mon case study)

**iii) Thailand**
- General Research (interviews, observations, document analysis)
- Facilitated Dialogues (Hat Yai)
- Specific Studies (Intercultural curriculum, Scaling up bilingual education, Regional status of Patani Malay)

**iv) Regional**
- UN guideline recommendations – this document contains comments about language and multilingualism in relation to peace building and peace keeping guidelines in international and specifically United Nations contexts
- Regional Conference (Knowledge Sharing workshop, Yangon)
- Facilitated Dialogue for Asia wide policy makers (Bangkok)
- Regional report on the LESC initiative
- An academic volume

Approximately 65 field visits and observations, 15 local conferences, seminars and workshops and approximately 40 interviews and consultations have been conducted so far, across the three countries, producing an extended data base for analysis of perceptions and documented links between questions of language (understood in the broadest sense as ‘communication’ and in narrower senses as multilingualism in society) and social cohesion.

1) Ethnic groups and education politics. Yangon, June 2013 (45 participants)
3) Language and Peace in South Thailand. Hat Yai, Songkla Province. Thailand 5-7 February 2014 (39 participants)
Malaysia enjoys a sophisticated and multi-faceted approach to the management of ethnic relations, combining substantial efforts in research, policymaking and critical interventions. However, the LESC examination suggests that substantially increased research investments, and specifically in public and dialogue-based language planning, are needed in light of the deep and pervasive effects of population mobility caused by the rapidly consolidating global trading and economic context. While nations are still much as they were in the 19th and 20th centuries, it is clear that economic, technological, and communications environments are far in advance. The effects of emerging global and transnational ‘networks’ are not fully understood, some, such as those managed by ASEAN and its various activities impinge directly on Malaysia, others, such as the ever more deeply integrated financial markets of global commerce are less clear.

In light of such deep transformations, older notions of national identity and belonging need to be revisited. Sober multi-disciplinary examination of ethnic relations in the context of globalisation is urgently required, combined with public education so that mass media reporting and understanding of modern identities can evolve in line with the ever greater mobility of populations. One clear consequence is likely to be that widespread literate multilingualism will be an essential, rather than an optional, outcome of all schooling for ever larger numbers of citizens.

Malaysia is fortunate to enjoy relatively high degrees of social cohesion, marked by the absence of overt public hostility between ethnic groups. However, the absence of overt conflict does not mean the absence of conflict and tension and the reading, interviews, observations and dialogues conducted as part of LESC show that Malaysia still struggles for an inclusive national citizenry and questions of language remain deeply implicated in this search. The events of 1969 are invariably cited as the moment...
that stimulated the focus on inclusive public citizenry, however today this internal concern for cohesion must be supplemented by the clear need for a cohesive presence of Malaysia in the global marketplace as a unified and pacific state. In light of its plural ethnic, religious and linguistic context Malaysia is in fact well placed with its home grown multicultural resources of language, culture and identity.

Malaysia’s language pluralism

The living linguistic diversity in Malaysia is astonishingly rich in world terms, represented by 138 living languages, although a substantial number of these, nearly 100, are considered currently endangered.

Immigrant languages include Burmese, Rohingya, Eastern Punjabi, Telugu, Malayalam, Western Cham, Sylheti, and Sinhala (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2013). As the national language Malay has been pivotal in the project of nation-building, representing the concept of adat-istiadat (traditional Malay cultural practices) and has been used ‘as a vehicle for bonding citizens within the multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and multi-ethnic nation-state across ethnic, religious, and class lines’ (Rappa & Wee, 2006, p. 37). Together with Chinese and Tamil, Malay is used as the key language of education, although English has been adopted sporadically, such as in the initiative from 2002 to 2009 to constitute it is the language for teaching science, mathematics and technology subjects. The demise of that programme is further evidence in support of the principal proposal made here that improved language planning is a priority for the Malaysian state, a kind of language planning that would seek to circumvent the problems that faced that initiative.

Following independence in 1957, substantial modernisation work was needed to develop Bahasa Melayu so that it could be taken ‘seriously as an intellectual language and to truly gain educational capital’ (Gill, Nambiar, Ibrahim, & Tan, 2010, p. 182). The establishment of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in 1956 to coordinate Malay language development in Malaysia and Brunei, under the Ministry of Education needs supplementation in a coordinated and comprehensive cultivation of all the language resources of the nation. The specific circumstances and needs of the ethnic/indigenous groups across all parts of the nation should be a major focus of this reinvigorated language planning.

At the last census in 2011, the population of Sarawak was 2,420,009, recording over 40 ethnic groups with distinct languages and cultures. The major ethnic groups of the Iban (29 per cent), Chinese (24 per cent), Malay (23 per cent), Bidayuh (8 per cent), Melanau (6 per cent), and Orang Ulu (5 per cent) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2011) represent a particular configuration of needs hence within the recommended language planning approach a targeted state effort is warranted. This is also true of Sabah.

In 2010, the population of Sabah was 3,117,405. With the employment of hundreds of thousands of foreign workers in the plantations of Sabah, 27 per cent of the population are foreigners. The largest ethnic minorities are the Kadazan-Dusun (178 per cent), Chinese (9.1 per cent), Bajau (14 per cent), Brunei Malay (5.7 per cent), and Murut (3.2 per cent). The other indigenous peoples of Sabah account for 20.1 per cent of the population. (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2011). Like the case in Sarawak the Sabahan setting warrants a particular focus for language planning deliberations. Both of these received extensive support in facilitated dialogues held in Kuching and Kota Kinabalu.
Malaysia’s language education system

The Malaysian education system is framed by the Education Act of 1996, which stipulates that Bahasa Malaysia be the medium of instruction and that all schools must utilise the national curriculum. Education is centralised through the national Ministry of Education and policy implementation is supported by fourteen state education departments. Schooling is compulsory at the primary level and is free for students aged 6 to 18 in public (Malay-medium) schools (European Union External Action Service, 2007).

Progression through the education system differs slightly depending on the type of school students attend. The main types of schools in Malaysia are:

- National schools (primary and secondary Malay-medium schools)
- National-type Chinese school (SJK(C) – Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina)) (primary and secondary level Chinese-medium schools)
- National-type Tamil school (SJK(T) - Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Tamil)) (primary level Tamil-medium schools)
- Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan (SABK) and Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama (SMKA) – government aided primary and secondary religious schools, and
- International Private schools

In 2011, there were 5,848 national schools, 1,291 SJK(C)s and 523 SJK(T)s (LLG Cultural Development Centre & Tamil Foundation, 2012).

Mother tongue education

After independence and the emergence of the Federation of Malaysia, mother-tongue education was provided some protection through the Education Ordinance of 1957, which allowed for mother-tongue education at the primary level. However, the existence of vernacular schools has constantly been challenged as the government has wished to establish a singular language and education system. The outcome for Chinese and Tamil-medium schools have differed significantly due to of differential funding models, varying socio-economic profiles, differences in political power and capacities to develop their education systems, among other variables. As a result, the Tamil education system generally serves the lower-income, rural Tamil families, with the middle to upper income Tamil families moving into the national school system.

Arumugam (2008) argues that the marginal role of the Indian political party in the ruling government, the neglect of Tamil schools, the negative perceptions of middle and upper class Tamils towards the vernacular system, discriminatory practices in the provision of education, the high number of untrained teachers, dilapidated buildings, and a lack of appropriate teaching resources have all led to poor performance by Tamil students and high drop-out rates. Nevertheless, Tamil schools educate over 100,000 students, around 53 per cent of the Indian school-going populace. Arumugam (p. 146) argues that the Tamil schools are bound to stay as it is an issue of pride and dignity for a majority of Indians and to dismantle the mother tongue education system would be to disrupt ‘the cultural and religious fabric that has provided an identity and belonging’.
Chinese vernacular schools, on the other hand, have enjoyed significant financial and political support from the Chinese community in Malaysia and students perform better than Malay students in mathematics and science (Gill, 2010). Indeed, an increasing number of Malay parents send their children to Chinese schools, with around 80,000 Malays were attending SJK(C)s in 2012. Overall, about 20 per cent of Malaysian primary-aged children attend SJK(C)s in 2012 (Zainul, 2012, 19th September).

To promote the integration of the different schools, attempts were made to house Chinese, Tamil and Malay schools in the same compound through the “Integrated Schools” and “Vision Schools” strategies in 1985 and 2001. Presently there are 5 Vision schools, but their presence has been resisted by some Chinese school providers who see it as an attempt to eliminate their schools (Lee, 2012). Rather than greater integration, the vernacular and national schools systems are experiencing greater ethnic stratification, with 96 per cent of Chinese primary-aged children attending SJK(C)s in 2011, up from 92 per cent in 2000, while 56 per cent of Indian primary-aged children attended SJK(T)s in 2011, up from 47 per cent in 2000 (The World Bank, 2013). Lee (2012: 175) argues that ‘a majority of Chinese parents have come to view the increasing Malayization and Islamization of the national primary schools as intolerant of and discriminating against Chinese students in the schools’.

However, a majority of students at vernacular primary schools attend national secondary schools as students are not able to access the post-secondary and tertiary system, which is Malay-medium, unless they have taken examinations through the national school system. The limited number of Chinese-medium While there are 60 Chinese-medium secondary schools, these students are unable to enter the public university system, as their Chinese language examinations are not recognised in the Malay public education system. There are no Tamil-medium schools beyond the primary level.

The development of the private education systems has had an enormous impact for all demographics in Malaysia. In fact, in 2007, enrolments in private institutions (507,438) were greater than those in public institutions (365,800) (Lee, 2012). Non-bumiputera face difficulties as they need to have completed secondary schooling through the Malay-medium national schools. For the Chinese in particular, the private tertiary sector has provided more equitable access to further education. While the academic standards of private post-secondary institutions vary, as long as students can pay the fees, they are generally accepted. As an indication of the effect of this, Chinese students currently make up 83.7 per cent of enrolments in degree programmes in private institutions (Lee, 2012).

Broader to the changes in the tertiary education system, a system-wide review is underway across the education spectrum. The National Education Blueprint 2006-2010 and National Education Blueprint 2013-2025 are both important policy documents for Malaysia and aim to identify and improve on weaknesses across the education system. For example, the 2013-2025 Blueprint has identified a number of achievement gaps, particularly between urban and rural students, with 16 out the 20 lowest-performing districts in the UPSR (primary level tests) and 10 out of 20 of the lowest-performing districts in SPM (Secondary level tests) in Sabah and Sarawak (Children in plantations will be discussed further in the situational analysis). Secondary dropout rates are also higher in rural areas, 16.7 per cent, than in urban areas at 10.1 per cent. The Blueprint identifies 11 shifts which need to occur across education in order for all students in Malaysia to attend school from primary through to upper secondary level by 2020 (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2012).
The LESC initiative in Malaysia, through observations, dialogues, interviews and reading, it has been made abundantly clear that the relations of the vernacular and national schools are at a critical point for inclusion in any educational change process, for which sensitive language planning focused development is most apt. Progression in this area has been waylaid or stalled in part by the initiative to create ‘vision’ schools. Hence this focus should form a central part of a reinvigorated language planning activity for Malaysia.

