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of Education for All (APPEAL)

Mother Tongue-based Literacy Programmes

Case Studies of Good Practice in Asia



Mother Tongue-based Literacy Programmes:

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Foreword

Education for All Goal 6 focuses on the quality of education. Quality education also involves imparting universally recognized moral values to the individual and integrating these with the ethnic-specific eco-centric values, cultural norms, and worldview. If these are not in place in an education system, a gap between the education system and the society will arise. This gap is often a result of using a language other than the language of the society in providing education. Curricula, syllabi, teaching methodologies and lesson contents that are not suited to the community situation and a society's needs contribute to this gap. The outcome is often an increase in the school dropout rate among minority linguistic and less-privileged communities.

Realizing the importance of mother tongue/bilingual education to improve the quality and reach of education, the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) at UNESCO Bangkok has been supporting eleven countries to establish mother tongue/bilingual literacy programmes throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Countries undertaking pilot projects include Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam, Malaysia and Afghanistan.

In a number of participating countries, the project is showing promising results following work done to develop orthographies for the different languages, create socio-cultural- specific curriculum and teaching-learning materials, and organizing classes for adults and children. The country experiences from the project show that the classes are very effective in transferring knowledge, skills and attitude to learners and the learner can learn desired skills faster in their mother tongue.

This publication, "Mother Tongue-based Literacy Programmes: Case Studies of Good Practice in Asia" presents success stories from mother tongue-based literacy programmes in seven Asian countries. It is divided into two parts. Part I provides a synthesis of the seven case studies as it discusses the different situations, strategies used and activities undertaken.

Part II features a more detailed study of each of the projects. Project organizers, themselves, have contributed these country project studies, which has allowed for the inclusion of much greater experiential insight into the projects. Part II covers elements such as selection of project sites, orthography development, curriculum and materials development, teacher training, organization of classes, resource mobilization, community participation, project impact, and future directions. It should thus be of particular interest to policy makers, planners and programme implementers from both formal and non-formal education department, as well as those individuals from non-governmental organizations who are involved in mother tongue/bilingual literacy activities.

People learn to read - to become literate - only once, and they build on that experience to learn other languages. It is our hope that this publication will help to create more literacy programmes that open the doors of education to much greater numbers of people.



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Acronyms

India

ZSS	Zilla Saksharata Samiti (District Literacy Society)
TLC	Total Literacy Campaign
PLP	Post Literacy Programme
CE	Continuing Education
IPCL	Improved Pace and Content of Learning
GZSS	Goalpara Zilla Saksharata Samiti
SRC	State Resource Centre
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SHG	Self-Help Group
RCH	Reproductive and Child Health

China

MT	Mother Tongue
PRC	People's Republic of China
TPR	Total Physical Response

Cambodia

RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
NFE	Non-Formal Education
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
ICC	International Cooperation for Cambodia
YWAM	Youth With a Mission
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Products
POEYS	Provincial Office of Education, Youth and Sports
EFA	Education For All

Thailand

NPKOM	Northern Pwo Karen Bilingual Education Project at Omkoi District
ONFEC	Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission
DNFE	Department of Non-Formal Education
CLCs	Community Learning Centres
CBO	Community-Based Organization

Nepal

NFIN	Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities
NFDIN	National Federation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities
ARNEC	All Round National Education Committee
NESP	National Education System Plan
NEC	National Education Commission

BPEP	Basic and Primary Education Project
CRED	Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
NCLPR	National Commission Language Policy Report
BASE	Backward Society and Education
VDC	Village Development Committee
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sports
SCF/US	Save the Children, United States
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IG	Income Generation
ARP	Action Research Project

Bangladesh

NFPE	Non-Formal Primary Education
NETZ	a German donor agency
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation
NOVIB	OXFAM Netherlands
UPA- ZILA	a sub-district
NCTB	National Curriculum & Text Book Board
PEDP	Primary Education Development Programme
RT	Research Team
R & SD	Research and Staff Development
PO	Programme Organizer
TADP	Tribal Adolescents Development Programme
PTI	Primary Training Institute
RDRS	Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (an NGO)
SSC	Secondary School Certificate

Part

I



Mother Tongue Literacy Programmes in Asia

A Review of Selected Case Studies

The Asia-Pacific region hosts several thousand languages. Linguistic diversity, which is characteristic of many countries of the region, presents a variety of challenges for the education system. What languages should children learn? Even more important: What language should be used for imparting instruction in schools? What factors direct the policy makers in formulating language policies? What would be more appropriate in pedagogical terms? These questions need careful examination for understanding the current state of language use in education for different countries of the region. Indeed, the central role played by language in processes of cognition and learning is a well established fact. Researchers and thinkers have unreservedly endorsed the crucial value of competence in the mother tongue, which children acquire in the most natural fashion as they grow and develop, for further learning and education. It is in the context of such assertions and mounting empirical evidences on the value of mother tongue in education that UNESCO emphatically stated: "...it is important that every effort should be made to provide education in the mother tongue ... On educational grounds, we recommend that the use of the mother tongue be extended to as late a stage in education as possible. In particular, pupils should begin their schooling through the medium of the mother tongue, because they understand it best and because to begin their school life in the mother tongue will make the break between home and school as small as possible." (UNESCO, 1951) Subsequently, the endorsement acquired the status of a "right" with its incorporation into the internationally established Convention on the Rights of Children. This Convention advocates education in the mother tongue at least through the initial years of schooling as a basic right of every child.

Apart from the issue of protecting children's right to learn through their mother tongue, mother tongue-based instruction is fundamental to achieving the Education for All (EFA) and Millenium Development Goals (MDG). It is true that within any country, linguistic groups outside the framework of the common or national language are relatively small in number and quite often consist of many heterogeneous subgroups. Logistical difficulties involved in providing education through the mother tongue are often the alibi for thrusting the national/common language on these children. Yet, taken together across countries, the number of children belonging to linguistic minority groups runs to several million. Ignoring their educational needs would undoubtedly jeopardize progress towards EFA. The question to be examined is, therefore, not 'Why isn't mother tongue-based education being pursued in all countries as a right of the child?'. Rather, the need is to understand and address through empirical work the question of 'How do we implement mother tongue literacy programmes given the existing socio-political and educational contexts?'. It is with the latter purpose in view that the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) supported research for case studies of seven mother tongue literacy projects in Asia. What follows is a brief description of how seven of these projects were conceived and carried out. As the contexts for these relatively small-scale action projects were significantly different, no attempt has been made to draw generalizations or to combine them in a common comparative framework. Rather, the approach has been to present snapshots of the contexts, methods and processes adopted by the projects, followed by a broad synthesis of the lessons emerging from these experiences.

Providing Quality Education for All

The modern school system - with its externally prescribed curricula, group-based instructional setting, and external examinations at various stages of education - tends to assume that children possess homogeneous backgrounds and experiences. This is particularly true with respect to the language of instruction that children may or may not know when they begin schooling. To what extent will such a

system accommodate diversity in language experiences? The answer to the question is often decided outside the school framework by political leadership. Language policy in a country is not necessarily linked directly to concerns of learning and cognition in schools, but they definitely define the contours of language learning and use in schools. Language choices are made by governments, both for practical and political reasons, and are not necessarily based solely on concerns for providing effective education. In multilingual societies, where the medium of instruction chosen is that of the majority, the needs of other language speakers are also an issue. Countries have to consider at what point or whether to introduce other national, regional and international languages into their educational systems. Their decisions will determine who has access to education, the quality of that education and whether minorities are treated equitably. Language choice is important, especially for basic education, because it is the basis for all further learning. (UNESCO 2000)

Many policy makers and scholars alike have expressed serious concerns over the negative impact of forcing children to learn through a language different from their mother tongue. This concern, coupled with intensive advocacy for the issue at various forums, has led to the articulation of the “rights of the minority language groups.” In a strict sense, the right to education that the Jomtien Declaration purported to guarantee for every individual should be interpreted as an obligation of the State to ensure provision of facilities for learning through mother tongue for every child. From this point of view, all governments and international agencies are bound to implement programmes that guarantee education through mother tongue for all children, irrespective of their majority or minority status. However, in multilingual settings, decisions about the relationship between language and education are not straightforward; instead, serious consideration is needed to determine which languages to use in education and literacy programmes. The same holds true in the Asian context. Most nations of the region are linguistically diverse and, thus, the issue of using different languages for imparting learning is of critical importance. (Kosonen, 2005; Shaeffer, 2005)

The concept of linguistic minority group rights has a long history grounded in the project of modernity during the nineteenth century, when having a national language became a defining principle of the nation-state. In providing the medium through which the narrative of the nation could be constructed, told and retold in literature, myths, rituals and symbols, the language by which the nation defines itself has played a key role in the social construction of a national cultural identity. The adoption of a common language is seen, generally, as providing an important means by which discrete groups of people living within the confines of the nation-state can be integrated into a common cultural value system (Rassool, 2000). With legitimization in national policy, these common languages are culturally validated through mass communication, educational practices and processes, and other administrative mechanisms (Hobsbawm, 1990). The link between modernization and use of a common language runs very deep. The concept of modernization grounded in the idea of rapid technological and scientific development demands that common languages are implicated in this process in the pivotal role of spreading ‘technologies and ideas through education and mass media’ (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1990: 25). This link, however, represents a double-edged sword. In addition to its potent symbolic value in the nation-building process, the notion of a common language also serves an instrumental purpose: it has an exchange value within the labour market. Thus, policies determining language use in education cannot be determined independent of political and economic consideration in any country.

Entrenchment of the common (majority) language politically and culturally becomes so deep over time that many Governments tend to consider the idea of nurturing minority languages as of little importance or even as a liability, and providing education through them is generally only done as a political contingency. The apparent legitimacy of the discourse of integration through common language invariably overshadows the need for offering scope for learning to minorities through mother tongue-based instruction. In practice, however, whether common languages necessarily integrate people into a common national culture remains a highly debatable issue. History has shown that common languages used to build particular solidarities can serve also to accentuate linguistic and social differences. They often set up linguistic barriers within social institutions and processes that contribute to the alienation and dissatisfaction of linguistic minority groups and, in the process, generate the potential for social disequilibrium. (Rassool, 2000, p.387) Hence, incorporation of the languages and cultures of traditionally subordinated groups often means converting systems that have long supported inequality into systems that are inclusive, democratic, and empowering. (Benson, 2002:304)

Undoubtedly, the colonial legacy inherited by many countries of Asia has further complicated the situation. Hornberger (2002:30) feels that to “transform a standardizing education into a diversifying one” presents an ideological paradox that challenges implementation of more culturally and linguistically relevant programmes. The paradox is invariably reflected in the educational transitions of many ex-colonial countries. Yet, the issue is not confined to former colonies. It also has an angle of development dependency that has emerged as a defining factor in the second half of the twentieth century. Peripheral states located on the margins of development operate almost like their former colonial neighbours as they remain largely dependent on resources mobilized by and from the bilateral and multilateral donors. This resource dependency gets inevitably reflected in their educational and intellectual dependency, notwithstanding the claims made on building local capacities in all programmes of external aid and assistance.

Pedagogic Considerations

Recent years have seen a rise in genuine concern over preserving the rich and diverse cultural fabric in the Asia-Pacific region, in terms of both its multi-ethnic and multi-lingual composition. It is well accepted that the key to such effort for preservation lies in promoting the diverse linguistic heritage of the people inhabiting the countries. One definite way of achieving this goal is to invoke mother tongue-based instruction to educate children. It is in this context that teaching through mother tongue in Asian countries acquires special importance. However, teaching through mother tongue should not be viewed only as a means of preserving a nation’s cultural and linguistic diversity. This methodology also has profound pedagogic value, as pointed out earlier. Furthermore, language learning is not merely an artefact of the school curriculum. It begins with birth, stimulated by the immediate social and linguistic surroundings, and continues throughout life. Mother tongue-based instruction is, therefore, the most natural and effective means of communicating knowledge and skills to children as they grow and participate in organized learning processes inside and outside the school.