Preliminary findings/tentative conclusions

Evidence accumulated from multiple sources of information collection in LESC has shown a multi-faceted set of relationships between language and conflict. Some of these are discussed below with specific reference to Malaysia.

Processes of language policy formulation

There is considerable evidence that language status, and language education, are often a cause but also a consequence of tension. Unlike some other sources of tension, especially religion, ethnicity and socio-economic disparities, language based tensions are more amenable to resolution. However, the track record of language policy making, in Malaysia as elsewhere, suggests that significant modification of the process of language planning is required to convert it into an instrument of conflict mitigation.

The content and process of language problem alleviation, in the general interest of enhancing social cohesion, resilience and fostering national unity, can be relieved through focused and well-prepared interventions. Collaborative processes of decision-making informed and guided by research evidence are urgently needed and have proved very effective. Bottom-up and expert-guided processes of language planning need to be enacted. The aim should be to achieve deeper consensus on language policy than has hitherto pertained. New methods and practices of language planning are urgently required to foster national unity, methods which go far beyond ‘consultation’ as a modality of seeking endorsement or compliance of populations. There is serious disparity between the perceptions of minority groups and officials as to the aims and experience of language education. This appears to be equally present in East as in Peninsular Malaysia, though the specific issues around which consensus need to be garnered vary. The most general claim therefore from the present research is for a drastic need of evidence-based consultative processes of decision making on disputed issues of language and on the general activity of language policy making.

Content, remit and application of the content of language policy

Practical methods for resolving language tensions can be very effective but in addition to improved processes of formulation Malaysia suffers from relatively high levels of scepticism about its language policy aims. The facilitated dialogues have shown an extremely high level of success in addressing these by a method of examining realistically achievable objectives against policy declarations. It is an
odd feature of language policy formulation that some specific questions of dispute are about symbolic representations of language, and others are about the presence of language as an almost silent or invisible aspect of social inequalities. We might contrast these as the ‘standing’ or representative nature of languages (what they are called and perceived to be, national, official, ethnic, regional, global, indigenous, identity etc. and other appellations), on the one hand, and the abilities produced by schooling and higher education that make possible high levels of educational attainment, employment and professional material success. Language questions span this vast range and therefore only a subtle and comprehensive approach to the content of language policy as well as its effects can aspire to realistically address language problems.

The evaluations done as part of these facilitated dialogues show an extraordinary high appreciation of the effect of consultative and guided language decision-making. The great majority of participants have acquired an enhanced awareness of language problems and some insight into how to tackle these problems. Many issues of dispute, such as arguments about when to introduce minority languages or when to replace them as language of instruction with the national language, can be resolved with a focused attention to local resources, policy alternatives and different models of practice.

Practical methods of language planning should involve all stakeholders in a participatory way to address areas of tension, replacing emotional, contested and disputed aspects of language education with evidence based solutions. The facilitated dialogues have written policy principles, discussed and classified a range of language problems and commenced work of drafting inclusive and evidence-based language policies with an appreciation of what is realistic and what is symbolic. Participants often express surprise at how much progress is possible in collaborative and guided facilitation. The involvement of government officials, community representative and experts has ensured that all groups come to understand the perspective and priorities of other groups better and participate in policy writing exercises taking account of each other’s needs and interests.

Dialogue and Discourse

Some aspects of language are implicated in virtually every conflict, and some kinds of conflicts involve many aspects of language. Communication in general, meaning language in use, is a major aspect of conflict, since political, ethnic, social, religious and racial disputes arise in speech and can only be successfully resolved through peace finding dialogue. Aspects of language use directly produce conflict, such as prejudicial generalising, hate speech, incitement to violence and ways of speaking about who is included and who is excluded from a community. Citizenship is best advanced through discourse that is attentive to the needs of all members of a society.

Language is also directly important for economic life. Literacy achievements in schooling have a direct and immense impact on the employment prospects and health of people. Language policies and language education should also take account of the need for all students to: i) gain full access to the knowledge and skills imparted through the curriculum; ii) gain full literacy and speaking competence in the mother tongue, the national language and English; iii), gain the awareness to conduct conversations in an inclusive and harmonious way that recognises the rights and opportunities of all people.
Social Cohesion

The term “social cohesion” is used with a range of different meanings, but three elements are common if not universal. According to its most recent discussion of this field the OECD (2011, p.17): identifies these common elements as social inclusion, social capital and social mobility and argues that “A cohesive society works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility.”

In recent years Malaysia, among other Asian societies, has achieved impressive economic growth, moving up the development scale from developing to developed nation status. With each new stage of development all societies face new challenges and demands and in the case of Malaysia these have compounded unresolved questions of ethnicity and language. As Malaysia has achieved its commendable and impressive economic aims there have also been identified rising income inequalities, structural transformations that unsettle traditional accommodations among social groups, and the need to meet citizens’ rising expectations of standards of living and access to opportunity. The emerging middle class in all societies compares itself with peers in advanced economies, its patterns of consumption and demands for quality services can be expected to change.

Social cohesion in multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-faith societies poses special problems in addition to the economic ones, though poverty and marginalization always affect health, income and other kinds of social cohesion. Specifically focused on this dimension of social cohesion is its conceptualisation by the Canadian Federal government:

Social cohesion is defined as the willingness of members of a society to cooperate with each other in order to survive and prosper. Willingness to cooperate means they freely choose to form partnerships and have a reasonable chance of realizing goals, because others are willing to cooperate and share the fruits of their endeavours equitably (Stanley, 2003, p.5).

We can readily see that this understanding of social cohesion places a considerable burden on civil collaboration and if we were to adopt a definition of this kind a particular challenge arises for Malaysia in both effective communication and networks of social discourse to facilitate the cooperation implied.

The following schematic representation suggests some of the links between language, conflict and social cohesion which have arisen in the course of the LESC initiative. Language can serve as a symbol of togetherness and unity and language can have the effect of bonding people into a sense of common political citizenship. In this way, it can foster belonging and inclusion, as the same fate of citizen life is experienced by people of different ethnic origins. However, language also has a deep impact on the economy and this may foster social cohesion or produce problems for social cohesion. If literacy or educational successes are unequal for different groups because minorities do not get access to the language of power, we can see that language policy directly inhibits social cohesion. Literacy and access to the mainstream and occupationally powerful curriculum are influenced by whether or not children can succeed in schooling – often depending on their mother tongue.
Further questions to arise from the LESC initiative demonstrates the importance of exploring connections between mother tongue abilities, comprehension and acquisition of Malay language capabilities and knowledge of and literacy in English. Such as inquiry should be tracked against employment and higher education destinations to the extent that the data sets available allow such analysis. Additional questions for exploration include the role of language as ‘narration’, i.e., the role of language in national story telling that includes and allows distinctive and legitimate space for all constituent elements of the Malaysian population in full citizenship. Other questions include health and wellbeing of indigenous minority populations, intergenerationally endangered languages of indigenous groups, violence reduction and prevention, and specifically ways in which peaceful co-existence and national unity can be diffused throughout schooling, and finally questions of inter-ethnic communication.

Generalisations of findings

The following is a list of generalizations from the research elaborated with an explanation, and then taken up in the recommendations section which follows.

1. When language education is a cause of tension, this tension can be relieved through focused and well prepared interventions;

   Elaboration

   Social tensions that are derived from ethnic, religious, or economic position are often more intractable than language based conflicts. Facilitated dialogues have shown that it is possible to achieve a high level
of agreement about language education goals in a relatively short period of time if the discussions are
guided by research evidence, professional mediation and good will. While some kinds of human identity
exclude others, racial and religious identities, for example, language identities are much more malleable.
Because it is possible to foster and produce high levels of bi- and trilingualism through appropriate language
education planning and because language is a means for bringing about better social relations, and because
language has specific benefits in the economy at a time of rapid globalisation Malaysia should invest more
in producing high levels of trilingualism in its population.

2. Collaborative decision making informed by research has proven very effective in the facilitated
dialogues;

Elaboration

A key aspect of the success of the facilitated dialogues has been the full involvement of affected parties.
Community representatives are able to listen to the perspective of public officials and incorporate this
into their claims and requests for education change. Public officials respond to and accommodate to the
perspective and interests of community-based representatives. Both are influenced by the research.
When properly digested and applied to practical problems in education research can have the effect of
replacing emotive disputes with a more feasible costed and, in the longer term, more effective set of
decisions. It is crucial to manage and mediate these interactions between the perspectives of community-
based organisations, public officials charged with managing public programmes and dispersing public
funds, and academic researchers whose focus is on knowledge gathering and publication.

3. Bottom-up language planning needs to be supported to achieve more consensus on language
policy;

Elaboration

Governments have tended to neglect the importance of seeking and negotiating consensus for language
policy. Processes of bottom-up planning are those in which teachers are not seen as mere implementers
of policies already taken by government, and in which the community is not merely represented as citizens
observing or benefiting from policy. When teachers and parents, as well as community and professional civil
society organisations are active participants in shaping policy development the result is more understanding
of policy aims and constraints on what can be achieved and more commitment to the goals and aims of policy.

4. There is a large gap between perceptions of minority groups and officials on language
education;

Elaboration

The LESC research has exposed a serious gap in the perceptions of Malaysia’s language policies and
especially its language in education policy. This is a major problem because indigenous groups express
alarm at the neglect and occasionally at the disrespect they perceive is directed towards their ancestral
languages. There is also substantial scepticism among the large ethnic communities, the Chinese and Indians in particular, though in different ways, about the overall aims of Malaysia’s language policy, and of the specific experience of its schooling and language education programs.

5. There is a need for evidence based consultative processes of decision making on some key disputes;

Elaboration

Some key disputes that are amenable to resolution through facilitated dialogues with expert content involve the name of the national language and how it is used, how and when to introduce Bahasa Malaysia for non-BM speaking children, how to assess BM competence as part of both primary and secondary school decision making, how and when to introduce English, programme models that produce high levels of spoken and written language outcomes in both English and Malay, especially bilingual methods, Content and Language Integrated Learning in specific subjects, camps and other kinds of short term immersion, the role, place, duration, point of introduction of indigenous mother tongues and when and how transition to BM and English occurs.

Higher education language policy, both in technical and general academic streams, especially in subject domains where English academic discourse dominates, is another question that requires more effort for evidence based consultation. These and related questions are amenable to technical resolution, meaning that research can help resolve the choices and costs/benefits of different decisions, but they are also ripe for negotiation in facilitated dialogues to win public support for the policy choices that are taken.