The question of “how” to make education inclusive with respect to linguistic minorities has led to the formulation of bilingual and mother tongue-based literacy programmes. While bilingual or mother tongue-based programmes are often debated on sociopolitical grounds, it is also important to examine them on pedagogical and psychological grounds. Analysis clearly highlights many pedagogical advantages that accrue from adopting mother tongue for imparting instruction in schools. For instance,

it is well recognized that use of local language for instruction often leads to inclusion of more local content in the curriculum, which makes the educational experience of greater relevance to learners. Also, it opens up the possibility for greater participation of parents and community members as classroom resources (World Bank 2005). This, again, is an important consideration because many small linguistic groups generally live in remote locations underserved by adequate infrastructure and human resources. It should be recognized, too, that many children attending schools in these areas may be first-generation learners. In such contexts, use of local resources carries significant value both from immediate and long-term perspectives. Further, when instruction is in the mother tongue, teachers and learners can interact more naturally and negotiate meanings together, which greatly improves the effectiveness of the learning process. (Baker 2001: 238)

Of course, changing the language of instruction does not solve all of the problems of the school system. In a multilingual society, there are different attitudes towards different languages, different expectations from different languages and different uses for different languages. Balancing all these factors within the school curriculum means teaching more than one language or even teaching through more than one language that is deemed to be pedagogically appropriate and socio-politically acceptable. It is following such an argument that bilingual and multilingual education programmes have taken shape. These programmes require careful crafting in order to ensure that young children are not over-burdened. Most such programmes involve beginning with teaching through mother tongue and gradually transitioning to the standard language. One has to be careful because premature transition to the second language from mother tongue use can jeopardize a child's ability to master skills in both languages and, eventually, learn in any subject. These considerations are equally relevant in framing the curriculum for non-formal programmes of bilingual education.

Another caution is with respect to assessing the value of such programmes. Over-emphasis on learning outcomes as measured through standard tests can counter the very philosophy of teaching through the mother tongue. Mere test scores do not tell the whole story of impact. One has to recognize the newly discovered pride regarding minority people's home languages and cultures that accompany such programmes in a multilingual context. Real impact of this positive feeling on further learning is immeasurable. Furthermore, use of the mother tongue in the official context of school elevates its status and usefulness in the eyes of both speakers and non-speakers, which has the potential to improve social relations and political participation as well as education. Parents lose their fear of the school and overcome the sense of divorce and alienation from the larger society as they are finally allowed to use a language they speak to communicate with the teacher.

The Asian Context of Linguistic Diversity

The linguistic variety that one finds in Asia is astounding. This, indeed, is cause for celebration as well as a challenge. The expectation on education systems to contribute to the preservation of this linguistic diversity is quite natural and poses one of the biggest challenges for EFA progress in the region. The simple fact that just seven countries (see Table 1) are home to 1,644 living languages demonstrates the robust resilience of these linguistic sub-cultures because most of these countries have adopted a national policy with only one or two official languages. At the same time, it is important to realize that the vast majority of these languages are used for spoken communication only. Thus, there is a real risk that many of these languages may be eventually lost. As Table 1 indicates, a number of languages within the case study group countries have already become extinct.

Table 1: Linguistic Contexts of the Case Studies

COUNTRIES	LANGUAGES			LITERACY (%)		POPULATION #
	Official languages+	Living languages*	Extinct languages *	Male #	Female#	
Bangladesh	2	39	-	53.9%	31.8%	147,365,352
Cambodia	1	21	-	84.7%	64.1%	13,881,427
China	1	235	1	95.1%	86.5%	1,313,973,713
India	22	415	13	70.2%	48.3%	1,095,351,995
Indonesia	1	737	5	92.5%	83.4%	245,452,739
Nepal	1	123	3	62.7%	34.9%	28,287,147
Thailand	2	74	-	94.9%	90.5%	64,631,595

Source: * Ethnologue

www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/countrylisting.html

+ These countries also have national language(s), which in many cases overlap with official language.

For instance, even a relatively small country like Nepal has 123 living languages, but three other languages have either become extinct or remain only as spoken languages. Linguistic diversity is an equally big challenge in these countries, not only because of the complex logistics it demands, but also because of the sheer number involved. For instance, in large countries like India and China, even 5-10 percent of a population could mean more than 100 million people belonging to linguistic minority groups. No national programme of education can ignore this reality if Education for All goals are to carry any meaning. To what extent do the national policies on language use respond to the linguistic diversity characterizing the Asia and Pacific countries? This is explored in the next section.

An Overview of Language Policy

Bangladesh introduced the Compulsory Primary Education Act in 1993 with a view to achieving Education for All goals. Though free education - including free textbooks and a food-for-education programme - has been introduced to move in this direction, no particular attention has been given to the needs of the ethno-linguistic indigenous communities in the country. The situation is quite dismal because approximately 80 percent of *adivasi* (original tribal inhabitants) children drop out of school without completing even the primary cycle. This is often due to feelings of discrimination, poverty and problems of non-comprehension. However, initiatives have been taken in recent years under the auspices of UNESCO, UNICEF and SIL Bangladesh to create awareness about education among the *adivasi* communities and Bangladeshi society, at large. Various NGOs are also operating schools for the *adivasi* population in their own language, with a view to increasing their participation in schools and enhancing their learning levels.

The Indian Constitution recognizes 22 major languages as national languages. Each of these languages is spoken by a large number of people inhabiting one or more states, and are recognized as the official languages of those respective states. Linguistic minorities have to be, therefore, identified vis-à-vis the official languages of different states. Recognizing the need for special efforts to protect the interests of the linguistic minorities, the Indian Constitution states: "It shall be the endeavor of every state and of every local authority within the state to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage to children belonging to linguistic minority groups." Does this arrangement fully take care of the linguistic minority groups' need to receive education through their mother tongue? Not

fully. The constitutional commitment is only to create the scope, but it does not make it mandatory for the state education system to make necessary arrangements. The issue has captured the attention of some of the state governments, which have begun to experiment with bilingual education programmes in languages other than the official state languages. Such efforts are far too few, however, to reach the vastly diverse minority linguistic groups whose number runs to more than a thousand. Consequently, large numbers of children belonging to linguistic minority groups are compelled to receive education through a language different from their mother tongue. Further, quite often even facilities for learning their mother tongue are absent for most of these ethno-linguistic groups because they do not find a place in the 3-language formula adopted as the national policy for language learning in schools.

In terms of the official language policy, China presents a stark contrast to the Indian setting, though both have a huge population of more than one billion. The Chinese Constitution allows all nationalities the freedom to use and develop their languages, including the freedom to use the nationality languages as media of instruction where conditions permit. However, in many places, and for various reasons, the multilingual education implied in the Constitution has not been implemented. Though with demand for mother tongue-based instruction rising, China too has come forward with bilingual programmes. Having adopted a mono-language policy across the whole country for a long period of time, the situation poses serious challenges for policy makers in the country. The country has more than 200 living languages spoken altogether by about 4 percent of the population; Chinese is the mother tongue of the remaining 96 percent. As a result, education is transacted across the country in an essentially mono-lingual environment.

The Constitution of Nepal (1990) provides the right for every group of people to promote and protect their own language and scripts and mother tongue education. Successive education plans have also emphasized mother tongue education. Keeping these policy commitments in view, education materials for primary education have been developed in recent years in seven minority languages, namely Newari, Maithali, Tharu, Abhadhi, Limbu, Tamang, and Bhojpuri under the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP) I and II from 1991 to 2001. Studies have noticed positive changes among community members' attitude towards education of their children. Also they have been taking interest in literacy classes through non-formal education organized by local governmental and non-governmental agencies. An important aspect of this development is that most of the children and adults who are benefiting from the provision of mother tongue-based education belong to highly deprived ethno-linguistic groups.

The Constitution of Thailand states with regard to the rights of traditional communities and their cultures as:

"Persons so assembling as to be a traditional community shall have the right to conserve or restore their customs, local knowledge, arts or good culture of their community and of the nation and participate in the management, maintenance, preservation and exploitation of natural resources and the environment in a balanced fashion and persistently as provided by law."

(Government Gazette, 1997)

It may be noted that there is no reference explicitly made to the issue of minority languages. Indeed, the country essentially adopts Thai as the main language for all educational transactions in formal schools. This is despite the fact that there are more than 70 living languages that a sizeable number of people in the country use as their mother tongue.

The 1945 Constitution of Indonesia encourages people to use, develop, and preserve local languages. Nonetheless, the formal learning system in Indonesia generally uses only the national language for instruction in schools. However, a legislation *muatan lokal* (local content curriculum) was enacted in 1996. Use of the local language was among the topics included in the Act. This law opened the door to encourage bilingual curriculum development in the national language and the local language when a community wants to use the mother tongue. This acceptance got further momentum with the passage of another law in 2003, which states: "Local language can be used as the medium of instruction in the early stages of education, if needed, in the delivery of particular knowledge and/or skills."

The above summary statements on the policy situation in different countries highlight the varying contexts in which the mother tongue literacy experiments have been launched. Needless to say, the goal of providing learning opportunities for all in their mother tongue cannot be fulfilled without strong backing through national policies. Yet, local initiatives have a significant place in influencing the policy environment of any country. It is certain that well-demonstrated local initiatives can go a long way in building community support and demand for mother tongue education and thereby carve out a place in government policies. The value of the seven action research studies in Part II have to be viewed in this perspective.

Country-Specific Contexts of Bilingual/ Mother Tongue Literacy Programmes

At the theoretical level, it is an accepted fact that learning to read and write in the mother tongue is at the core of all literacy initiatives, and bilingualism (or multi-lingualism) confers definite cognitive advantages to learners in the long run. However, in reality, the minority child speaks his/her mother tongue at home, but learns to read and write in the dominant regional/national language. This was true for all seven countries under consideration. Also, it is important to note that non-dominant languages of a country cannot be considered in one basket. The actual geographical spread of language users and their size in terms of numbers are critical elements to be examined in designing any programme for mother tongue-based education.

With a population of 14 million people speaking an estimated 19 languages, Cambodia encompasses almost 30-40 ethnic minority groups (Gordon, 2005). The majority of this population is Khmer who speak the national language, Khmer. A significant number of indigenous minority groups, however, live in Cambodia's remote highland provinces. They are entrenched in widespread illiteracy, which restricts their access to the various development resources that are available to the dominant language group. The literacy rate among the adult population in the highlands is alarmingly low, at only 5.3 percent. Keeping this in view, the Government of Cambodia has supported several mother tongue and bilingual education programmes. Non-formal education programmes have also been undertaken by several NGOs over the last decade. The Highlands Children Education Project is one such effort focused on educating children in the Bunong language in four Tumpuen and Krung villages. The project has also set up non-formal education classes for Bunong people of Mondulkiri Province. In order to give official

legitimacy to these efforts, the orthography of the Bunong language (in addition to other languages) has already been approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

The situation in the state of Bangladesh is quite different from Cambodia. Ninety-eight percent of Bangladeshis speak Bangla, the national language. Among the remaining 2 percent, there are about 29 ethnic minority groups seeking government attention for their growth and development. The literacy rate among these communities has remained very low. According to the country's 1991 Census, only 14.1 percent of the tribal population is literate, and the rate for females drops to a low of 7.14 percent. At least part of the poor enrolment and high dropout rate among the tribal population can be attributed to vast cultural differences and language barriers operating within the schools. Schools simply do not have adequate numbers of teachers who can speak the children's languages. It is widely recognized that the use of Bangla as the medium of instruction in schools has placed the children from tribal groups in a disadvantageous position. A gradual erosion of indigenous languages is taking place, transforming many ethnic groups as bilinguals speaking mother tongue mutated with Bangla, and alienating the young from their own culture. Surprisingly, even the national literacy movements used only Bangla as the medium of instruction for all, irrespective of their ethnic and linguistic minority affiliation. It is in this context that the present effort marks a renewed recognition of the value of using mother tongue in imparting education.

The Indian education system officially follows the 3-language formula in an attempt to address the challenges and opportunities of the linguistic wealth in the country. The formula envisages that every child will learn the mother tongue or regional language, Hindi and English as part of school education. The National Policy on Education adopted in 1986 states that home languages of children should be the medium of learning in schools. But this has not effectively solved the problem of divergence between mother tongue and the language of learning in school for many children because most of the states in India have a multilingual population. The situation is even more acute in the northeastern region of the country, which includes the State of Assam, with a high concentration of diverse ethno-linguistic populations. While the official language of Assam is Assamese, there are about 23 ethnic minority communities that use 92 non-scheduled languages. Most of these linguistic groups do not have a script of their own, as is the case in Bangladesh. The Rabha ethnic community, for example, has a population of 236,931 who speak the Rabha language and use either Roman, Devanagari or the Assamese scripts. It is in this fragile linguistic context threatening the very survival of the Rabha language that the present action project on bilingual education has been implemented.

The study in China was conducted with the minority ethnic group whose mother tongue is Kam, while mandarin is the majority language of the country. The total population of the Kam-speaking community living in Guizhou Province of south central China is around 2.96 million. They are well-known for their cultural flamboyance and musical abilities. Even their speaking seems musical: the Kam language has nine tones, which means that many words can only be distinguished by the pitch of the speaker's voice. Kam has a strong oral culture that is rich in story-telling: myths, ancient songs, legends, folk tales, folk songs, long narrative poems, riddles, *shuochang* (which combines poetry and prose) and drama. Kam is one of several such minority language groups in China who feel handicapped due to the absence of facilities for learning through their mother tongue. Keeping this in view, ethnic minority communities have planned and implemented some interesting educational experiments; the Kam/Mandarin Bilingual Education Pilot Project is one such experiment. It is different from other countries' programmes because here the impetus has come from within the community, which gives a larger scope for active community support and sustainability beyond the present action project.

"If we stop using our language, it will be the end of our culture and tradition and we will lose all our identity as the Tharus of Nepal." These are the words of anguish and anxiety expressed by a native language facilitator in Nepal. In Nepal, the languages of minority ethnic people have remained unconsidered and underdeveloped for many years. Monolingualism practiced in school instruction continues to pose a serious threat to children from ethnically diverse contexts and conditions. 'Tharus' constitute a subsection of the larger indigenous group called Kirant, who belong to the marginalized category of Nepal's population. According to Nepal's 2001 Census, there are 1,533,879 ethnic Tharu (6.75% of Nepal's total population) of which 1,331,546 speak one of the seven Tharu dialects as a mother tongue. In recent years, there has been increased concern for the difficulties faced by minority language groups, and some attempts have been made to develop curriculum material in several of these languages. It is within this context that the Tharu Mother Tongue Literacy project has been initiated.

Thailand has 13.8 percent of its population who speak ethnic languages not related to the national language, namely, Central Thai. It is estimated that there are still around 74 living languages spoken by different ethnic groups in the country. With the Thai language as the sole medium of instruction in schools, very little opportunities are available for children to learn their mother tongue if they belong to any of the minority ethnic groups. In fact, the Thailand's EFA report for 2005 indicated that a very large number of children who are "out of school" are from ethnic minority groups. It is in this context that the current bilingual education programme for two Omkoi villages of Pwo Karen people in the mountainous northern province of Chiang Mai is taking place. This project has enjoyed a high level of enthusiasm both at the grassroots level and nationally, and has served as a model of success for duplication elsewhere in Thailand.

Although Indonesians speak more than 700 languages across the country, the country has one language of unification, Bahasa Indonesia. This said, mother tongue languages do continue to play an important role in Indonesian life as a valuable part of Indonesia's cultural heritage. Even though the overall literacy level and school participation rates in Indonesia are reasonably good, Kampung Cibago has a very low functional literacy rate and relatively poor access to formal education. The native language spoken in this area is Sundanese, which has a long historical base. These contextual factors provided the ideal background for initiating the Functional Literacy through the Mother Tongue programme in Sundanese.

The brief description of the contexts and conditions in which the action studies were implemented highlights that even though all the projects had a common agenda, namely, designing and experimenting with a programme of imparting mother tongue literacy, they had to contend with wide diversity for selecting the language and location within the country. In more than one way, the action projects could be characterized as efforts bound integrally to the local contexts. This makes it virtually impossible to attempt any synthesis of the experiences generated through them. In fact, true lessons from the studies lie in their uniqueness of contexts and contents. Even the design and choice of the target group (children or adults) as well as the mode of organization (formal or non-formal) were dictated by local considerations. Bearing this in mind, as already mentioned, this synthesis does not attempt to make any generalized observations; instead it attempts to capture the variety of mother tongue programme design and implementation by presenting snapshots of the action projects' different dimensions.

On the Selection of Language and Location

In Mondulkiri Province, Cambodia, minority groups make up 80 percent of the population. The largest groups among them are the ethnic Bunong, who speak the Bunong language and have a semi-nomadic lifestyle. This lifestyle seems to have adversely affected their pursuit of education and, consequently, Mondulkiri has remained the province with the lowest literacy rates in Cambodia. The formal school system in the province where national language is used as the medium of instruction is gradually improving; yet Bunong children who attend formal school know very little spoken Khmer. This has resulted in high student attrition and repetition rates. That the Bunong children contribute only an estimated 20 percent to the student population in both lower and upper secondary schools illustrates this alarming situation. Keeping in view these circumstances, the mother tongue literacy project decided to focus on the task of addressing the educational needs of those who failed to benefit from the formal school through mother tongue.

In Bangladesh, a survey done among the Oraon ethnic group found that Sadri and Kurukh were the main languages of Oraons; in fact, Sadri is the mother tongue for a majority of them. Understanding this, the action project was launched in Agholpur Oraon village under Godagari sub-district, where the average rate of literacy is 27.6 percent (32.3% among males and 22.6% among females). The primary objective of the action project revolved around setting up a laboratory school for the Oraon children and developing mother language education materials in Sadri.

The Rabha language project in India is located in the predominantly agrarian district of Goalpara in the southwestern part of Assam. The Rabha are the fifth largest ethnic community among the 23 listed communities of that state. This community is divided into eleven sub-classes, and among them only three sub-classes have retained their language. The other sub-classes have adopted the dominant regional language, Assamese, as their mother tongue. Through the survey conducted for the mother tongue project, it was found that a sizeable number of Rabha people had refused to join the literacy classes earlier because they were in Assamese. Thus, Rabha became a natural choice for organizing the pilot project in mother tongue literacy for adults through a programme of non-formal education.

The Kam literacy project was initiated in China's Rongjiang County, Guizhou Province. Two factors prompted the choice of location and language. First, it was strongly felt that larger social and economic forces encompassing the country were eroding much of the Kam language and culture that forms the foundation of Kam traditional society. Secondly, a large number of Kam students have been unable to complete secondary schools and enter the university portals. Thus, the mother tongue project was based on two learning needs identified for Kam children: (1) the need to acquire Kam literacy prior to being introduced to Chinese literacy, and (2) the need to learn enough oral Chinese prior to Grade 1 in order to help them "bridge" into Chinese literacy later. Given this background, the project focused on experimenting with a bilingual literacy programme in two Kam preschools and two primary schools. It is envisaged that the programme would be extended to more schools at a later stage.

The literacy project in Nepal targeted the Tharu ethnic group, which makes up approximately 38 percent of the total population of Dang district's 386,066 people. Though the average literacy rate for this district, located in mid-western Nepal, is 57.7 percent, literacy and levels of education among the Tharus remain very low. Thus, the main objective of the project was to impart literacy to adult illiterate groups in the Tharu language. The focus was on functional literacy so that the learners could use the skills as part of

their normal lives and communication. Notable, too, is the fact that the district had earlier offered its residents literacy classes in Nepali, but these had been met with considerable resistance from the native Tharu groups.

Indonesia has a programme of adopting local languages for teaching in the early years of the elementary school. However, only nine out of more than 700 local languages have local language curriculum for grades 1-3 of elementary school. This has led to low literacy levels and very poor levels of participation in middle and high school among minority children. One such location is the district of Subang in West Java, which has a large number of Sundanese speakers. Keeping this in view, the project for imparting functional literacy through mother tongue was launched to provide education to adults who have largely been left out of the formal education framework.

In Thailand, the Office of the Non-formal Education Commission (ONFEC) and Department of Non-formal Education have been involved in special education for the northern Thai hilltribes, for whom specialized curriculums were also developed. The programme was, however, conducted in Thai and did not fully benefit the tribes. Therefore, the current bilingual project in mother tongue was initiated in the remote locations of Nong Ung Tai, Huay Kwann and Salatey villages, where Northern Pwo Karen teachers and Thai teachers have already been working in the non-formal system. While the focus of the project was mother tongue-based education for children, by virtue of needing to create a written expression of Pwo Karen, the project garnered the enthusiastic involvement of the whole community. Indeed, this “trickle over” effect is an important characteristic of successful mother tongue-based projects, which serves to expand “ownership” of educational activities to all members of the targeted communities.

To sum up, one could say that many factors have influenced the choice of location and language for the action projects in different countries. These included the ethnic affiliation of the speakers of the language chosen, geographical distribution of the speakers, support and willingness of the community members to be associated with the projects, and level of effort already invested in such programmes in the locality. Besides these, an overarching factor was the overall national policy on language in education and the support and approval provided by the official agencies for implementing such an experimental project. This requirement was seen as critical for ensuring the sustainability of the project and taking it to scale based on the outcomes and impact. What shape did the projects take at the field level? What strategies were adopted to ensure effective implementation? What were the outcomes of the projects? Are there lessons useful for consideration when designing similar projects? And, what are the critical issues that need careful consideration in launching similar projects or adopting them on a larger scale? The following sections shall seek to provide answers to these questions.

Common Purpose but Differing Approaches: Orchestrating the Intervention

The common purpose that bound all seven action projects was two-fold – first, to promote acquisition of literacy skills in mother tongue for linguistic minorities and, second, to promote education through mother tongue-based instruction, particularly during the early years of schooling. It is recognized that these are long-term goals that demand engagement over several years and through a variety of programmes. The action projects presented here had these common goals, but the approaches adopted to move towards these goals differed. Such variations are not only inevitable, but even desirable if the

strategies have to be made contextually relevant and practicable. In this section, we briefly discuss the approaches adopted by the projects.

The project in Bangladesh focused on teaching through the Sadri language (mother tongue) in selected primary schools on the premise that offering education to children in Sadri would help them learn quicker. It also theorized that the children would then be better prepared to easily adopt Bangla following their completion of primary education in Sadri. Thus, it was clearly envisaged that children would learn both Sadri and Bangla in the early years of schooling, though Sadri would be the medium of instruction at the primary stage. Considering the eventuality of “bridging” the two languages, the project chose the Bengali script for developing literacy skills in Sadri.

A different approach was adopted in Cambodia to develop the Bunong orthography for use in bilingual literacy classes for youth and adults. Based on linguistic research done on Bunong dialect variants and studies made on the phonology of the language, a conscious decision was made to adopt the Khmer script for developing the Bunong orthography. As mentioned in the case study, the choice of the script was made based on Smalley’s Maximums¹ (Parkhurst, 1993). The approach was to develop learning material on a low- cost basis so that the programme would be sustainable. The literacy classes were organized at night in order to accommodate the work routine of the learners. Care was taken in designing the curriculum to meet the expectations of the learners by incorporating components of life skills, improved practices of agriculture, basic knowledge of health and hygiene, and preservation of traditions. Curriculum transaction was done through participatory methods involving reflections and discussions. Also, separate classes were organized for adults and young students to meet their varying expectations and styles of learning.

In China, the Kam language is written using Roman letters, which is based on a system of using the Roman alphabet to write Chinese called *hanyu pinyin*. This existence of an accepted orthography for the Kam language that had already been in use for nearly two decades facilitated faster implementation of the project. A Kam writers’ workshop for the project was organized to generate necessary texts and supplementary readers for implementing the mother tongue literacy project. As the project focused on young children, it started by adding a two-year preschool programme to the already existing Zaidang primary school programme. In addition, every day the five- and six-year-old Kam children attended two Kam language classes in the morning and two in the afternoon.