6. There is an urgent need for locally focused success stories to be documented and shared to encourage curriculum innovation;

Elaboration

Although evidence based decision making means drawing from the best and most disciplined research in the world this requires localisation to make it convincing and applicable. The LESC report found evidence of Malaysian education initiatives of the highest calibre. These need to be better documented and used to encourage improvement through light-house modelling of excellence.

7. The issue of multiple languages is badly misunderstood, it is relatively easily solved yet is often used to ‘impossibilise’ language rights.

Elaboration

The LESC research uncovered instances in which education officials and local communities expressed the view that it is impossible to meet all the language needs of the community. It was commented to the chief investigator that there are too many languages, they are of uneven intellectual and literary development,
and that these socio-linguistic facts make language support for children from those language communities impossible to implement and support. Within Malaysia itself, and also internationally, there are many models of effective responses to the challenges of meeting multilingual needs in administratively efficient and cost-effective ways.

8. There is an urgent need for inclusive, democratic, language planning to take account of all communication needs of the communities

Elaboration

Malaysia should invest in producing a distinctive national language planning activity that addresses in a comprehensive way the totality of its communication needs. These include the needs of all major groups but also of small minorities. Deaf communities and the communication needs of special populations should be incorporated into a single coherent process of national language policy writing. The multilingualism of which Malaysians are justly proud is a resource whose long term health and vitality should be cultivated. The learning of economically and strategically important foreign languages should form a natural part of this endeavour.

9. Current language planning is fragmented, uncoordinated and partial and should be reinvigorated. What is required is a comprehensive approach that combines a focus on all aspects of the Malaysian language ecology: the national language, ethnic languages/mother tongues/indigenous languages and international languages. These should be tied in a scholarly and evidence based way to academic skills linked to literacy attainments.

Elaboration

The LESC research has shown instead that instead of the needed comprehensive, evidence based and facilitated policy, with bottom-up elements added to win support and understanding from the community, the process instead is needlessly fragmented and overly politicised.

10. Language policy involves areas well beyond education, such as the status of languages in a multi-ethnic society, the official recognition of minority and regional languages, access to literacy and mother tongue teaching, access to prestige international languages, learning of the national language, script policy and the special communication needs of disabled children, and of sign language among other areas. Comprehensive language planning should address all such questions.

Elaboration

The LESC research has produced ample evidence that when a more inclusive approach is taken there is an increased likelihood of community understanding of other citizens’ language rights. Reaching beyond education into civic and economic life also has the benefit of supporting national unity and pride in the nation that would take its citizens’ unique communication needs seriously. In this way language policy
processes can achieve social cohesion by responding the needs of national unity and cohesion at the same time as supporting minority, indigenous, migrant and disadvantaged populations.

11. Language is directly important for economic life. Literacy levels have direct impact on employment and health of people and economic focused language planning displaces attention towards mobility and opportunity dimensions of social cohesion, while not ignoring issues of identity and social solidarity among populations.

Elaboration

An overarching aim of new a process of language planning for Malaysia would be to link communication realities and skills with the employment market of the future. It would emphasise that language is uniquely additive, this means that the learning of additional language skills need not imply any loss of respect, or reduction in importance, of existing languages. An overall language planning process should aim therefore to influence public attitudes in a positive direction. This can be an outcome of seeing the economic benefit that all citizens can obtain from a more internationally focused Malaysia.

Implications and recommendations for action

Malaysia stands at an important phase in its development as a sovereign, stable, independent nation. In recent years Malaysians have been right to celebrate their economic and social progress, which has been remarkable in world terms, elevating the nation in economic, technological, scientific and productive fields. This enviable success and its many benefits have transformed the physical infrastructure of the country and elevated its research, economic productivity and international competitiveness. All this is worthy of congratulation.

However, alongside these impressive achievements there are persisting social schisms, some serious, that appear impervious to policy action. Whilst Malaysia proudly displays its multi-racial credentials in its education system, its tourism recruitment and in its national imagery, all acknowledge that social cohesion is at times fragile, and that much more needs to be done to convert the absence of overt social conflict into a true sense of being a unified, multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-faith society. The absence of overt social tension is precisely the time and opportunity for a strenuous effort of forging the affiliations, sense of shared destiny and citizenship that are indispensable to guarantee enduring national unity. A crucial component of achieving full national unity is to bring about a strong and widespread commitment to language, as discussed above, involving language status, language education and language use. This will require a concerted effort to tackle intractable difficulties of language, especially the endangered status of indigenous languages and a more collaborative and integrated public education in languages.

The overriding sense that strikes the well-disposed outsider in relation to questions of language and ethnicity in Malaysia is one of a persisting unresolved burden on the full development of the society, its cultural unity, its educational standards and its social cohesion. A key observation has been that the programmes and initiatives that currently make up the bulk of the activity of national unity promotion are essentially motivated by an ethos of the overcoming of problems and occasionally of problem prevention.
Tacking problems is important but Malaysia should move beyond this in its language policy, towards an ambitious programme of social inclusion, fostering a sense of participatory citizenship, educational equality and cultural democracy. While some of the dimensions of this are beyond the scope of the LESC initiative the need for comprehensive language planning is the strongest single conclusion of our work.

This comprehensive language planning should build on the promising outcomes of LESC, addressing the vitality and secure presence of the Indigenous languages of all the citizens, and the disparate and un-integrated vernacular-national school systems of the major ethnic groupings. A concerted, sustained and facilitated public conversation based on the participation and voices of policy makers, ethnic and indigenous communities, experts and the wider society (media, civil society organizations, economic interests) is needed. This public conversation should be guided by a facilitated process of development of a staged public national language planning, inclusive of all of Malaysia’s language communities.

The aim of such comprehensive staged and public language planning should be threefold:

- To forge a new national language policy dispensation premised on public support and consensus for national bi and tri-lingualism, ie., Bahasa Malaysia as the unifying lingua franca of the nation, the mother tongues (Melayu, ethnic vernaculars – Chinese and Tamil - and indigenous languages) as the crucial languages of identity and English, along with other international languages, useful for higher education and commerce in a globalized world;
- To secure widespread public appreciation and commitment to the new policy vision;
- To collectively negotiate the administrative, educational and juridical mechanisms for enduring and effective implementation of such a comprehensive, coordinated multilingual national plan.

References


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Appendix 3: 

Professor Joseph Lo Bianco
University of Melbourne
UNICEF, Language, Education and Social Cohesion Project
January 2015

Background: Social Cohesion and Language Education Planning

This report comprises a preliminary analysis and generalization of findings from the Malaysian component of the 2013-2015 Language, Education and Social Cohesion (LESC) initiative undertaken in Myanmar and South Thailand. The present report contains findings that have emerged from the LESC initiative in Malaysia, implications and discussion of these findings, and recommendations arising from the research.

Project origins

UNICEF has developed a global programme on Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) which has been funded since 2011 by the Government of the Netherlands. The focus of the Dutch grant was twofold: first to encourage practical intervention (tools and methods) to alleviate conflict and second to support research into conflict analysis (increasing understanding of the ways in which education can hinder social cohesion). The overall vision is to strengthen policy and resilience in society, to foster social cohesion and human security in countries at risk of conflict, experiencing conflict or recovering from conflict. The strategic result and primary objective is to improve the lives of children in conflict-affected contexts though strengthening policies and practices in education for peace building.

LESC in Malaysia

In the context ongoing education reform and initiatives in national unity and integration the Malaysian component of LESC decided to focus on language planning initiatives for the main ethnic groups, specifically relations between schooling in vernacular and national streams (Chinese-Tamil-Malay), and an additional focus on the special circumstances of indigenous communities (Orang Asli/Orang Asal children in peninsular and East Malaysia – Sabah and Sarawak).
In addition to data gathering through interviews, observations and document analysis, three “facilitated dialogues” were held:

2) Language, Education and Social Cohesion. Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia, 7-8 May 2014 (46 participants).

Preliminary Findings and Conclusions

The following is a list of generalizations from the research elaborated with an explanation, and then taken up in the recommendations section which follows.

1. When language education is a cause of tension, this tension can be relieved through focused and well prepared interventions;

Elaboration

Social tensions that are derived from ethnic, religious, or economic position are often more intractable than language based conflicts. Facilitated dialogues have shown that it is possible to achieve a high level of agreement about language education goals in a relatively short period of time if the discussions are guided by research evidence, professional mediation and good will. While some kinds of human identity exclude others, racial and religious identities, for example, language identities are much more malleable. Because it is possible to foster and produce high levels of bi- and trilingualism through appropriate language education planning and because language is a means for bringing about better social relations, and because language has specific benefits in the economy at a time of rapid globalisation Malaysia should invest more in producing high levels of trilingualism in its population.

2. Collaborative decision making informed by research has proven very effective in the facilitated dialogues;

Elaboration

A key aspect of the success of the facilitated dialogues has been the full involvement of affected parties. Community representatives are able to listen to the perspective of public officials and incorporate this into their claims and requests for education change. Public officials respond to and accommodate to the perspective and interests of community-based representatives. Both are influenced by the research. When properly digested and applied to practical problems in education research can have the effect of replacing emotive disputes with a more feasible costed and, in the longer term, more effective set of decisions. It is crucial to manage and mediate these interactions between the perspectives of community-based organisations, public officials charged with managing public programmes and dispersing public funds, and academic researchers whose focus is on knowledge gathering and publication.
3. Bottom-up language planning needs to be supported to achieve more consensus on language policy;

**Elaboration**

Governments have tended to neglect the importance of seeking and negotiating consensus for language policy. Processes of bottom-up planning are those in which teachers are not seen as mere implementers of policies already taken by government, and in which the community is not merely represented as citizens observing or benefiting from policy. When teachers and parents, as well as community and professional civil society organisations are active participants in shaping policy development the result is more understanding of policy aims and constraints on what can be achieved and more commitment to the goals and aims of policy.

4. There is a large gap between perceptions of minority groups and officials on language education;

**Elaboration**

The LESC research has exposed a serious gap in the perceptions of Malaysia’s language policies and especially its language in education policy. This is a major problem because indigenous groups express alarm at the neglect and occasionally at the disrespect they perceive is directed towards their ancestral languages. There is also substantial scepticism among the large ethnic communities, the Chinese and Indians in particular, though in different ways, about the overall aims of Malaysia’s language policy, and of the specific experience of its schooling and language education programs.