The Rabha language programme was designed as an adult literacy project within the framework of the national programme of literacy implemented by the Government of India. The programme was specifically designed to impart mother tongue literacy to the ethnic minority group in Assam who speak Rabha. The project adopted Assamese script (which is the state language in Assam) for reading and writing skills among the adult participants. The local District Literacy Committee implementing

1 Smalley’s Maximums: (1) Maximum motivation among the speakers: The orthography must be accepted and approved by the community, which is enthusiastic to learn it, to involve them in the process. (2) Maximum representation of speech: Accurately reflect the sounds of the language and peoples’ understanding of their language to ensure no ambiguity in the written form. (3) Maximum ease of learning: Represent sounds of the language in the simplest way to make it easy to read and write the language. (4) Maximum transfer to other languages: Script and spelling rules should be based on those of neighboring languages (most importantly the national language) in order to help learners transit from the mother tongue to neighboring languages. (5) Maximum ease of reproduction: Use minimum new or unusual symbols to avoid print problems. Ideally the language should be able to be written with existing computer fonts.

the project ensured that community members were actively involved in mobilizing learners. The Rabha primers were developed following the pattern suggested by the National Literacy Mission. The curriculum included such components as skill up-gradation, legal literacy, women's empowerment, Rabha culture, and local folk stories, as well as larger issues of relevance to the adult learners. Facilitators for the literacy classes essentially consisted of volunteers from within the community.

The Tharu language, which follows the Devanagari (Nepali) script, has the status of a national language in Nepal. The project focused on conducting literacy programmes for adults. The choice was prompted by the fact that considerable work had already been done by NGOs in preparing Tharu language textbooks and curricula based on an empirical survey in selected villages of Tharu-speaking people. Also, despite promotion of Tharu language use in primary education by the Government, literacy levels of adults has remained quite low. Thus, the action project was designed to capitalize on the existing policies and programmes, and not to develop a parallel programme for imparting mother tongue literacy for adult illiterates.

The Indonesian project carried out in Western Java with the Sundanese people faced a unique situation in the choice of the orthography. This is because Sundanese has a well-developed orthography - a writing system derived from the ancient Indian Sanskrit language that is known as *Aksara Sunda* (Sundanese script). However, *Aksara Sunda* is no longer being taught in formal schools and younger Sundanese people no longer recognize it. After a serious consideration of options available for a writing script - a choice between the original Sundanese script or the Roman script - a conscious decision was made to adopt the Roman script. There was a need to reaffirm the Roman script for writing activities (which also forms the basis for Bahasa Indonesia's writing system), while at the same time helping learners to recognize and be fully aware of the fact that an ancient script had been in use. Thus, learners were exposed to the Sundanese script, too, which had the effect of inducing greater enthusiasm and appreciation for their Sundanese cultural identity.

A unique method was adopted to develop orthography in the Thai project, which took into consideration more than a dozen Pwo-Karen scripts available pertaining to different regions. The scripts were largely based on the sounds of the words, rather than following a single style of writing. The project therefore took up the task of preparing a word list and recording them, looking for the sounds that were responsible for the different meanings of words (minimal pairs) in order to determine the consonants, vowels and tones of Northern Pwo Karen. Later, an appropriate Thai script representation for each Pwo Karen sound was chosen (including several sounds not found in Thai which required special symbols). This unique approach of deriving a script for the native language has created enthusiasm among community members for learning and preserving the language. The complex technical procedure also brought together the Office of Non-formal Education and Payap University in production of learning material.

Table 2: Overview of Project Elements

	Province/ Region	Ethnic Group	Language	Target Group	Nature of Programme
Bangladesh	Godagiri Upzilla	Oraon	Sadri	Children	Formal School
Cambodia	Mondulkiri	Bunong	Bunong	Youth and Adults	Non-formal Programme
China	Guizhou		Kam	Children	Formal School
India	Goalpara	Rabha	Rabha	Adults	Non-formal Programme
Indonesia	Subang District, West Java	Sundanese	Sundanese	Adults	Non-formal Programme
Nepal	Dang District	Tharu	Tharu	Adults	Non-formal Programme
Thailand	Northern Region	Northern Thai Hilltribe	Northern Pwo Karen	Children	Non-formal Programme

A quick review of the approaches adopted in different projects for deciding on the location of the project, choice of particular language to work with and choice of script for writing highlights the complex nature of these mother tongue-based instruction programmes. Project organizers had not only to contend with the issue of difficult technical issues, but also to be pragmatic in making it acceptable within the framework of the national language policy. Generally, of mother tongue literacy projects or experiments in using bilingual literacy programmes have been done with adult literacy programmes. In the present case, also, four of the seven projects focused on adult literacy. This is possibly because literacy programmes are more flexible and provide greater space for experimentation. Also, being non-formal and often non-linked to any prescribed curriculum and certification requirement, they can be designed and managed locally, unlike school-based programmes. Introducing formalized education in the mother tongue demands that a project arrange for the children to negotiate a smooth transition into learning through the national/majority language as they move up the school ladder. In this context, two action projects – Sadri in Bangladesh and Kam in China - should be of special interest as they demonstrate the ways and means of implementing mother tongue literacy and teaching through mother tongue in minority languages.

Curriculum Development and Training

One of the most challenging tasks in designing and implementing any programme for mother tongue literacy or bilingual education is that of developing suitable learning material. In the mainstream language, one would invariably find graded material for different categories of learners. However, for minority languages one has to start from scratch with no benchmarks on age- and grade-specific learning material. This was a challenge faced by the implementers of all the projects reviewed here.

The languages chosen in the seven cases were in different states of development. Some of them, such as Bunong in Cambodia and Sundanese in Indonesia, had well-developed scripts of their own. Absence of the script in some cases made it relatively easy to adopt the script of the majority language for developing learning material; the situation was even more complex in some other cases such as for the Kam in China. The organizers had to innovate uniquely appropriate procedures and make careful choices in each case. A critical question that had to be examined was the relative value addition it brought in reviving old scripts, if available, in comparison to using vastly available resources for producing material in the majority language script.

Also, it was important to identify and incorporate linguistically and culturally relevant symbols, images and metaphors for teaching different contents through the mother tongue medium. As already noted, the minority languages invariably have unique histories linked to specific minority ethnic groups. The challenge is to determine the right balance in presenting learning subject matter via these historical connections on the one hand, and via current concerns and developments that are captured through the majority language texts, on the other. With a view to addressing this sensitive question, the project implementers recognized that solutions for such issues have to be locally orchestrated by involving the community members – active speakers of the native language.

A third issue to be addressed in the preparation of teaching-learning material and training of teachers was related to the nature of the programmes and the target groups the projects addressed. In some cases, the projects were organizing non-formal programmes with the objective of imparting mother tongue literacy skills to adults through suitably designed literacy curricula. This, indeed, was the case in Cambodia, India, Nepal, and Indonesia. The organizers had considerable freedom in deciding the level at which the material was to be pitched and the nature of the contents to be included. However, the projects that attempted to address children in formal school settings had a bigger challenge to face. In these cases, the learning material had to be carefully graded so as to be comparable with those nationally defined for the children learning through the mainstream language, especially in terms of language proficiency levels and competencies in various subject areas.

Thus, developers of the mother tongue literacy projects had to address a number of critical questions: Who will write the material? What kind of preparatory work has to be done for producing the learning material? Should original material be written or could translated material from the main language be used? How should one ensure that local stories and contexts are built into the texts being produced? What steps should be taken to ensure the comparability of competencies represented by the texts in mother tongue with the national-level curricular prescription? Who will teach through the mother tongue? How do we ensure that the teachers, who themselves have not studied through mother tongue, would be able to do justice to the language in their teaching? What kind of training should the teachers be given? There were no straightforward answers to these questions that could be applied to all the contexts. They had to be, in fact, addressed in innovative ways in each of the projects. The following paragraphs highlight some of the unique efforts undertaken to address these questions in different projects.

The Bangladesh project, which chose to focus at the primary school level, had to carefully examine the policies of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board for primary education, which lays strong emphasis on development of core learning skills such as reading, writing, arithmetic and life skills. The first challenge faced was to identify writers from within the Oraon community who could develop and write stories and learning materials. An illustrator added appropriate pictures to the texts to reflect *adivasi* culture, tradition and practices. It was ensured that the primers were graded to suit the age and developmental stage of the children. To make them engaging, the primers also included original stories and narratives of local specific personal experiences; songs, poetry, traditional folktales, and local histories; information about geography and travel; instructional texts about health and religious, moral and ethical messages; and social issues of local concern. The texts and the illustrations were refined based on feedback gathered from the students and teachers before making it final. In all these efforts, people from the community were actively associated. A female from the community with requisite academic qualification was chosen and given intensive training to teach through Sadri in a laboratory school especially designed for the purpose. That training included subject-related instruction, pedagogy, child

rights and child-centred learning. Monthly refreshers were also arranged to discuss classroom problems and possible remedial measures for tackling them.

The Cambodian programme developed two kinds of materials – a primer and a story track to include the use of both phonics and whole language methods that would ensure wider community involvement apart from making the learning process more meaningful and interesting to the adult learners. The primer track, however, focused on accuracy using the phonics approach. The lessons included texts with controlled vocabulary that was built upon gradually. The students read the text and then answered comprehension questions through discussion and writing exercises. The participatory approach gave students the opportunity to write stories and adults the chance to share their traditional knowledge. Considering the complex objectives set forth, trained teachers, graduating from the teachers training college were chosen to pair up with community teachers who had knowledge about the community and the needs of the participants.

In the Kam bilingual programme, children were introduced to the Kam alphabet and to reading and writing Kam in the formal school. This was done by attaching 2-year preschool classes in the Kam language to the already existing Zaidang primary school programme. The instructional programme used two tracks similar to the Cambodian feature – a story track and a word-building track – with one 40-minute class for each track. The story-based primers were accompanied by pictures that illustrated the texts. Another genre of input was that of “listening stories,” intended for reading aloud to the children and with the children in order to develop their own creative ability in reading and writing stories. Through the word-building track, correct ways of combining letters into words, and words into sentences was demonstrated. Kam-speaking adults from within the local community who already knew reading and writing in Kam were selected and trained to teach in the preschools. Besides the Kam language, other subjects were also taught under the programme. Mandarin was also introduced through oral lessons at the preschool level to allow for easier bridging later. Many of the children would have otherwise seldom heard Mandarin.

The project in India was implemented by the District Literacy Committee of Goalpara district in Assam. The programme involved simultaneously running 70 literacy classes in the Rabha language to impart literacy skills to all adult illiterates. The Committee engaged 70 volunteer teachers to teach in these classes. The curriculum included topics on local environment, culture, promotion of small families, reproductive and child health, and gender equality besides imparting basic literacy skills in Rabha. Writers from the community and language experts from various institutions were involved in designing the curriculum and preparing learning material. The approach was to introduce words from pictures, rather than beginning with the alphabets. The primers also included contents on Rabha life and culture. The programme was phased in such a manner that the neoliterates who had learnt their mother tongue were introduced to reading and writing skills in the regional language, Assamese. The volunteer teachers were given intensive training, and the teacher-learner ratio was maintained at around 1:10, which made learning more personalized. In this way, the teacher could also monitor the progress of every learner.

The project in Nepal looked beyond imparting basic literacy skills in the mother tongue Tharu language to native adult speakers. For this, an extensive set of literacy materials was designed and prepared with the help of the local community members. This included translations of material in Nepali produced by the Ministry of Education. Also, a Tharu literacy primer, a Tharu grammar book, and a dictionary were published under the project. The literacy primer in Tharu integrated literacy learning with many issues that were considered relevant to the lives of the people, such as sanitation, family planning, and forest

conservation. Tharu traditional practices, customs and cultural heritage were also included. Specially produced music cassettes and posters made the curriculum rich and unique. It should be noted that the status of Tharu as an officially recognized national language in Nepal facilitated these efforts. The project could recruit experienced teachers familiar with local culture and traditions from within the ethnic group to implement the curriculum. This helped in the sustainability of the programme beyond the life period of the pilot project.

The project in Indonesia also addressed adult learners and a variety of materials were specially produced for the purpose. A Sundanese bi-monthly brochure called *Buletin Kejar* was a major component of the learning material, which included learners' own writings and ideas like short stories, letters, personal experiences, and columns designed to sharpen the basic literacy skills of about the environment, health, and collective entrepreneurship. The contents focused on generating business capabilities and meeting the everyday needs of the learners in Kampung Cibago. Publications in Sundanese generated renewed interest in preserving and using the ancient script to produce historical legends and songs. Tutors were selected to teach adults to read and write in Sundanese through the Roman script, the base for the national writing system in Indonesia. Guides were also selected and trained for educating the learners in Sundanese script. Tutors and guides were trained in such aspects as the general context of Subang district, social relations and cultural practices, management of learning and assessment, discussion and teaching techniques, and entrepreneurship skills. In addition, they were given intensive training to develop mastery in both the national and the local language.

The project in Thailand represented that country's first bilingual programme for imparting mother tongue literacy to ethnic minorities. Each community learning centre organized for the programme had one Thai and one Northern Pwo Karen teacher. Unlike programmes in the other countries, all the teachers possessed associate or bachelor degrees. The Pwo Karen teachers were assigned to teach the younger children, and the Thai teachers, the older ones. A series of workshops were organized to produce learning materials, which included primers, word card sets based on key words from the primer, an audio tapes containing traditional Northern Pwo Karen songs, as well as children's songs translated from Thai, and cultural calendar posters. A major problem faced during the project's implementation was the difficulty of retaining the trained teachers within the project because the formal school system offered better incentives.

To sum up, one could conclude that producing learning material and providing trained teachers to participate in mother tongue-based literacy classes is not easy. In terms of introducing mother tongue learning materials into the formal school setting, comparability with the mainstream materials poses a big challenge. Thereafter, arranging for a smooth transition into the mainstream medium of learning is even a bigger challenge. Some countries adopted translations from the main language. The Nepal example went further in producing a dictionary and a grammar book for the mother tongue. A major critical factor facilitating actions in this regard was the presence or absence of support from official sources.

Some projects drew technical support from experts working in universities and other higher educational institutions, as well as governmental Departments of Education. However, the case studies illustrate that the process of creating learning material that is interesting and culturally relevant to ethnic minority groups is a challenge, even for the experts. One could trace some specific trends, particularly in the material produced for adult learners. For instance, the Tharu language primers in Nepal and the Rabha language material in India reflected a Freire-ian perspective of empowerment and conscientization

of the disadvantaged. In contrast, the Indonesian material explicitly focused on equipping the adult learners with entrepreneurship skills to become competitive in the marketplace. But for these very gross characterizations, it is safe to say that the materials were generally designed to be compatible in perspective with the nationally prescribed material that was available in the mainstream language.

Finding teachers to teach mother tongue was also not easy. Invariably, for the non-formal literacy programmes, teachers had to be found from among the community members. More often than not, these people possessed minimal academic qualifications and had no pedagogic preparation. Thus, preparation demanded extensive training both in content and transaction methodologies. It was also necessary to ensure that the selected teachers were sensitive to the cultural concerns of the minority ethnic groups and felt positively about the value of learning through the mother tongue particularly since many of the programmes had very limited means (if any) to remunerate the teachers. The Thai project, for example, could recruit well-qualified persons, but could not retain them for long within the project due to the availability of more lucrative and geographically-comfortable jobs being offered through the formal education system.

Assessing the Impact

Protagonists of a monolingual national language policy do not accept any real benefit from studying learning through mother tongue. This is based on the argument that in any case all children will have to eventually switch over to the common national language for most of their public communication tasks. It is in this context that the pilot studies examined if any special advantages accrued to the individuals who underwent mother tongue learning programmes. In other words, did the pilot projects make any perceptible difference to the learners? This was not easy to ascertain. The seven pilot studies operated for a relatively short period of time and in widely varying contexts. Though the overall goals of the projects were similar, they were linked to local contexts of the particular ethnic/linguistic groups. Furthermore, in two cases studies, the learners were young children and it was not easy to assess what and how much influence the early mother tongue literacy learning has had on their development. Keeping these points in view, project impacts have been recorded in different ways and with respect to different parameters. This section gives a brief account about the benefits of teaching through mother tongue as observed under the seven projects.

A clear indication was that wherever the experiment was linked to early school years, it had a direct impact on the participation behaviour of children. For instance, the introduction of the Sadri mother tongue literacy programme for the Oraon ethnic group in northwest Bangladesh resulted in significant improvement with respect to attendance and retention of children in schools. In fact, the dropout rate among children became negligible with the introduction of mother tongue literacy involving graded materials for Classes I, II and III on literacy, arithmetic, social studies, physical science and English. Simultaneously, the community learning centres established in the project areas helped villagers to acquire, upgrade, and enhance life skills, livelihood and literacy. Preparation of structured material ensured that the effort could be extended to other Sadri-speaking areas. Also, the involvement of local people in the development process had a lasting effect on the community, significantly increasing the likelihood of the effort continuing beyond the life of the project.

The Cambodian effort of imparting mother tongue literacy did not remain confined to the Bunong community; even Khmer speakers began to learn Bunong. The Bunongs felt encouraged that their

language and traditions were being valued outside their own community. Interestingly, students who had remained practically illiterate were now learning some Khmer as they were discovering correlations in sounds and symbols after learning to read and write in Bunong. This encouraged some of the learners go back to the formal school. Community members considered that the skills acquired would make a major difference in their lives. Organizationally, employing local teachers reduced the costs and ensured community acceptance. On the part of the Government, there was greater readiness to get involved in bilingual efforts that targeted the northeastern provinces, both through formal and non-formal education

In the Kam programme of China, which was implemented in formal schools, headmasters were satisfied and convinced with the initial outcomes of the project in terms of improvement in learning levels of their students. The self-confidence gained by these students helped them outshine non-Kam students, even in extra-curricular activities. Another manifest influence of the bilingual programme was that mother tongue education had effectively reduced the burden of teaching to almost half. A special report from the Headmaster of Zaidang Primary School said that the average mathematics marks in primary classes improved from 42% to 79% before and after the project, respectively. Furthermore, initial results showed that the children who learned Kam did better in learning Chinese, as well.

The Rabha literacy programme in Assam, India, appeared to create several collateral advantages for the learners apart from their ability to communicate effectively using their mother tongue. For instance, one Assamese speaker who married into the Rabha group reported how the Rabha literacy class enabled her to communicate with her new family and community. This enormously improved the quality of her family life. The project also awakened the participants to their right to education, in general. Several women continued their learning of the Rabha language despite resistance from their families. As a woman learner affirmed, "My husband is not keen on my coming to attend classes as it upsets the household routine at times. But he cannot stop me. I manage to have my way and attend classes regularly." There is a rising demand among the women to get more written primers that illustrate their lives. The formation of women's self-help groups among the learners has also led to learning management of finances and cooperative work with others.

The Cibago people in Indonesia could be found using the newly acquired reading, writing and arithmetic skills in their daily lives. These skills enabled them to read Sundanese newspapers, fill in forms, and manage accounts of their home businesses. Some of them could even write newspaper articles. There was a marked improvement in their quality of life with active engagement in income-generating activities. Some of the well-established community learning centres involved in the project are seeking business partners for promoting home business among their learners. Cibago parents now encourage their children to stay in school, and a new preschool programme for mothers and young children has been put together. A major impact of the Cibago programme was the interest it generated in other areas of the country for beginning mother tongue literacy programmes.

Learner assessment done under the Tharu project revealed that the mother tongue literacy participants acquired proficiency in reading and writing skills. Besides, they also learned about life and livelihood-related issues; developed confidence to speak out before outsiders; recognized the importance of savings for the family; got opportunities to go out of the home to participate in development activities; and gained confidence in dealing with family issues. The participants have begun to demand the introduction of a bridge programme for learning Nepali so that they can benefit from proficiency in both the mother tongue and the official language.

In Thailand, participation in schooling is almost universal and therefore almost all people acquire basic education. It was found that learning Pwo Karen gave those individuals who were already learning Thai a better understanding and appreciation of both the Thai language and their own local ethnic culture. Project organizers have addressed the issue of imparting mother tongue literacy and formalizing the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the early years of schooling as the next step so that the pilot project does not become just a one-time effort with no follow up. This is definitely possible if the enthusiasm and involvement of the community members is any indication. However, it would require changes in school education policy and readiness on the part of the official authorities to yield space for such innovative efforts.

In the formal school setting, teaching through mother tongue was reported to have influenced learning, in general, and to have established a better foundation for lifelong education, in particular. Additionally, the programmes have also highlighted several benefits that were not easily measurable: they have undoubtedly contributed to the well-being of the participants by instilling self-esteem and by improving both social and economic quality of life.

Deriving Lessons from the Action Projects

The seven mother tongue literacy programme case studies represent efforts made in widely varying contexts in Asia. The variation is not only in terms of the linguistic context, but also with respect to varying political and social parameters. That most of the seven action projects have been carried out with specific ethnic and linguistic minority groups adds further value to the efforts. Projects have been implemented in varying policy environments – some supportive and some indifferent, even though all the projects were implemented with full involvement of concerned officials. Do these experimental efforts hold lessons for implementing similar programmes in other countries or in other regions, perhaps with different linguistic minority groups within a country? Are these efforts sustainable and could they be scaled up? In this section, we shall try to address these and other similar issues. However, at the outset, it should be noted that these are relatively small-scale efforts carried out for a limited time period. Therefore, they may not fully answer all the issues on imparting education through mother tongue or teaching mother tongue literacy. However, they certainly help gain insight into the dynamics involved in implementing such programmes. The observations made here should be viewed from this perspective.

The projects have clearly demonstrated that, with some support from the Government and with cooperation from the community, such programmes can be implemented in relatively remote locations and under difficult circumstances. They have also demonstrated how much the ethnic communities value their linguistic and cultural heritage. This is very clear from the overwhelming support and cooperation received in all the project sites from local community members. The question it raises is: Are the Governments ready to take forward the experiments which have fully demonstrated their value for the individual participants as well as for the society as a whole?

The projects have illustrated implementation of bilingual mother tongue literacy programmes in two distinct contexts – formal schools addressing children in the early years of education and non-formal education programmes that mostly address adult literacy needs. The non-formal programmes allow for greater flexibility in incorporating local contexts and contents because they do not have to be strictly comparable to a nationally-prescribed curriculum. The value of these efforts lies in their capacity to impact the life of the adults directly. They help revive and record the rich cultural heritage of the

ethnic and linguistic minorities and thereby create an institutional memory for posterity. The formal school channel also has several advantages because it helps institutionalize a nationally-comparable curriculum, create a standardized framework for teaching through mother tongues and orchestrate gradual transition to education using the mainstream medium. A message that clearly comes out from the case studies is that developing such efforts as stand-alone examples, however good they might be, is not desirable if disconnected from mainstream language-based programmes. Such efforts would run the risk of being forgotten after the project ends. It is with this concern that all the projects have involved the Department of Education – school education as well as non-formal education – in their design and implementation.

A major challenge tackled in implementing the projects was that of developing learning material for teaching in and through the mother tongue. The projects have highlighted the need for drawing on technical resources from universities and other institutions for developing learning material of good quality. Equally important is the involvement of local community members – native speakers of the language who hold a wealth of cultural and linguistic knowledge. Difficult choices have to be made at all steps of a project, which begins with deciding on the choice of the script/orthography to be used. In fact, the examples show that even the existence of a well-developed native script may not solve the problem. This is because the issue is not merely technical; it is a policy choice that has to be examined from a national political angle. Choice of contents to be included in the learning material is equally contested. Considering that these projects target minority ethnic communities, a high level of sensitivity and a sense of balance between tradition and modernity (as well as local and national) is required on the part of the material developers. The case studies present a rich set of experiences about the kinds of difficulties faced when developing learning material and the ways of resolving them.

Introducing bilingual literacy is not the same as introducing literacy in the mother tongue or in the mainstream language. It demands a new framework for teacher training. One has to look beyond the traditional framework of L1 and L2 teaching adopted for training of language teachers. Every one of the projects has found its own innovative solution to this vexing problem. That the projects have been done in such varying linguistic contexts should be of special interest for professionals and researchers engaged in linguistic explorations – structuring and sequencing of the language skills, integrating language learning with various content inputs, designing transaction methods, and so on. Understanding these aspects would, of course, require more in-depth studies of the projects. The case studies have, indeed, traversed some uncharted areas for pedagogues who generally focus only on classroom-based teaching-learning processes, functioning according to a nationally prescribed pre-determined framework. Finding suitable persons and training them as teachers to teach different subjects in the school through the new medium, even if it is their own mother tongue, was an equally big challenge. Apart from the technical task of preparing them to teach, it was essential to ensure that the teachers understood and appreciated the local histories, cultures and customs, on the one hand, and were aware of the national education policies and perspectives, on the other. Most projects engaged local community members and trained them to deal with the issues. This was not always easy. The creative solutions that many of the projects employed hold good lessons not only for other bilingual and mother tongue literacy programmes, but also for mainstream education programmes.