5. There is a need for evidence based consultative processes of decision making on some key disputes;

**Elaboration**

Some key disputes that are amenable to resolution through facilitated dialogues with expert content involve the name of the national language and how it is used, how and when to introduce Bahasa Malaysia for non-BM speaking children, how to assess BM competence as part of both primary and secondary school decision making, how and when to introduce English, programme models that produce high levels of spoken and written language outcomes in both English and Malay, especially bilingual methods, Content and Language Integrated Learning in specific subjects, camps and other kinds of short term immersion, the role, place, duration, point of introduction of indigenous mother tongues and when and how transition to BM and English occurs. Higher education language policy, both in technical and general academic streams, especially in subject domains where English academic discourse dominates, is another question that requires more effort for evidence based consultation. These and related questions are amenable to technical resolution, meaning that research can help resolve the choices and costs/benefits of different decisions, but they are also ripe for negotiation in facilitated dialogues to win public support for the policy choices that are taken.
6. There is an urgent need for locally focused success stories to be documented and shared to encourage curriculum innovation;

*Elaboration*

Although evidence-based decision making means drawing from the best and most disciplined research in the world, this requires localisation to make it convincing and applicable. The LESC report found evidence of Malaysian education initiatives of the highest calibre. This need to be better documented and used to encourage improvement through light-house modelling of excellence.

7. The issue of multiple languages is badly misunderstood; it is relatively easily solved yet is often used to ‘impossibilise’ language rights.

*Elaboration*

The LESC research uncovered instances in which education officials and local communities expressed the view that it is impossible to meet all the language needs of the community. It was commented to the chief investigator that there are too many languages, they are of uneven intellectual and literary development, and that these socio-linguistic facts make language support for children from those language communities impossible to implement and support. Within Malaysia itself, and also internationally, there are many models of effective responses to the challenges of meeting multilingual needs in administratively efficient and cost-effective ways.

8. There is an urgent need for inclusive, democratic, language planning to take account of all communication needs of the communities

*Elaboration*

Malaysia should invest in producing a distinctive national language planning activity that addresses in a comprehensive way the totality of its communication needs. These include the needs of all major groups but also of small minorities. Deaf communities and the communication needs of special populations should be incorporated into a single coherent process of national language policy wiring. The multilingualism of which Malaysians are justly proud is a resource whose long term health and vitality should be cultivated. The learning of economically and strategically important foreign languages should form a natural part of this endeavour.

9. Current language planning is fragmented, uncoordinated and partial and should be reinvigorated. What is required is a comprehensive approach that combines a focus on all aspects of the Malaysian language ecology: the national language, ethnic languages/mother tongues/indigenous languages and international languages. These should be tied in a scholarly and evidence based way to academic skills linked to literacy attainments.

*Elaboration*

The LESC research has shown instead that instead of the needed comprehensive, evidence based and
facilitated policy, with bottom-up elements added to win support and understanding from the community, the process instead is needlessly fragmented and overly politicised.

10. Language policy involves areas well beyond education, such as the status of languages in a multi-ethnic society, the official recognition of minority and regional languages, access to literacy and mother tongue teaching, access to prestige international languages, learning of the national language, script policy and the special communication needs of disabled children, and of sign language among other areas. Comprehensive language planning should address all such questions.

**Elaboration**

The LESC research has produced ample evidence that when a more inclusive approach is taken there is an increased likelihood of community understanding of other citizens’ language rights. Reaching beyond education into civic and economic life also has the benefit of supporting national unity and pride in the nation that would take its citizens’ unique communication needs seriously. In this way language policy processes can achieve social cohesion by responding the needs of national unity and cohesion at the same time as supporting minority, indigenous, migrant and disadvantaged populations.

11. Language is directly important for economic life. Literacy levels have direct impact on employment and health of people and economic focused language planning displaces attention towards mobility and opportunity dimensions of social cohesion, while not ignoring issues of identity and social solidarity among populations.

**Elaboration**

An overarching aim of new a process of language planning for Malaysia would be to link communication realities and skills with the employment market of the future. It would emphasise that language is uniquely additive, this means that the learning of additional language skills need not imply any loss of respect, or reduction in importance, of existing languages. An overall language planning process should aim therefore to influence public attitudes in a positive direction. This can be an outcome of seeing the economic benefit that all citizens can obtain from a more internationally focused Malaysia.

**Implications and Recommendations for Action**

Malaysia stands at an important phase in its development as a sovereign, stable, independent nation. In recent years Malaysians have been right to celebrate their economic and social progress, which has been remarkable in world terms, elevating the nation in economic, technological, scientific and productive fields. This enviable success and its many benefits have transformed the physical infrastructure of the country and elevated its research, economic productivity and international competitiveness. All this is worthy of congratulation.

However, alongside these impressive achievements there are persisting social cleavages, some serious,
that appear impervious to policy action. Whilst Malaysia proudly displays its multi-racial credentials in its education system, its tourism recruitment and in its national imagery, all acknowledge that social cohesion is at times fragile, and that much more needs to be done to convert the absence of overt social conflict into a true sense of being a unified, multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-faith society. The absence of overt social tension is precisely the time and opportunity for a strenuous effort of forging the affiliations, sense of shared destiny and citizenship that are indispensable to guarantee enduring national unity. A crucial component of achieving full national unity is to bring about a strong and widespread commitment to language, as discussed above, involving language status, language education and language use. This will require a concerted effort to tackle intractable difficulties of language, especially the endangered status of indigenous languages and a more collaborative and integrated public education in languages.

The overriding sense that strikes the well-disposed outsider in relation to questions of language and ethnicity in Malaysia is one of a persisting unresolved burden on the full development of the society, its cultural unity, its educational standards and its social cohesion. A key observation has been that the programmes and initiatives that currently make up the bulk of the activity of national unity promotion are essentially motivated by an ethos of the overcoming of problems and occasionally of problem prevention. Tacking problems is important but Malaysia should move beyond this in its language policy, towards an ambitious programme of social inclusion, fostering a sense of participatory citizenship, educational equality and cultural democracy. While some of the dimensions of this are beyond the scope of the LESC initiative the need for comprehensive language planning is the strongest single conclusion of our work.

This comprehensive language planning should build on the promising outcomes of LESC, addressing the vitality and secure presence of the Indigenous languages of all the citizens, and the disparate and un-integrated vernacular-national school systems of the major ethnic groupings. A concerted, sustained and facilitated public conversation based on the participation and voices of policy makers, ethnic and indigenous communities, experts and the wider society (media, civil society organizations, economic interests) is needed. This public conversation should be guided by a facilitated process of development of a staged public national language planning, inclusive of all of Malaysia’s language communities.

The aim of such comprehensive staged and public language planning should be threefold:

- To forge a new national language policy dispensation premised on public support and consensus for national bi- and trilingualism, i.e., Bahasa Malaysia as the unifying lingua franca of the nation, the mother tongues (Melayu, ethnic vernaculars – Chinese and Tamil – and indigenous languages) as the crucial languages of identity and English, along with other international languages, useful for higher education and commerce in a globalized world;
- To secure widespread public appreciation and commitment to the new policy vision;
- To collectively negotiate the administrative, educational and juridical mechanisms for enduring and effective implementation of such a comprehensive, coordinated multilingual national plan.
Appendix 4: Report: How Language and Education Can Support National and Social Cohesion in Malaysia


Professor Joseph Lo Bianco, AM.
University of Melbourne
March 2015

BACKGROUND
In 2011 UNICEF began a global program called Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA). Funded by the Government of the Netherlands PBEA encouraged research and action to reduce conflict and social tension across the world, and to study how education and social cohesion are linked.

The Malaysian component of LESC commenced in 2013 with a focus on language and education in relation to the main ethnic groups, examining schooling in vernacular and national streams (Chinese-Tamil-Malay) and indigenous communities (Orang Asli/Orang Asal children in peninsular and East Malaysia – Sabah and Sarawak).

LESC IN MALAYSIA
This report is informed by more than 40 site visits, 65 interviews, analysis of official, academic and community reports on language education and Malaysian society. There have also been seminars with interest groups and “facilitated dialogues”, involving 166 participants in intensive discussion exploring the links between language, education, national unity and social cohesion.

The facilitated dialogues are ‘hands-on’ problem solving mini-conferences led by Professor Lo Bianco, an academic linguist, language planner and professional mediator. Drawing together public officials, academic experts and community members the facilitator guides discussion on language problems, introducing research evidence in response to problems raised by participants and leading them towards evidence-based solutions.
Three “dialogues” and a public seminar have informed the present report:


The aim of guided dialogue is to discuss difficult issues in a constructive way, involving participants in exploring real-world solutions in line with the latest international and Malaysian research evidence. Participants examine threats to social cohesion and respond to language education problems through evaluating the costs, benefits and feasibility of different alternatives. Consensus is common but not inevitable.

Using these methods of research and engagement this report makes a series of recommendations to improve resilience, community harmony and social progress.

**MALAYSIA’S NATIONAL UNITY POLICIES**
Malaysia has been very active in promoting national unity through a series of whole-of-government, Ministry, community and individual actions. The most prominent have been a series of National Action Plans, such as the Rukun Negara (national principles) issued in 1970, Vision 2020 dating from 1991, and 1-Malaysia, issued in 2009. These national government actions have been matched by Ministry of Education initiatives such as Vision Schools, Student Integration Plan for Unity, and Curriculum Development for Islamic and Moral subjects.

Most impressive in scale and scope is the work of the Department of National Unity and Integration, located within the Department of Prime Minister, with its extensive array of initiatives, such as Unity Childcare Centres, Racial Unity Issues Identification and Indexing, Neighborhood Watch and Multicultural and Multi-racial Festivals, which celebrate cultural differences in the context of a commitment to national cohesion and unity.

“*Malaysia Truly Asia*” declares pride in the diversity of the Malaysian nation, and proclaims a commitment that it should remain united, peaceful and prosperous. Since independence Malaysia has taken giant strides towards achieving first world economic status, through technological, economic and social innovations. Nation building relies on success in these spheres, but these need to be tied to community harmony, mutual respect among all of Malaysia’s ethnic and racial groups and a sense of belonging and identification with the nation to be truly effective.
THREATS AND CHALLENGES TO SOCIAL COHESION
The following statements are drawn from the seminar and facilitated dialogues. A very large number of individual issues were raised as language problems, language education challenges, representing threats to social cohesion and national unity, more than 70 at the second Kuala Lumpur facilitated dialogue alone (KL-1). A representative selection is listed below organized under seven general headings.

1) Integrated System: National and Vernacular (Chinese/Tamil) Schools
2) Bahasa Malaysia and English Language
3) Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education
4) Language Planning & Indigenous Language Policy
5) Student Attrition, Literacy, School Dropout rates in minority communities
6) Capacity Building
7) Politics and Government Support

There is some overlap between these categories but they serve to show the deep feelings of participants and the very wide scope of language questions, impacting on social opportunity, personal and group identity and national unity.

1. Integrated System: National and Vernacular (Chinese/Tamil) Schools

• “... biggest problem? ... the single school system vs. multi school system”; KL-1
• “we need to know if having a single school system would be as bad for non-Malays as some people may claim”; “… need more research done on these areas”; KL-1
• Malaysian Education Blueprint: “…the Tamil and Chinese primary schools have grown in numbers – but the drop-out rates are high after students from vernacular schools make the transition to National schools (secondary level)”; KL-1
• “Professor Joseph to do a study on the vast number of drop-out rates amongst the Chinese and Tamil students; especially in the secondary level”; KL-1
• “remove classes.... actually a good system but ... it has failed over the years because of the lack of funding and bias policy and that these factors may have contributed to the drastic fall of the remove class system”. KL-1
• “Perception about National schools – the national schools have become Malay schools and this has led to divisiveness in state of unity.” KL-2
• “Previously when we mainly had the English medium in schools – national schools were once popular however when converted to the Malay medium, perception changed that national schools are Malay
school. This has led to a lot of divisiveness instead on unity.” KL-2

- “There is a lot of mistrust because of the implementation of the education policy – attention not given to vernacular schools.” KL-2

- “Malaysia has a situation where there are many different languages, 3 different national type schools and if you decide on one language that prioritizes one ethnic group, it will not go down well with other races – one language which is related to the majority is not right.” KL-2

- “Getting mother tongue education is the right of every child in the society. In the Razak report it was stated that Malay is the national language while Chinese and Tamil will continue for the purpose of unity.” KL-2

2. **Bahasa Malaysia & English Language**

- “. . . aside from students having to learn the Malay language – emphasis should also be placed for the students to learn the English language as most Malaysian youths who enter the labour market would find themselves struggling to compete with candidates who have a stronger command of English”; KL-1

- “Language is a medium to make yourself understood. In a country with many ethnicities, it should be better to have one language to be understood by all. But it would be best if there is one language that unites us all as it can help to avoid any mis-communication. We have to have a common language, meaning that we can learn Chinese or Tamil, but we need a common language which is Malay.” KL-2

- “English is the second language in the country, but not given enough priority by the government. In order for the grassroots to see the importance off the language, the government should be using the language more.” KK-Sab

- “I fully support the current policy on language teaching and values. To uphold the teaching and learning of the national language but at the same time: strengthen the teaching of English language.” KL-2

- “My wish is for a Malaysia to be free to use the Malay language as there are certain words in Malay that ... not allowed to be used. There should be freedom of language.” K-Sar

3. **MTB-MLE (Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education)**

- “The Mother-Tongue issue and the single school system vs. multi school system is critical. [ ] questioned whether having a single school system would be bad for non-Malays as some people claim.” KL-1

- “I strongly feel that each child should be given the opportunity to learn as many languages as possible and not to underestimate their ability to
learn....The introduction of as many languages as possible should be encouraged.” KL-2

- “Political misconception that multi-lingualism contributes to political instability.” KL-2
- “If the Government could provide support by incorporating the usage of their own mother-tongue language – it would not only help the students with their school work but would make learning enjoyable again.” KL-1
- “Malaysia provides a wonderful platform for people to learn different languages and it is important to introduce multiple languages to children in their early years so that we can groom a group of young leaders who can communicate globally.” KL-2
- “Diversity is an asset and the achievement of national unity must be based on diversity – on treatment and equality.” KL-2
- “Learning in 3 different languages is great but if a child is not fluent or proficient in any one language, it would make it difficult for them to express themselves.” KL-2
- “...all ethnic languages in Sarawak to be taught in school. (I also believe that the standard of English in Malaysia has dropped dramatically as compared to 30-40 years ago. Language is an identity to the community).” K-Sar
- “…every ethnic group has their right to learn their mother tongue; in the school time-table to be included a period/slot for the ethnic language.” K-Sar
- “Every ethnic group to document their language to be used as guideline for the teaching and learning (Dictionary, Workbooks, Teacher’s module, Start as early as kindergarten); K-Sar
- “Mother tongue education is not a threat to Malay as a national language.” KL-2
- “I believe mother tongue is important for all communities. I consider it as a human right. Mother tongue language is a priority and must be inculcated first.” KL-2

4. Language Development & Indigenous Language Policy

- “Most Orang Asli students feel discriminated when they are unable to pick up or cope with the Malay language in school. This would inadvertently cause them to quit school out of frustration.” KL-1
- “I wish that we have a national policy on languages in Malaysia.” K-Sar
- “I wish for the government to have clearer policies in promoting indigenous languages. I also wish all groups to be more pro-active in educating young people to sustain the indigenous language.” K-Sar
- “I wish people are able to see the importance of ethnic languages.” K-Sar.
• “I wish there are more research on ethnic languages done in Sarawak.” K-Sar
• “I wish we have stronger and clearer policies – both at the state and national level to promote implement the teaching of vernacular language/indigenous languages.” K-Sar
• “….language documentation ….in Sarawak…. make it …available for all.” K-Sar
• “….proper research and study done specifically on the Bidayuh language and other indigenous languages.” K-Sar
• “….an indigenous language development promotion institute to be built in Sarawak.” K-Sar
• “Implement of language policies for natives in Sarawak to be formulated and approved for implementation”. K-Sar
• “…..printed materials [and]formulation of flexible language policy for Sarawak, eg. Setting kindergartens using the indigenous language of the community. “ K-Sar
• “Everyone should have equal rights and opportunities to learn and be taught for all languages; specifically the indigenous and vernacular languages (e.g. Bidayuh, Iban, etc). For this purpose, more research should be carried out on indigenous languages in Sarawak, and to have it documented and taught to the younger generation at school (e.g. preschool and from the kindergarten level onwards). There should also be clear and strong policies- both at the state and national levels to support the needs and aspirations.” K-Sar
• “Iban language should be taught in schools from the primary level (not just starting at the secondary level).” K-Sar
• “Unity amongst society should not be based on language. It is not the found should for national unity. Mother tongue is the best medium for learning. This will help to unite all cultures.” KL-2
• ”Article 1 on CRC says that a child has the right to a name and nationality. CRC does not talk about language and is only a tool for social interaction. It is not to determine the identity or citizenship. That’s where the problem starts. Language needs to be divorced from race, citizenship and religion. Language is currently linked to race, religion and citizenship.” KL-2
• “The endangered status of indigenous languages.” KK-Sab
• “Low status of various ethnic languages in Sabah.” KK-Sab
• “Indigenous – The thinking at the community level is more towards commercialization. For Kadazandusun, the importance of learning their mother tongue is declining. If children in schools were give a choice between Kadazandusun and Chinese – more than 50% would choose Chinese, as Chinese would be more important in the work setting/seen as a more useful language to find jobs. Because of this reason we will soon
face a loss in these indigenous languages.” KK-Sab

- “Sabah Malay – are the children really prepared for formal schooling where standard Malay is used? The language that they learn at home is not similar to the Malay language used in schools and this can cause confusion.” KK-Sab
- “Students perform much better if they know the mother tongue. Our mother tongue is the language where we express ourselves much better.” KK-Sab
- “The child learns best in L1. Indigenous peoples need to realize that their children can learn better using the mother tongue. Expressions are better in the mother tongue (as they have the vocabulary). It’s closer to them. ‘This is a mindset that we have to change.” KK-Sab
- “Language is alive and has knowledge in it. Lifestyle and environment developments has changed the learning environment. Learning and knowledge will be enforced when learning happen in the mother tongue.” KK-Sab

5. Student Attrition, Literacy, School Dropout rates in minority communities

- “Attention needs to be focused on the drop-out rates within the national school: especially the indigenous groups and students from the Tamil schools.” KL-1
- Literacy – are there problems related to literacy in Sabah?
  a. Children who are out-of-school e.g. undocumented, refugee, stateless, children in plantations ... When children don’t go to school, it has dire impact on their future. When children do not have access to school they will grow up a illiterates regardless of which country they live in
  b. Sea-Gypsies – illiterate, and only speak their own language. If sea-gypsies are excluded/not integrated, how can they fit into the Malaysian/Sabah society? They need help towards integration, and not end up as beggars.” KK-Sab
- “…more research be done on these areas.” KL-1
- “attention needs to be focused on the drop-out rates within the national schools; especially the indigenous groups and students from the Tamil schools”; KL-1.
- “The lack of the written form of indigenous languages will be a challenge in teaching the language – most of the indigenous languages in Sabah are only spoken, we have only just started coding/writing the Kadazan language beginning in the 1980s.” KK-Sab
- “Access to knowledge – beginning at the mother tongue then bridge to other language that are more useful in other domains.” KL-Sab
- “drop-out rates are very bad for Orang Asli”; “issues faced by the Orang Asli children and indigenous groups in Sabah and Sarawak are very bad”; KL-1
6. **Capacity Building**

- “I wish we can have an start on early childhood education in Malaysia.” K-Sar
- “I wish for every Malaysian child to learn the languages naturally and not by force.” K-Sar
- “I wish we have enough specialists for children with disabilities/ special needs (e.g. sign language).” K-Sar
- “Change in lifestyle, occupation and daily activities among indigenous communities. The language and culture that was tied to the lifestyle is now lost.” KK-Sab
- “For the deaf and blind – special schools are required, most of these children are not at par with other children from mainstream schools. However, they do get support in the language codes – the curriculum for special needs students in special needs schools are different.” KK-Sab
- “a lot of work still needs to be done on the education system in the rural areas. Speaking from [my] experience and with research done by [my] organization; the studies show that there is a lack of teachers in the rural areas who can ‘connect’ with the students in their mother tongue. Most students from the rural areas are struggling with the national language and most drop-out half way through the school semester as they cannot cope with the language”; KL-1.
- Millennium Development Goals, 2010 report: “the report has shown that the quality of education in Malaysia is dropping and this is an extreme concern”; KL-1

7. **Politics and Government Support**

- “...take politics out of all the language making policy decisions.” K-Sar
- “I wish the ministry would not overwrite the law of language of the country.” K-Sar
- “....the Ministry of Education ... stop changing the policies. Make it more consistent!” K-Sar
- “I wish that there is a consistent policy in the usage of language in our mainstream education. Politicians should not get involved with the education system.” K-Sar
- “One independent entity (non-political) to manage the standard national education – A minister does not have the power to simply change the policy.” K-Sar
- “Profound mistrust with regards to language education between the govt and the community.” KL-2
- “Language is over politicized in Malaysia and we are paying the price now.” KL-2
• “There is too much involvement of politics.” KL-2
• “Education in Malaysia is disorganized (in terms of language) For example, Tamil schools, Chinese schools – this is mainly because of political intervention. For the 45 billion ringgit we spend yearly on education, we are worse off than Vietnam (PISA scores) : high expenditure in education but poor results.” KL-2
• “Conflicts are often created through politics - there are groups who attack the vernacular schools saying that they disrupt national unity – but there are also international schools, private schools etc that people don’t dispute about.” KL-2

• “We cannot sacrifice our language in order to develop self, nation. Language is our identity. I am not ashamed to say that ‘I am a Kimaragang. We cannot force indigenous peoples to become Malay or Chinese.” KK-Sab
• “some of what is done in ‘civics education’ was seen as prejudicial to some communities, using “highly questionable methodologies” and provoking tension.” KL-1

• “the lack of quality trained teachers could be one of the main contributors to the low standard of education in Malaysia”; KL-1
• “if Prof. Joseph could look into the areas of a) transition of students from vernacular primary schools to national secondary schools, and b) why is there a big number of drop-out rates in remove classes”; KL-1

• The acceptance of the Unified Examination Certificate (UCE) was raised ... “UCE is recognized as a qualification for entrance into many tertiary educational institutions around the world, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Singapore, Australia and many others. However, the UEC is not recognized by the Government of Malaysia for entry into public universities”; KL-1

• “based on four] research, most Orang Asli students feel discriminated when they are unable to pick up or cope with the Malay language in school. This would inadvertently cause them to quit school out of frustration”; KL-1

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The above shows the extent and depth of concern about language questions and the many ways language issues intersect with social relationships. From the facilitated dialogues the LESC process looked at ways forward to help Malaysia make the most of its diversity within its policy of national unity and social cohesion. The following statements emerge from the evidence above.