While the projects have effectively demonstrated the possibility of implementing programmes in mother tongue-based literacy, the task yet to be done is enormous. Each case study demonstrates the practicability of teaching through mother tongue in one of many living languages in each country. When

would there be projects to cover all the languages in any country? The task cannot be accomplished without active support, both in terms of policies and finances, from the respective national governments. There is a need for mass-scale efforts nationally and internationally to mobilize societal and political support for extending such programmes to cover all linguistic minorities. Successes achieved through the action projects in different countries of Asia would definitely be of great value for launching such a programme of political advocacy.

What is the current state of the projects? What has happened to those who underwent these programmes? These are legitimate questions, and they invariably invoke the issue of funding. Funding for continuation of a project is an important question, but it is not the only one. It is important to note that sustenance and continuity of such literacy programmes essentially depend, in the long run, on creating a robust lifelong learning environment. This would imply making available a rich source of literature to read and institutional arrangements such as public libraries, where mother tongue reading materials could be easily accessible. This demands investment to promote authors and creative writers to write and produce literature in minority languages. We have also to invest substantially in converting oral literary resources into written ones and preserving them for easy access. Modern technology could aid enormously in all such efforts.

The action projects reviewed here should not be viewed merely as experiments in the Education sector. They, no doubt, represent significant advancements in understanding the dynamics of introducing bilingual and mother tongue literacy programmes to children and adults in varying linguistic contexts. However, their value goes much beyond this. It should be noted that the participants of these programmes belonged to minority groups that are relatively disadvantaged. Educational progress among them is below the national average, and they live in regions that are relatively underserved and underdeveloped. When indicators from impact assessments of the projects are taken, they demonstrate that such projects hold enormous value by improving people's quality of life. They have tremendous potential as poverty reduction strategies – reducing not only income poverty, but also “capability poverty” through education that effectively empowers people to access developmental resources hitherto denied.

Finally, projects that preserve linguistic diversity and provide mother tongue education have also to be viewed as an integral component of sustainable development. Indeed, sustainable development does not consist merely of cutting down greenhouse gases or preserving the flora and fauna, it equally consists of preserving and nurturing human sub-cultures along with their ways and means of living. In this endeavour, minority group languages occupy a central place. Certainly, teaching through mother tongue in schools and other education programmes lays the foundation for any long-term national and international effort in this direction.

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Part





বিষয়: শামার বই

আজকা

BANGLADESH

A Mother Tongue-based Education Programme for
Children of the Oraon Community

Background

Bangladesh is a delta land, carved by the mighty rivers of the Himalayas and surrounded by the countries of India, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar to the west, north and east, and by the Bay of Bengal to the south. It is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with an average population of 834 per square kilometer. This population is ethnically and religiously quite diverse. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS 1991), 29 ethnic minority groups exist in the country. The small ethnic minorities live in 9,388 villages, which are spread throughout the country. The majority of them, however, live in the hilly areas. Many of the small ethnic groups have their own languages, and some have separate alphabets, too. Bangalee is the major ethnic group in the country, accounting for over 98 percent of the total population. Bangla, the mother tongue of this majority group, is named in the country's Constitution as Bangladesh's national language.

Like in many other countries of the world, aborigines in Bangladesh are often marginalized. The major issue the tribal communities face is ownership of land. This is particularly true for those living on the plains lands. A large number of them do not even have homesteads. Most of them are either share-croppers or work as day-laborers. With income being small compared to expenditure, the tribal people are forced to borrow from moneylenders and other rich landlords. Almost all adult women are involved in farm activities to earn income as along with shouldering household responsibilities. Health facilities for medical care, family planning, water supply and sanitation are very nominal. There are no constitutional safeguards accorded to the indigenous peoples. The relation between the tribal and non-tribal people often is not cordial due to socio-economic and cultural exploitation, abuse of human rights, forceful eviction from their homesteads and other causes. Their representation in the local government is almost negligible.

Education Status of the Tribal Communities

An extremely low rate and level of literacy largely prevails in the tribal communities in Bangladesh. According to the 1991 Census, only 14.1 percent of the population is literate. The situation of tribal female literacy is much worse. Their rate of literacy is only 7.41 percent, compared to 20.5 percent male literacy. (Biponna Bhumija by M.Kamal & A.Kibria)

Tribal children aged between six to ten years do get admitted to both government and non-government schools, but often eventually drop out due to cultural differences and language barriers. Enrollment rates of tribal children into primary schools are much lower than for non-tribal children.

In government/non-government schools, the medium of instruction is Bangla (the national language). There is no provision for using tribal languages in these schools. A very negligible number of teachers from the indigenous communities are recruited as teachers at any level of education.

Government schemes related to indigenous literacy and education are few and far between. Quotas are applied to minority ethnic groups for school admission, scholarships and the teaching profession, but these are not maintained properly.

Policies on Mother Tongue and Bilingual Education

The ethnic communities belong to diverse cultures with different languages and identities. Broadly speaking, there are three unique linguistic families among the tribes in Bangladesh. These are:

- i. Tibeto-Burmese: All the tribal people of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and the Garos, Kochs and Tipras
- ii. Austro-Asiatic or Mon-Khmer: Khasis, Santal, Mundas, Mahalis
- iii. Dravidians: Oroans and Paharis

Other tribal groups speak some form of Bangla. The Chakma and Tanchingya, for example, speak a language that is a dialect variant of Bangla. The Rajbanshis, Pahari, Kochs and Pathors have lost their original language, and primarily speak Bangla. In fact, almost all the tribal communities are now bilingual. They have learnt Bangla to communicate with the wider Bangali society, but they continue to speak in their own language amongst themselves.

However, there is no separate language policy in the country. Only sections have been incorporated into the education policy documents that emphasize the importance of mother tongue in primary education. Sadly, these documents only recognize mother tongues of the larger ethnic groups. Languages of the small ethnic minorities have been ignored in the policy documents for a long time. During the Pakistani regime, Urdu was given the highest priority, and then Bangla. At that time, all students had to learn Urdu from Class-III in the name of unity of the newly established State. In 1952, the first East Bengal Education System Reconstruction Committee (formed in 1949) submitted a report stating that mother tongue would be the only language taught at the primary stage, and that it would also be the medium of instruction. Two succeeding Education Commission reports, however, said nothing further about mother tongue-based instruction.

With Bangladesh's independence, Bangla has taken the place of Urdu and has been given the highest priority, while English has been emphasized as a necessary language for the world of work and globalization. The first Education Commission after the country's independence recognized that "language teaching in our schools is defective and unscientific.It should be removed soon. There is no need of learning other languages except the mother tongue up to Class-V." Here again, there was an allusion to the weaknesses of Bangla-based education for all, though in further Commission reports, no follow-up attention was given.

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) has never attempted to prepare textbooks in any other language. Literacy movements, including the TLM (Total Literacy Movement), have only used Bangla as the medium of instruction.

Though Government documents have ignored mother tongue-based education for small ethnic groups, Bangladesh has stated its commitment to achieving the goals and targets set internationally during the last fifteen years. These commitments include improving basic and primary education, providing quality education, ensuring a full cycle of primary education for all children, and achieving gender equity at the secondary level. Towards this aim, the whole country was brought under the Compulsory Primary Education Act in 1993. Free education, including free textbooks and food for the education programme, have furthermore been introduced to ensure education for all (EFA). Nevertheless, no particular attention has been given to the needs of the ethno-linguistic groups in the country for introducing a mother tongue literacy programme for indigenous communities.

As a consequence, literacy rates among indigenous communities remain very low. It is worth mentioning that a specific study on the status of literacy among tribal people has yet to be done. However, according to a survey in 1997 conducted by the Oraon Youth Formation Programme, the literacy rate is at its highest in Gaibandha (28.2%), followed by Thakurgaon (26.6%), Rangpur (18.1%), Joypurhat (17.7%), Dinajpur (17.6%), Shirajgonj (14.1%), Natore (11.6%), Chapai Nowabgonj (11.3%), Noagaon (7.7%), Rajshahi (5.6%), Bogra (6.2%) and Panchagar (5.2%). (Based on the findings of the Education Programme of Oraon Community as reported by Dr. Jalil on 25 July 2003.).

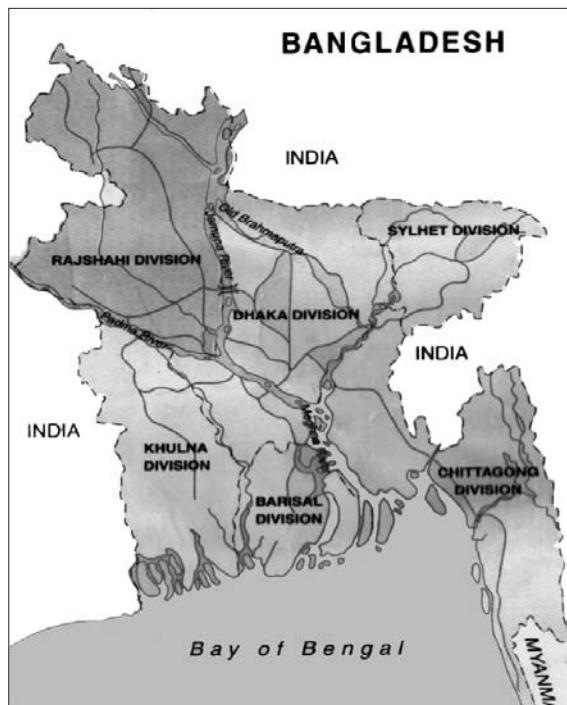
Strategies and Implementation Process

To address the problem of low literacy among the Oraon, in October 2002 the non-governmental organization ASRHAI launched the project, "Action Research for Developing Curriculum and Educational Materials for the Oraon Communities in the Northwest Part of Bangladesh," or Action Research Project (ARP) in short, with direct support from UNESCO Bangkok. The purpose of the project was to develop mother tongue-based education materials for the Oraon community.

Following an intensive survey, the research team selected Agholpur Oraon village under Godagari Upazila for the location of the project. The team set up a laboratory school for the Oraon children to conduct action research and to develop an MT literacy programme in one of the Oraon languages called Sadri.

The Oraon community of northwest Bangladesh is the second largest tribal community living on the plains of Bangladesh in a remote and rural area, Oraon people are found in the districts of Panchagar, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Joyopurhat, Noagon, Rajshahi, Chapainwabgonj, Natore, Sirajgonj, Gaibandha, Bogura in the Northwest and in Gazipur, Habigonj and Moulavibazar in the East. The density of Oraon people is also considerable in Rajshahi and Naogaon districts. Godagari is a densely-populated sub-district of Rajshahi.

Population of Godagari is 217,811, of which 50.88 percent is male and 49.12 percent is female. Religious affiliation of the population includes Muslims (86.55%), Hindus (8.05%), Christians (1.93%) and others (3.47%). Those of different ethnicities, including the Santals, account for 3,749 families. Average literacy is 27.6 percent, (male 32.3% and female 22.6%). [A.K.M Kaisaruzzaman].



Selection of Project Site and Situational Analysis

ASHRAI decided to address the language needs of the Oraon community primarily because there had been no earlier initiative to preserve and promote the Oraon's languages despite the Oraon being the second largest indigenous group in Bangladesh's plains region. Following this decision, an ASHRAI research team (under the leadership of Professor A.Jalil, Phd of Rajshahi University) undertook an extensive survey of the languages spoken by the Oraon, as well as the location of where each language was spoken.

The survey was done through the tribal students who were studying or had studied at Rajshahi University. The survey team was oriented on survey techniques and interviewing for collecting information and holding focus group discussions prior to their field work. Primary information about the concentrations of the tribal population, known as "Adivasi" in Bangla, and leaders of the communities were collected beforehand from different sources, such as organizations working with indigenous communities, tribal professionals working with different governmental (GO) and non-government (NGO) services and Adivasi staff of ASHRAI. Surveyors were supervised by the Chief Researcher and Sr. Programme Organizer.

The survey revealed the districts, as identified above, in which the Oraon are found. It was also found that the Oraon communities speak two different languages. One is Sadri and the other is Kurukh. Both are oral and having no alphabet of their own, but are used at home and within the scope of local day-to-day community activity. Further, it was observed that the overwhelming majority of Oraon speak Sadri, and only a section of the community that lives in Rangpur and parts of Dinajpur districts speak Kurukh. As a language, Sadri is spoken widely in different districts among the Oraon people, and many of the words are similar to Bangla. For instance, the word "mango" in English is called "aam" in Bangla and "amba" in Sadri. Also, Sadri uses some adopted Bangla words due to the Oraon people's long association with the Bangla-speaking communities. Indeed, many Oraon can either speak or understand Bangla well. Unlike Sadri, Kurukh is still in its original form and not easily understandable by the neighboring people; nor do Kurukh speakers understand Bangla easily.

The survey also identified:

- i) Key sources of information in the Oraon communities
- ii) Oraon community leaders
- iii) Oraon students reading in higher classes of the secondary level, colleges and universities
- iv) Oraon people working with GOs and NGOs
- v) Oraon teachers
- vi) Oraon singers and storytellers
- vii) village doctors working in Oraon communities

The research team leader, Professor A. Jilal, was a professor of Bangla who has published a book about the culture and life of the Oraon. Other members of the team included community persons and eminent educationists from various institutions in the country.

The team emphasized community mobilization and the participative approach for successful implementation of the project activities. For this reason, several community meetings were organized in different villages to explain the purpose of the project. During these meetings, community members assured the team that they would give their full participation and cooperation for developing literacy programmes in their Sadri language.

Orthography Development

During early decision-making about the project, ASHRAI faced two primary questions: which Oraon language to focus on and what kind of writing systems to use (neither Oraon language had a written script). To answer these questions, the team rightly decided to leave the selections to community members, themselves, to decide. Accordingly, ASHRAI organized a 3-day workshop in Rajshahi for community leaders, students, teacher/professors, GO and NGO Oraon professionals, and key information sources from all the districts of Rajshahi. The workshop was facilitated by the Chief Researcher.

The participants were very enthusiastic, and actively participated in discussions freely and frankly. After reviewing the pros and cons of all the proposals made during the discussion, participants unanimously agreed that Sadri should be chosen for developing their mother language-based education and for introduction into their children's primary education.

Decision on Orthography

Deciding the orthography or script in which the Sadri language would be expressed and written was a more challenging question. Language is very much associated with one's emotion, attitude, political belief/ambition, expectation and, above all, reality. Many discussions, arguments and counter arguments took place during the workshop. However, after elaborate discussions, participants agreed that developing a new alphabet or using a foreign script would not be helpful for learning nor advantageous for mainstreaming into the country's education system. Since the Oraon people had been living with the Bangalee community for generations and the Bangla alphabet was familiar to them, it was decided that it would better serve the children to use the Bangla script for Sandri. This would allow them to learn Bangla quicker and acquire competencies in Bangla-based education faster. This decision also made it easier for the research team to develop curriculum and educational materials in Sadri.

Identification of Learning Needs

Following the decisions regarding language and script selection, the identification of learning needs was a major issue. The research team wanted to involve the community in determining the children's learning needs so that age-appropriate graded education materials could be developed according to real practical need and expectation. Accordingly, the team held meetings with all the various stakeholder groups, and collected recommendations for best designing the project.

The team then held a series of workshops in order to review the collected information and decide about the learning needs. All the stakeholders were invited to participate in this task.

Participants reviewed the findings and gave their thoughtful opinion about their expectations for an education programme that would enable their children to acquire competencies similar to those that children who that would uphold and allow to flourish their own cultural and traditional practices. Thus, during this workshop, a material development team was formed to act as an extended arm of the research team. Teachers, university/college students, a village doctor and educated community leaders who were willing to spare time and work for development of the educational materials were included on the team. Later, this team sat with the other workshop participants to finalize the list of learning needs for further curriculum and material development.

To identify the learning needs, the following steps were undertaken:

National Education Policy review

- Goal & Objectives for Primary Education review
- Discussions about the expectation of the Oraon community for education of their children
- Identification of Aims and Objectives for the Oraon children’s primary education
- Identification of attainable terminal competencies for the Oraon children’s primary education
- Identification of subject-based attainable terminal competencies for Oraon primary education

The team used the following processes for curriculum/material development and training:

Curriculum & Material Development	Evaluation	Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direction for writing Text Books • Orientation for the Writers • Preparation of Draft Texts • Pre-evaluation of Draft Texts • Editing of Draft Texts • Development of Text Books and Finalization • Development of Supplementary • Reading Materials and Teacher’s Guide • Printing of Books/Texts • Class Test/Feedback from the Students and Teacher • Editing and Finalization and Printing Books/Texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Strategy and Plan for Evaluation • Record Keeping of Evaluation • Identification of learning deficiency • Measures for overcoming learning deficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of Subjects/ Areas for Teachers’ Training • Development of Training Materials • Pre-service (Basic) Training • Skill development Training • Monitoring • Refreshers’ Training

Process of Developing and Producing Materials

At every stage of language development, ASHRAI’s research team involved the Oraon community very extensively. Likewise, a curriculum development workshop was attended by research team members, material development team members, community representatives and educationists who had expertise in education materials development. Some of the experts had similar experiences working in the past on material development for NGOs and for Government primary school curriculum development initiatives.

ASHRAI was extremely pleased that Oraon community members representing all walks of life actively participated in the different stages of curriculum and material development. They were very helpful in providing relevant information that directly assisted in making the primers reflective of the Oraon’s practical life situation.

At the beginning of the workshop, objectives of the workshop and tasks to be performed by the participants were explained clearly so that they understood the process well and could perform their noble tasks properly. Through group work



▲ Community leaders participate in a curriculum development workshop

and discussion in the plenary, age- and grade-appropriate subjects to be taught were finalized. After participants determined the subjects, like Language (literature), Environment (SS), Arithmetic, Science, Personal Hygiene, etc, they were again divided into groups and asked to decide what topics/issues/ learning would be taught under each category. For this they had to consider what competencies the children would need to learn after each year of study based on the Primary Curriculum of the National Curriculum and Text Book Board (NCTB). They also needed to consider how to integrate their indigenous socio-cultural tradition and practices in order to meet the community expectations for learning, which had already been expressed to them.

Examples : Children should learn about traditional heroes. In such a case, the Oraon children would learn about the Shidu-Kanu, who fought against British rule and sacrificed their lives for the cause of tribal interest. During the month of February, children would learn about the importance and glory of their own mother-tongue languages on the occasion of International Language Day.

Contents of Curriculum and Materials



▲ Consultant explains material development for primers

To develop curriculum and relevant materials for textbooks, writers were selected from the Oraon community. ASHRAI arranged an orientation on writing for textbook development, which was facilitated by research consultants. , NCTB's policies for primary education, which strongly emphasizes literacy and life skills, were duly considered so that mainstreaming into high schools would be easily possible with requisite competence.

In order to help the writers create the topics/contents, they were also provided guidelines for preparing age-appropriate graded materials, i.e. i) the number of words to be in a sentence, ii) avoidance of conjoint letters for making a word, iii) use of simple words, iv) use of words that would be commonly employed in day-to-day life. To prepare exercises for each content/topic, guidelines focused on short questions, filling gaps with appropriate words, word matching, multiple choice, and true or false. For language books, grammatical terms like "tense," "opposite words," and "masculine and feminine gender words," were included in the guidelines, as well. Writers were also asked to include moral/ethical materials that would act to guide children towards practicing responsible and safe behaviour. Apart these guidelines, the writers were given freedom to choose specific topics/contents so that they could do their best to create engaging material.



▲ Participants prepare for a group assignment

Draft write-ups were edited in several sittings by the research team. All the write ups for a particular subject were then compiled, and appropriate illustrations were added to the texts by an illustrator who was knowledgeable about Adivasi culture, tradition and practices. It is to be noted that illustrations often needed revision before finalization, as well.

The material was then tested by children in actual classrooms. Based on both the children's and teachers' feedback, the material underwent further revision and eventual finalization via an editorial board. The material was then sent for printing.

In this way, the graded primers featured Adivasi culture and tradition through:

- Original stories
- Personal experiences
- Songs, poetry
- Traditional folktales, legends
- Biographies, histories
- Jokes, riddles, proverbs
- Travel, geography
- Information (e.g., health), awareness-raising issues
- Instructions (how to do something)
- Religious / moral / ethical messages
- News (local and national)
- Skits and dramas

Teacher Recruitment

During February 2003, the first ARP school was opened in the tribal village of Agholpur with the aim to test the developed materials in Sadri and offer basic mother-tongue based education. The research team wanted to offer teaching to the children through a Sadri-speaking teacher who was bilingual and hired from the community. However, during one of the workshops, community participants voiced their criterion for hiring and employing a teacher, which included:

- Having at least secondary school certificate (SSC) qualification
- Minimum 16 years of age
- Trained in teaching
- Dutiful and conscious of their duties
- Skilled enough to teach community children
- Gentle and idealistic
- Knowledgeable about own culture and language
- Member of Sadri community
- Having lovely attitude towards children
- Honest
- Interested in games and extra-curricular activities
- Maintaining personal hygiene
- Having social acceptance
- Free from Haria (homemade alcohol) drinking

Ideally, the teacher needed to possess a graduation degree, but if not available, should at least have a Secondary School Certificate. It is not, however, easy to find individuals who have such academic

qualifications in the tribal communities. However, ARP was fortunate to find a woman who possessed a Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC). She had just married and was living in Agholpur with her husband. The ARP team leader talked to her and her husband, and they agreed for her to take the job. She was subsequently trained, and became the ARP laboratory school teacher in Agholpur.

In successive years eleven schools in Sadri were opened and supported by different donors in different places. ARP assisted in recruiting the teachers and provided necessary training for running those schools effectively.

Teacher Salary and Remuneration



Since the ARP school is non-formal, instruction takes place for only 3-4 hours per day, and the school is located in the teacher's own village, it is considered as a part time job which she can manage at ease. Hence, the salary also is determined on the basis of part-time work. Her monthly salary was fixed at Tk. 700 (in the year 2003) only. This was in line with non-formal school teachers working with other NGOs in the country. Provision was made for yearly increment on the basis of her performance, and one festival bonus was also included, as this is a general practice for employees throughout the country.

▲ Children are learning in the class

Teacher Capacity-building

Like curriculum and education materials, it is equally important to have appropriate teaching plans and methods for imparting quality education and for acquiring the desired level of competencies among the targeted children. For primary education, the Active Learning Process (ALP) methodology is very conducive to learning because it makes the class joyful as well as insures the students' development of subject competency. For this reason, the research team wanted the same methodology to be used in the Sadri schools. ALP capacity-building for the teachers was an important component of the project. In fact, the research team has been continuously providing formal and informal training to the teachers. To this aim, it has organized several formal trainings to instruct the teachers about the basics of the teaching-learning process and class management. In addition, on-the-job training and feedback is regularly given so that weaknesses and shortcomings can be readily identified and shared to help the teachers improve. Monthly refreshers' are also arranged where class problems are discussed and possible corrective measures are suggested or taken. Rehearsal of lessons to be taught in the coming month also takes place during the monthly meetings.

Formal trainings are : 1) Basic Training, 2) Facilitation Training, 3) Child Rights, and 4) Child-to-Child Training.