1. There is a large gap between perceptions of minority groups and officials on language education.
The LESC research has exposed a serious gap in the perceptions of Malaysia’s language policies, especially in education. This is a major problem because indigenous groups express alarm at the neglect and occasionally at the disrespect they perceive is directed towards their ancestral languages. There is also substantial scepticism among the large ethnic communities, the Chinese and Indians in particular, about the overall aims of Malaysia’s current language policy.

2. *When language education is a cause of tension, this tension can be relieved through focused and well-prepared interventions.*

Tensions associated with ethnic, religious, or economic differences can be more difficult and long lasting than language conflicts. Through the facilitated dialogues LESC has shown that we can achieve a high level of agreement about language education goals in a relatively short period of time. For this to happen it is necessary for Dialogues to be informed by research evidence, to have the guidance of a professional mediator and to be conducted with good will. Because it is possible to teach and learn many languages and produce high levels of language competence, language education policy can become a force for better social relations. Language learning benefits the economy, so that at a time of globalisation Malaysia should invest more in producing high levels of ability in three languages for the majority of its citizens: BM, English and mother tongues/vernaculars.

3. *Bottom-up language planning can achieve consensus on language policy.*

Governments have tended to neglect the importance of negotiating consensus for language policy. We can see from the evidence provided above that there is a high degree of concern about official language policy. One of the main conclusions of LESC is that Malaysia should invest in “bottom-up” planning as well as “top-down” planning for its language education decisions. This means bringing together government officials, ethnic/indigenous and national community organisations, teachers, parents, and academic experts to help shape policy development. If this is done systematically, the result is more understanding of the aims of policy and language education that responds better to the needs of the community.

4. *Malaysia should commission dispute resolution on key language education issues.*

Dispute areas such as the low level of integration of the school system between national and vernacular schools, a generally unclear relationship between the roles and educational position of BM and English, and the need for much more support for MT based MLE, need to be tackled in specific
conferences focused on reaching consensus for a new way forward. The role of Vision schools, their limited number and the low level of integration within them should be a high priority for this dispute resolution. Indigenous language policy in Sabah and Sarawak are also high priority issues to be tackled, as is the general question of mother tongue and its role in initial schooling.

5. The issue of multiple languages is badly misunderstood, it is relatively easily solved yet is often used to limit the ability of indigenous groups and other minorities from claiming their language rights.

The LESC research uncovered instances in which education officials expressed the view that it is impossible to meet all the language needs of the community. It was commented to the chief investigator that there are too many languages, they are of uneven intellectual and literary development, and that this makes language support for children from those communities impossible to support. Within Malaysia itself, and also internationally, there are many models of effective responses to the challenges of meeting multilingual needs in administratively efficient and cost-effective ways.

6. Current language planning is fragmented, uncoordinated and partial. What is required is a comprehensive approach with a focus on all aspects of the Malaysian language ecology. This refers to all the languages of the society that should be collectively developed, with their different roles and status, they are all important to Malaysia’s future. These are BM, which serves as the national language, the ethnic languages/mother tongues/indigenous languages of Malaysia’s many communities, and English as the key international language. These should be jointly developed in a single overarching language policy, based on evidence of the best ways for young people to gain academic skills linked to high literacy and technical language knowledge of different trades, careers or professions.

FIVE ACTIONS: A CONSTRUCTIVE WAY FORWARD

1. New National Language Policy
It is recommended that in the interests of national unity, social cohesion and support for the best possible education for all, Malaysia should revisit its language policies. Instead of piecemeal attention to the national language or occasionally in a separate process to English, or the main ethnic/indigenous languages, it is recommended that all these language interests be included in a single comprehensive language planning process. By building on the promising outcomes of LESC, this process should look at the different parts of Malaysia according to their local language situation, so that Sabah and Sarawak should be supported to develop language policies responsive to their local needs and situation.
This process of language policy making should not be just top-down but should be bottom-up, it should support the vitality and secure presence of the Indigenous languages of all the citizens, address the vernacular-national school systems of the major ethnic groupings and aim to raise general education standards to support the economic competitiveness of the country. It is vital that this process go along with a “facilitated public conversation”, by which I mean that the public is actively part of the process, engaged in deciding priorities, processes and structures. The participation of policy makers, ethnic and indigenous communities, experts and the wider society (media, civil society organizations, economic interests) is needed. This public conversation should be guided by a facilitated process of development of a staged public national language planning, inclusive of all of Malaysia’s language communities.

The aim of such comprehensive staged and public language planning should be to:

- To forge a new national language policy premised on public support and consensus for national bi and tri-lingualism, i.e., Bahasa Malaysia as the unifying lingua franca of the nation, the mother tongues (Melayu, ethnic vernaculars – Chinese and Tamil - and indigenous languages) as the crucial languages of identity and English, along with other international languages, useful for higher education and commerce in a globalized world;
- To secure widespread public appreciation and commitment to the new policy vision;
- To collectively negotiate the administrative, educational and legal mechanisms for enduring and effective implementation of such a comprehensive, coordinated multilingual national plan.

2) New Vision for Intercultural Schooling.
There should be a public process of canvassing new ways of ensuring that Malaysia’s children interact socially with each other on a regular basis in education. There are many ways that this can occur. Research canvassing the many ways that intercultural integration and contact can be promoted is required. Even the current provision, single-sites housing national and vernacular separately operating schools (eg Vision Schools) appear to miss many opportunities for substantial interaction across ethnic, religious and linguistic lines. The many options available should be debated without prejudice to the right of ethnic groups to guarantee a strong and viable home language support for their children, while acknowledging national curriculum needs, the national language, English and shared citizenship.
3) Development of Indigenous Language Policy
Indigenous language policy warrants separate attention because of the unique, and endangered state of the languages. The evidence above shows the serious concern that exists in the communities about the viability and long term future of these languages. The long term social cohesion of Malaysia will be affected by how it responds to this serious need. It is recommended that in the East Malaysia states, as a matter of urgency, conferences and other processes of preparing indigenous language policy be commenced. A conference on Education for Indigenous Peoples is a critical part of this process, and should be organized during 2016.

4) English and Effective MTB-MLE
Two other related but distinct areas form part of a constructive set of actions, English and the role of the mother tongue in early education. Both of these will form part of the new national language policy process recommended in 1) above, but these should be a distinct and clear part of the process because of the large number of Malaysians who will be affected by policies in these areas.

ACTION NEEDED BY SECTOR

Many other actions are required to sustain the long term language vitality of Malaysia. These actions are needed at advocacy levels, at inter-agency level, and at the community level where capacity building is urgently required to produce sustainable initiatives in grass roots language support. However, these initiatives will form part of the LESC Malaysia final report to be completed shortly. The present report is limited to actions supported by LESC research that bolster social cohesion and national unity.
Appendix 5: Initial Outline of Facilitated Dialogue Language and Social Cohesion Project: Malaysia

Facilitator and Chair: Professor Joseph Lo Bianco

Dates: Week of 7-11 April 2014 Location: Kuala Lumpur
Moderator and Chair: Professor Joseph Lo Bianco Participants: Approximately 30
Duration: Two days including a working evening, one week of preparation, one week follow-up

Provisional Aims

1. To foster national unit, social cohesion and collaborative social relations in Malaysia by producing national agreement on contested language questions
2. To prepare problem statement, principles, preamble, outline and focus areas for comprehensive language planning and policy statement for Malaysia
3. To coordinate this language planning statement with action at the local/municipal, state and Federal levels
4. To promote understanding of the forms and possibilities of language planning for fostering human rights, improved education and social cohesion.
5. To enhance and improve the educational lives of children in Malaysia
6. To enhance and improve the learning of all languages, Malay, Chinese and Tamil, indigenous mother tongues and English.
7. To identify, define and examine problems that require separate attention
8. To pass on skills and capacity on language planning.

Main Procedures Prior, During, Post Dialogue

Prior

It is a crucial aspect of effective facilitation on language planning to meet with as many participants as possible before the dialogue itself.
This familiarization ensures that the dialogue meets the needs and expectations of the participants and allows the facilitator to plan the dialogue to function smoothly and effectively.

**During**

The dialogue is run in a collaborative way, and is facilitated using methods and techniques designed to produce a draft policy through processes of both voice and vote democracy.

The dialogue is a process of problem solving, seeking consensus around contested issues. If its focus is language and language education it follows methods Professor Lo Bianco has extensively field tested, including four very successful recent iterations as indicated below.

A specifically language oriented dialogue aims to identify language problems, discuss, classify and elaborate these problems, and then engage in a process of in situ language planning in which skills and concepts of language policy writing and developed and transferred to participants.

- AUS-AID and British Council, Ethnic Seminar for Language and Peace, (2013, Yangon Myanmar, 23-26 June, 40 participants from 14 ethnic groups and 3 countries)
- UNICEF/UNESCO High Level Officials Forum on Language Policy Making for Peaceful Co-existence (2013, Bangkok, Thailand, 10 November, 25 participants from 12 countries)
- UNICEF/Taksin University/Mahidol University, Southern Thailand Provinces Language Planning for Peace (2014, Hat Yai, Thailand, 5-7 February, 28 participants)

Each dialogue has its unique purpose and structure and is organised around its specific theme.

**After**

Following the dialogue and the adoption of a policy statement a range of options regarding promotion, dissemination, refinement and additional research are possible, but the most important activities include promoting the outcome for implementation and adoption by the authorities.

**Sequences of the Facilitated Dialogue**

The extent of plenary work, table work, individual work, presentations, and private talk will be arranged before the facilitation.

**I: Prior to the Dialogue**

Identified participants will provide a brief answers to questions focused on the key issues of language, communication and literacy that should be tackled in Malaysia as a matter of urgency? What they hope will emerge from this initial facilitated dialogue? What relevant Malaysian and international research exists on the focus points of the
II: Post Dialogue

Are we able to achieve a viable outline of a peace-promoting language policy? What remains to be done? What problems/issues are still to be sorted? Follow up report? Additional Dialogue? Research? Post-dialogue consultant visits?

Comments

Currently Professor Lo Bianco has been commissioned to conduct three such dialogues, one for Kuala Lumpur, one in Sabah and one in Sarawak. The current concept note is for a facilitated dialogue to prepare ideas and approaches for a social cohesion oriented language planning exercise, under the auspices of UNICEF Malaysia. The general outline of the 2014 plan is as follows:

**Kuala Lumpur** Week of 7-11 April
Monday 7 and Tuesday 8: In country preparation, pre-dialogue consultations, advisory committee meeting; Wednesday 9 and Thursday 10: delivery of dialogue; Friday 11: writing report and presentation of outcomes to UNICEF KL.

**Sabah Week** of 5-9 May
Monday 5 and Tuesday 6: In country preparation, pre-dialogue consultations, advisory committee meeting; Wednesday 7 and Thursday 8: delivery of dialogue; Friday 9: writing report and presentation of outcomes to UNICEF KL.

**Sarawak Week** of 25-29 August
Monday 25 and Tuesday 26: In country preparation, pre-dialogue consultations, advisory committee meeting; Wednesday 27 and Thursday 28: delivery of dialogue; Friday 29: writing report and presentation of outcomes to UNICEF KL.
Appendix 6:
Agenda Kuala Lumpur Facilitated Dialogue, 9–10 April 2014

Language, Education and Social Cohesion Malaysia

Facilitated Dialogue under the auspices of the UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Program; Language Education and Social Cohesion Initiative

Dates: 9-10 April 2014
Location: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Facilitator and Chair: Professor Joseph Lo Bianco

Selamat Datang
欢迎
Selamat Datang
Welcome
Aims and Objectives

The workshop will function along the lines of a World Café, meaning an open-ended exploratory solutions-seeking facilitated dialogue. Key objectives are to discuss perspectives, and seek inputs and recommendations:

To develop a comprehensive language planning and policy framework for Malaysia, including preamble, principles, and focus areas;

To foster national unity, social cohesion and collaborative social relations in Malaysia;

To promote understanding of the forms and possibilities of language planning for fostering human rights, improved education and social cohesion;

To identify, define and examine problems that require special attention, and to identify areas of capacity development in language and social cohesion planning;

To foster improvements in language learning in Malaysia;

To make a contribution to enhance and improve the educational lives of children in Malaysia.
**FOCUS: LANGUAGE PROBLEMS AND ISSUES**

We will be discussing our challenges in multilingual education, literacy, and languages development in Malaysia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>FORMAT</th>
<th>DETAIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM 9:00-9:20</td>
<td>Official Opening</td>
<td>Speeches of Welcome</td>
<td>Dr. Victor Karunan, Deputy Representative, UNICEF Malaysia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1 AM 9:30-10:15</td>
<td>• Self-presentations • Introduction to Workshop • Icebreaker • Visioning Exercise • Expectations for Friday</td>
<td>Facilitator presentations to whole group with translation World Café Tables with hosts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1 AM 9:30-10:15</td>
<td>• Child: 2014 • PowerPoint # 1: Facilitation &amp; Dialogues • PowerPoint # 2: Methods • PowerPoint # 3: Our Agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREAK AM 10:15-10:45</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 AM 10:45-12:00</td>
<td>• Language Problems • Language Issues</td>
<td>Facilitator presentation: whole group Brainstorming General Discussion, whole group and with hosts at tables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 AM 10:45-12:00</td>
<td>• PowerPoint # 4: Language planning and policy • Facilitator: EBCS LP model; • components of a LP</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUNCH PM 12:00-1:00</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3 PM 1:00-2:45</td>
<td>Write Policy preamble</td>
<td>At tables with hosts</td>
<td>Child: 2021</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREAK PM 2:45-3:15</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 4 PM 3:15-4:15</td>
<td>Language Planning and Language Policy What can the community do? What can officials do? What can schools do?</td>
<td>Storyboarding language problems/issues with hosts at tables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 4 PM 3:15-4:15</td>
<td>Converting language issues/problems into a narrative. Organise and classify language problems. Tables to work on sets of problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 5 PM 4:15-4:45</td>
<td>Wrap Up</td>
<td>Facilitator to Summarise Day and Plan Day 2</td>
<td>PowerPoint # 5: Community/Expert/Official</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOCUS: LANGUAGE POLICY AND PLANNING

We will be building on the problems and issues raised on day one to write a consensus statement and model language policy. We will focus on multilingual education in schools and classrooms; multilingualism in the community; how children think and develop in more than one language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>FORMAT</th>
<th>DETAIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>AM 9:00-10:15</td>
<td>• Input on bilingualism in education and society</td>
<td>Facilitator presentation Q/A</td>
<td>• Power Point # 6: Mother Tongue, Bilingual Education, Language Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREAK</td>
<td>AM 10:15-10:45</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| #7      | AM 10:45-12:00 | • Merge Table LP drafts  
• Extend from Preamble to Goals of Policy | General Discussion, whole group and with hosts at tables | • Working with Day One records                                |
| LUNCH   | PM 12:00-1:00 | LUNCH                                         | LUNCH Hosts and Facilitator meet | LUNCH                                                         |
| #8      | PM 1:00-2:45  | • Begin Full merge of policy draft           | General Discussion, whole group and with hosts at tables  | • Display developing policy position                         |
| BREAK   | PM 2:45-3:15  | Coffee/tea break                             | Coffee/tea break              | Coffee/tea break                                              |
| #9      | PM 3:15-4:45  | • Complete model policy draft  
• Present to whole group | With hosts at tables in whole group session led by facilitator | • Presentations from hosts or table reporters                |
Appendix 7:
Agenda Kota Kinabalu Facilitated Dialogue, 7–8 May 2014

Language, Education and Social Cohesion Malaysia

Facilitated Dialogue under the auspices of the UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Program; Language Education and Social Cohesion Initiative

Dates: 7–8 May, 2014
Location: Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

Facilitator and Chair: Professor Joseph Lo Bianco

Selamat Datang
欢迎
தமிழ் வரவு
Welcome
Aims and Objectives

The workshop will function along the lines of a World Café, meaning an open-ended exploratory solutions-seeking facilitated dialogue. Key objectives are to discuss perspectives, and seek inputs and recommendations:

To develop a comprehensive language planning and policy framework for Malaysia, including preamble, principles, and focus areas;

To foster national unity, social cohesion and collaborative social relations in Malaysia;

To promote understanding of the forms and possibilities of language planning for fostering human rights, improved education and social cohesion;

To identify, define and examine problems that require special attention, and to identify areas of capacity development in language and social cohesion planning;

To foster improvements in language learning in Malaysia;

To make a contribution to enhance and improve the educational lives of children in Malaysia.
# Agenda, Day One
**Wednesday, 7 May 2014**

**FOCUS: LANGUAGE PROBLEMS AND ISSUES**

We will be discussing our challenges in multilingual education, literacy, and languages development in Sabah.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
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<th>DETAIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AM 9:00-9:20</td>
<td>Official Opening</td>
<td>Speeches of Welcome</td>
<td>Dr. Anuar Abdul Muthalib</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>AM 9:30-10:15</td>
<td>• Self-presentations</td>
<td>Facilitator presentations</td>
<td>• Child: 2014&lt;br&gt;• PowerPoint # 1: Facilitation &amp; Dialogues&lt;br&gt;• PowerPoint # 2: Methods&lt;br&gt;• PowerPoint # 3: Our Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduction to Workshop</td>
<td>to whole group with translation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Icebreaker</td>
<td>World Café Tables</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Visioning Exercise</td>
<td>with hosts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Expectations for Friday</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREAK</td>
<td>AM 10:15-10:45</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>AM 10:45-12:00</td>
<td>• Language Problems</td>
<td>Facilitator presentation: whole group</td>
<td>• PowerPoint # 4: Language planning and policy&lt;br&gt;• Facilitator: LP model; components of a LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Language Issues</td>
<td>Brainstorming General Discussion, whole group and with hosts at tables</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUNCH</td>
<td>PM 12:00-1:00</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3</td>
<td>PM 1:00-2:45</td>
<td>Write Policy preamble</td>
<td>At tables with hosts</td>
<td>Child: 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREAK</td>
<td>PM 2:45-3:15</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 4</td>
<td>PM 3:15-4:15</td>
<td>Language Planning and Language Policy</td>
<td>Storyboarding language problems/i</td>
<td>Converting language issues/problems into a narrative. Organise and classify language problems. Tables to work on sets of problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What can the community do?</td>
<td>isues with hosts at tables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What can officials do?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What can schools do?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 5</td>
<td>PM 4:15-4:45</td>
<td>Wrap Up</td>
<td>Facilitator to Summarise Day and Plan Day 2</td>
<td>PowerPoint # 5: Community/Expert/Official</td>
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</table>
### Agenda, Day Two
#### Thursday, 8 May 2014

**FOCUS: LANGUAGE POLICY AND PLANNING**

We will be building on the problems and issues raised on day one to write a consensus statement and model language policy. We will focus on multilingual education in schools and classrooms; multilingualism in the community; how children think and develop in more than one language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION</th>
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<th>DETAIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>AM 9:00-10:15</td>
<td>• Input on bilingualism in education and society</td>
<td>Facilitator presentation Q/A</td>
<td>• Power Point # 6: Mother Tongue, Bilingual Education, Language Learning</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREAK</td>
<td>AM 10:15-10:45</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>AM 10:45-12:00</td>
<td>• Merge Table LP drafts • Extend from Preamble to Goals of Policy</td>
<td>General Discussion, whole group and with hosts at tables</td>
<td>• Working with Day One records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUNCH</td>
<td>PM 12:00-1:00</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
<td>LUNCH Hosts and Facilitator meet</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>PM 1:00-2:45</td>
<td>• Begin Full merge of policy draft</td>
<td>General Discussion, whole group and with hosts at tables</td>
<td>• Display developing policy position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREAK</td>
<td>PM 2:45-3:15</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>PM 3:15-4:45</td>
<td>• Complete model policy draft • Present to whole group</td>
<td>With hosts at tables in whole group session led by facilitator</td>
<td>• Presentations from hosts or table reporters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 8:
Feedback summary from Kota Kinabalu Facilitated Dialogue

- 88% of participants strongly agreed that the facilitator was well prepared and knowledgeable
- 88% of the participants strongly agreed that the facilitator was effective in creating a positive learning environment
- 71% of participants strongly agreed that they will be able to use what they learned in the workshop
- 65% of participants rated the workshop overall as excellent / 94% of participants rated the workshop as very good or excellent

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question (17 responses)</th>
<th>% neutral</th>
<th>% agreed</th>
<th>% strongly agreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was able to contribute my skills/knowledge and experience to the discussions</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content was relevant to my work</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the workshop objectives were achieved</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will be able to use what I learned in this workshop</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was well informed about the workshop</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The workshop objectives were clear to me</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The workshop activities stimulated my learning</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The workshop activities provided me with sufficient practice and feedback</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The difficulty level of this workshop was appropriate</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pace of this workshop was appropriate</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facilitator was well prepared and knowledgeable</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facilitator was effective in creating a positive learning environment</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The workshop venue was conducive to learning</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall assessment of the workshop (one blank response)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. What session did you most like and why?

- The group discussion; can gain people experience based on what they are working for
- The last session, because I learned more about an area very relevant to my work (domain of MLE, early childhood education in MT)
- The practical group participation and discussion around the language planning, to come up with a policy planning
- I enjoyed the last session because it gave a broad overview of research on bilingualism with relevant examples
- Group discussion to write up the policy; input from trainer and other group members; different perspective from MOE, community and ethnic leaders
- All sessions
- Session – problems to be solved
- I’ve enjoyed all the session; session that I like the most is when listing all the language problems and issues. I think it is not enough to collection the info which only a few stakeholders involved because some of the group are not represented
- The second day was better and more interactive
- I enjoyed all the sessions equally
- The reflection sections regarding the 3 points; The where is my kid/child at a certain year; The Zomia activity; The scaffolding provided helps I + 1 and creates a positive, effective ZPD for me to achieve the objectives of the workshop
- Brainstorming activity – really helpful to open up mind and thinking more deeper into the topic given
- Language problems – was able to hear many different and personal problems that people face while at the same time, able to provide some input regarding the problems I face with language myself
- The 2nd day most very interesting, because more discussion about the difficulties of learning language
- Facilitator presentations, policy sessions = inspiring – informative

16. Which sessions did you like the least and why?

- 1st day – just because maybe was just the starting day
- The input sessions – not of the content but the sequence it was presented seems to disrupt the flow. It took some time to return the input to the workshop activities
- Writing a preamble to the chief minister because I don’t have an idea how to express the feeling/opinion in the paper
- Language policy and planning
- Language policy and planning
- When we were asked to write letter to Sabah’s chief minister. Haven’t been writing for so long – suggestion – do as pair work – give more time for us to discuss.
- The promise child exercise as it is quite a new concept and haven’t fully grasped it in such a short time. More explanation and time needed.
- Drafting a message to the chief minister – I am not clear what the value of this was
17. What additional follow-up or information would you like? Anything else you would like us to share about the facilitated dialogue/workshop and/or LESC study?

- The statistic based on MT and domain language in rural areas
- Will there be any communication with workshop participants regarding outcomes of this study – what was submitted to the MOE, what the response was, etc?
- Not really. All these concepts and ideas were very new to me and need to slowly digest and research on my own
- A bibliography of resources on the topic
- Having an ice-breaker (some game) so some participants are awake; a video example regarding these problems; can do a workshop with each group ethnicity in the Sabah
- I would like to get a copy of the presentation by Prof. Joe Lo Bianco What next?
- If we can have the copy of the powerpoint slides used before or after each session
- I would appreciate the outcome of the FD/workshop/LESC study to see how far the input from the 3 regional workshop has effect on the national language policy and planning
- Hoping the future that there will be more workshop such like this and also try to invite more participation from different parties, groups, government, NGO and so on; overall – this workshop is very helpful to me and very appropriate to my current job/ workshop; UNICEF did a great job!! TQ very much.
- Not anything at the moment. I was well informed.
- Materials and more for educational language
Appendix 9: 
Agenda Kuching Facilitated Dialogue, Sarawak, 27–28 August 2014

Language, Education and Social Cohesion Malaysia
Facilitated Dialogue under the auspices of the UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Program; Language Education and Social Cohesion Initiative

Dates: 27–28 August, 2014
Location: Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia

Facilitator and Chair: Professor Joseph Lo Bianco

Selamat Datang
欢迎
_press barrage
Welcome
Aims and Objectives

The workshop will function along the lines of a World Café, meaning an open-ended exploratory solutions-seeking facilitated dialogue. Key objectives are to discuss perspectives, and seek inputs and recommendations:

To develop a comprehensive language planning and policy framework for Malaysia, including preamble, principles, and focus areas;

To foster national unity, social cohesion and collaborative social relations in Malaysia;

To promote understanding of the forms and possibilities of language planning for fostering human rights, improved education and social cohesion;

To identify, define and examine problems that require special attention, and to identify areas of capacity development in language and social cohesion planning;

To foster improvements in language learning in Malaysia;

To make a contribution to enhance and improve the educational lives of children in Malaysia.
**Agenda, Day One**  
**Wednesday, 27 August 2014**

**FOCUS: LANGUAGE PROBLEMS AND ISSUES**

We will be discussing our challenges in multilingual education, literacy, and languages development in Sarawak.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>FORMAT</th>
<th>DETAIL</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM 9:00-9:20</td>
<td>Official Opening</td>
<td>Speeches of Welcome</td>
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| #1      | AM 9:30-10:15 | • Self-presentations  
• Introduction to Workshop  
• Icebreaker  
• Visioning Exercise  
• Expectations for Friday | Facilitator presentations to whole group with translation  
World Café Tables with hosts | • Child: 2014  
• PowerPoint # 1: Facilitation & Dialogues  
• PowerPoint # 2: Methods  
• PowerPoint # 3: Our Agreement |
| BREAK   | AM 10:15-10:45 | Coffee/tea break                          | Coffee/tea break                            | Coffee/tea break |
| #2      | AM 10:45-12:00 | • Language Problems  
• Language Issues | Facilitator presentation: whole group  
Brainstorming  
General Discussion, whole group and with hosts at tables | • PowerPoint # 4: Language planning and policy  
• Facilitator: LP model;  
• components of a LP |
| LUNCH   | PM 12:00-1:00 | LUNCH                                    | LUNCH                                       | LUNCH |
| #3      | PM 1:00-2:45  | Write Policy preamble                     | At tables with hosts                        | Child: 2021 |
| BREAK   | PM 2:45-3:15  | Coffee/tea break                          | Coffee/tea break                            | Coffee/tea break |
| #4      | PM 3:15-4:15  | Language Planning and Language Policy  
What can the community do?  
What can officials do?  
What can schools do? | Storyboarding language problems/issues with hosts at tables | Converting language issues/problems into a narrative. Organise and classify language problems. Tables to work on sets of problems. |
| #5      | PM 4:15-4:45  | Wrap Up                                  | Facilitator to Summarise Day and Plan Day 2 | PowerPoint # 5: Community/Expert/Official |
FOCUS: LANGUAGE POLICY AND PLANNING

We will be building on the problems and issues raised on day one to write a consensus statement and model language policy. We will focus on multilingual education in schools and classrooms; multilingualism in the community; how children think and develop in more than one language.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>AM 9:00-10:15</td>
<td>• Input on bilingualism in education and society</td>
<td>Facilitator presentation Q/A</td>
<td>• Power Point # 6: Mother Tongue, Bilingual Education, Language Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREAK</td>
<td>AM 10:15-10:45</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>AM 10:45-12:00</td>
<td>• Merge Table LP drafts • Extend from Preamble to Goals of Policy</td>
<td>General Discussion, whole group and with hosts at tables</td>
<td>• Working with Day One records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUNCH</td>
<td>PM 12:00-1:00</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
<td>LUNCH Hosts and Facilitator meet</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>PM 1:00-2:45</td>
<td>• Begin Full merge of policy draft</td>
<td>General Discussion, whole group and with hosts at tables</td>
<td>• Display developing policy position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREAK</td>
<td>PM 2:45-3:15</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>PM 3:15-4:45</td>
<td>• Complete model policy draft • Present to whole group</td>
<td>With hosts at tables In whole group session led by facilitator</td>
<td>• Presentations from hosts or table reporters</td>
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Appendix 10: Feedback summary from Kuching Facilitated Dialogue

- 92% of participants strongly agreed that the facilitator was well prepared and knowledgeable
- 84% of the participants strongly agreed that the facilitator was effective in creating a positive learning environment
- 76% of participants strongly agreed that the workshop venue was conducive to learning
- 64% of participants rated the workshop overall as excellent and 100% of participants rated the workshop as very good or excellent

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question (25 responses)</th>
<th>%neutral</th>
<th>% agreed</th>
<th>% strongly agreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was able to contribute my skills/knowledge and experience to the discussions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content was relevant to my work</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the workshop objectives were achieved</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will be able to use what I learned in this workshop</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was well informed about the workshop</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The workshop objectives were clear to me</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The workshop activities stimulated my learning</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The workshop activities provided me with sufficient practice and feedback</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The difficulty level of this workshop was appropriate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pace of this workshop was appropriate</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facilitator was well prepared and knowledgeable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facilitator was effective in creating a positive learning environment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The workshop venue was conducive to learning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall assessment of the workshop (one blank response)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. What session did you most like and why?

- Session 6 on Mother tongue learning.
- The sessions relating to the ways in which children learn languages and how policy can be shaped accordingly.
- Sessions on how policy needs to include teaching ethnic languages in schools.
- Session two on Brainstorming and general discussions.
- All sessions.
- Sessions 7, 8 and 9.
- Presentations by Professor Lo Bianco.
- The session on bilingual education because of its widespread relevance and application
- The sessions on language planning and writing language policy.
- The facilitated group discussions as they created a friendly and tolerant atmosphere in which to discuss issues on education.
- The importance of scaffolding in language education.

16. Which sessions did you like the least and why?

- The group discussions could be clearer with written guidelines to steer participants through debate.
- None – all sessions were relevant, stimulating, and engaging.
- Session 9 about policy was less interesting than the other sessions.
- Found the activity on the child writing a letter difficult to understand and follow.
- Impact of bilingualism in education was a bit too technical and hard to understand.
- Hand outs from facilitators would be useful.

17. What additional follow-up or information would you like? Anything else you would like us to share about the facilitated dialogue/workshop and/or LESC study?

- This facilitated dialogue should be introduced to NGOs in Sarawak with the same facilitators.
- It would be helpful if printouts of the slides were given to the group along with copies of the presentations.
- Add another day to better prepare and revise.
- More detail provided as to how ethnic languages can be integrated into National language policies.
- UNICEF should conduct this kind of workshop more frequently in the area and invite us to join international conferences.
- Handouts need to be provided, particularly in the more technical and detailed sessions like those concerning language policy and planning.
- More discussion on social cohesion and language, as well as debates on national dialogues and national unity, particularly in the context of Malaysia.
- UNICEF/UNESCO should organise and facilitate the second ‘Indigenous Peoples’ Conference on Education.
• More on learning and teaching models concerning multilingualism
• More time to go through the process of language policy planning.
• Set up workshops for parents to initiate vernacular education in the home.
• Email copies of presentations to the participants so they can review and refer to the workshops.
• More case studies of how multilingual education works in different contexts.
• Another session of how to implement action plans once problems have been identified in the context of Sarawak.
• Reports on the role of education in shaping children's lives.