Basic Training

After recruitment, teachers are given Basic Training first for 12 days, where they learn:

- What is Education? Types of Education – Formal, Informal & Non-formal
- Objectives of Basic/Primary Education and Importance of Mother Language
- Problems of Primary Education in the Country
- Child Behavior and Role of the Teacher
- Methods of Teaching, Display, Group Discussion, Role Play, Q&A, Field Trip/Educational Tour and Different Teaching Tactics
- Types of Education Materials and How to Use the Mmaterials; How to Prepare Learning Materials Using Local Resources Available
- Maintenance of Class Discipline
- Importance of Co-curricular Activities and Kinds of Co-curricular Activities
- Importance of Evaluation and Techniques of Evaluation
- Teacher-Parents Relationship
- Importance of Lesson Plans; How to Prepare Lesson Plans; Steps of Lesson Planning
- Simulation of Class Teaching

Facilitation Training

The second training for the teachers is about Facilitation and involves three days. It includes:

- Qualities of a Facilitator; Role of a Facilitator
- What is Communication; Types of Communication and Features of Good Communication
- Inter-personal Relations; Child Psychologist; Self-Control and Teaching Techniques
- Conceptual Knowledge on the Subjects to Teach to Children

Child Rights Training

The third training is for three days duration, and is on Child Rights. The themes taught include:

- Definition of Child, Prime Rights of Children, Child Labor, Risk of Child Labor
- Nature of the Child and Their Behavior; Inter-personal Relationship
- Child Abuse, Types of Child Abuse, and How to Prevent Child Abuse; Child Trafficking
- Child Marriage; Consequences of Child Marriage

Child-to-Child Training

The fourth training is also for three days, and studies Child-to-Child Training. Topics include:

- What is Child-to-Child Training, Its Importance & Objectives
- Steps of Child-to-Child Training, PRA Tools – Body Mapping, Flow Chart/Result Tr and Mapping
- Awareness-raising Issue Selection; Selection of Tools on the Basis of the Issues
- Materials Development; Child-to-Child Activities Planning & Implementation



▲ A teacher training session

Before opening the school, the research team arranges a 2-day refreshers' training for the teachers so that they can undertake necessary preparations for opening the schools and dealing properly with the children. The training also provides an opportunity for the teachers to reinforce the knowledge and skills that they have already gained.

Literacy Teaching Plan and Methods

Bridging Plan between L1 and L2

Although ASHRAI had considerable experience in education programming, it had no experience in working with MLE programmes. As such, when the ARP project was launched in 2002, it did not consider and plan a strategy to bridge between the L1 and L2. As the early phase of the project progressed, however, the research team began contacting resource people and institutions to collect ideas for bridging the mother tongue-based instruction to the national language education. Towards this aim, ARP organized a very important workshop on "Language Bridging" on 27 September 2005 in Rajshahi. Community leaders, teaching professionals from the community, university students and ARP teacher research team members all participated to discuss and decide upon the bridging strategy. The workshop was facilitated by consultants and research team members.



▲ Workshop on "bridging" strategy development

Table 1: Bridging Plan for ARP ASHRAI

Grade Subject	Prep. Phase	Grade-1	Grade-2	Grade- 3	Grade- 4	Grade 5	MOI
Cultural, Heritage & Co-curricular Activities	12 months	Story telling, Singing, Family good practices, Playing, etc.	Continuing	Continuing	Continuing	Continuing	Sadri
L1- Literacy	-	Oral fluency in MT for 1st 06 months. & Reading & writing - Alphabet - 06 months.	Reading, Writing & Story telling	Reading, Writing, Story telling & Re-telling from L1 to L2	Story book reading & Communication skill dev.	Activity based Story Book Reading & writing - 1day in a week	Do
L1 – SS	-	Listening from the Teacher as Story	Do	Do	-	-	Do
L1- Math	-	Introducing with Figure, Shape & Counting–3 months Fluency in MT & Knowing Numbers, Counting Numbers. Writing Numbers – 9 months	Simple Calculation	-	-	-	Do
L2- Literacy	-	Story Listening, Songs, Playing, and Activity performing with TPR.	Reading, Writing, Making sentences from words	Reading, Writing, Story telling & Re-telling from L2 to L1	Reading, Writing & Memorizing	Reading, Writing, Memorizing & Activity performing	Bangla
L2 – SS	-	-	-	Reading, Writing & Re-telling, exercise	Do	Do	Do
L2- Math	-	-	Calculation	Continuing	Continuing	Continuing	Do
L3- Literacy	-	Recognizing Alphabet- last 2 months of G1 using TPR	Knowing & writing Alphabet and Build Vocabulary with TPR	Reading, Writing & Telling	Reading, Writing, Telling & Activity Performing	Reading, Writing, Telling, Reciting & Activity Performing	Sadri-G2 Sadri+ Bangla-G3, Eng-G4 Eng-G5
%	L1-100 (%)	L1-90, L2-07 & L3 -03 (%)	L1-70, L2-20 & L3-10 (%)	L1-50, L2-35 & L3-15 (%)	L1-20, L2-60 & L3-20 (%)	L1-5, L2-75 & L3- 20 (%)	

Note : The above bridging plan will be reviewed further by the ARP research team and necessary changes or modification will be made accordingly in the near future.

Networking with Other Organizations

ASHRAI has established relationships with the governmental and non-governmental organizations mentioned below in order to mobilize resources for capacity-building of ARP staff and promote awareness/establish support for MT literacy programming in the country.

Name of the Organization	Support Received
SIL Bangladesh	Training on MLE capacity-building for ARP teachers, research staff and community members
Tilottoma Voluntary Organization	Training on reproductive health for ARP teachers
Save the Children Australia	Training on child rights programming for ARP teachers and research staff
CAMPE (Campaign for Popular Education)	Training on education programme management and experience sharing for teachers and research staff
Oraon Foundation	Active participation by the members for developing curriculum and education materials in Sadri

Regional Workshop on MLE

Very recently, on 19 August 2006, ASHRAI organized a regional-level workshop for creating awareness about MLE among the tribal communities, civil society, government officers and NGOs working for education. It was largely attended by the Adivasi people and organizations from different districts of Rajshahi. Among the notable participants were the Deputy Director, Social Welfare Department; District Education Officer; Upa-zila Education Officer; a professor of Rajshahi University; and directors of NGOs. Participating NGOs expressed the desire to work together for developing and strengthening the efforts undertaken by the different organizations working in MT literacy programming. It is, thus, expected that NGOs will come closer and uphold the cause of MT education for the Adivasis in the near future.

Cost of Materials Production

ASHRAI's approach for researching and developing education materials in Sadri was to mobilize and insure participation of the Oraon communities. As a result, maximum participation from the community people was possible and insured. The ARP involved community people in every event/activity as much as possible. This effort to include the Oraon people was much appreciated by the community members, and also helped to minimize the cost of materials production. The expense for printing the three primers (Hamar Boi Part-3, Poribesh Boi Part-3 & Charu-Karu Part-3) that were developed for Grade 3 in 2006 was Tk. 86,718.00, based on a print-run of 40 copies each. Hence, per book printing cost was Tk. 723.00 (US\$10.63). However, this amount could be reduced with larger print-runs.

Impact of the Project

Impact on Education Policy

Until 2002, when UNESCO initiated MLE programming through ASHRAI, no government policy nor private organization addressed mother tongue-based education. The ARP project, together with a national seminar cum workshop that was organized in 2005 by UNESCO, UNICEF and SIL Bangladesh, have finally positively influenced policy makers and planners within both private national and international organizations. As a result, organizations are coming forward and providing support for developing languages for ethnic minorities. Gonshashtya Kendra (GK) has been working for the Marma,

Karitas for Santal, SIL Bangladesh for Bishnupriya and so on. Indeed, it appears that awareness of MLE is increasing daily, and it is expected that the Government will come forward to take appropriate action in the near future.

That said, in May 2006, a study was carried out by Interaction (a private education organization) to assess the situation in Naogaon District. The study revealed that about 80 percent of Adivasi children drop out of school due to: (1) linguistic problems, (2) cultural problems, (3) discrimination between Adivasi students and other students, and (4) poverty.

In this context, it should be mentioned here that some NGOs - including ASHRAI - are operating schools in the Naogaon region. These schools conduct classes in the Adivasi people's language for the Adivasi population. The enrolment rate, attendance, dropout rate and rate of pass of these schools are satisfactory. Thus, it would certainly appear that the language in which classes are conducted makes a dramatic difference in the quality and consequent outcome of education provision.

Again in the workshop on 18 August 2006 on popularizing MLE in Rajshahi, Professor Chittaranjon thanked ASHRAI for its Mohoti Uddyog (noble effort) for developing Sadri language and offering education to the Oraon children in mother language.

As Bijoy Minj, an ARP school student stated, "I like to go to my school as the books are in Sadri, my language, and my teacher also speaks my language in the school."

It is hoped that the positive effects gained so far will influence the national-level policy planners, and that the day will soon come when mother tongue-based education for minority ethno-linguistic groups will be standardized throughout the country.

Impact on Learner Enrollment

In May 2006, ASHRAI published an assessment report which found that of seven districts, 27 upa-zilas and 1,372 villages in Rajshahi, 67,162 children of ages between 6 to 12+ were found to be enrolled in Grades 1-5. Of them, 31,788 children dropped out in the same year. Of these dropouts, 13,952 were Adivasi children (49% boys and 51% girls).

As for the ARP students, all 25 children who began the project in 2003 at Agholpur village are still carrying out their studies in the school in Class-IV. Thusfar, only one girl has dropped out of Class-III (which was started in Idolpur village in 2004) due to her marriage, and only two boys in Class-II have dropped out from the 2005 Agholpur group (their mothers left parents houses to live with their husbands following resolution of conjugal disputes). There have not been any dropout cases in Chpai Nowabgonj and Joypurhat district schools. This clearly indicates that dropout from Sadri schools is almost negligible.

Research on Effectiveness of Mother Tongue Education

Ashrai's Action Research Project aimed at improving the level of learners' achievement through education in their mother tongue at the primary levels. With a financial grant from UNESCO Bangkok, the project has developed a multilingual learning model that has encompassed all the elements of teaching and learning. The major activities of this project were to prepare appropriate materials and teachers' guides, supplementary materials and teachers' training. The hypothesis was that with appropriate learning materials and mother tongue instruction, learning achievement would increase in time.

A small baseline study was conducted to establish the level of learners' achievement at the end of Grade-1 in 2004. Again in 2005, another study was done to measure the learning achievements of the same group of learners. The data was then compared with the baseline to measure the impact of the interventions.

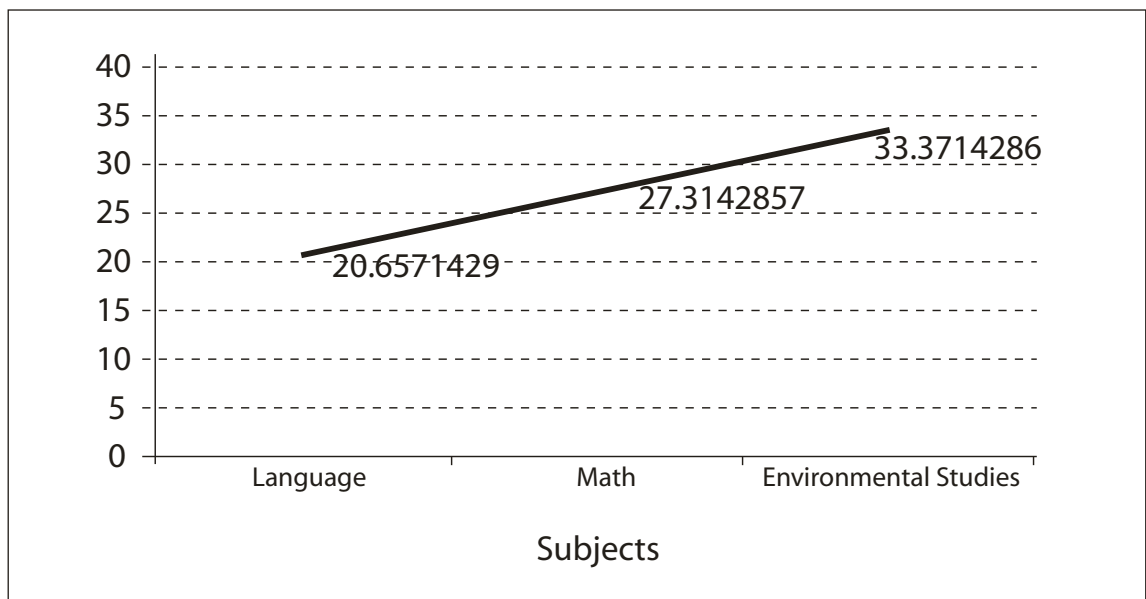
Methodology and Analysis

The baseline study was designed to capture the levels of learners' competencies upon leaving Grade-1, according to the national curriculum. The data was collected through two tests given to the learners as a quarterly exam in October 2004. The tests were prepared and administered by the teachers of the ARP schools. Later they scored the scripts, and the scores were collected by ARP staff in order to create a baseline. The tests that were prepared were achievement tests to measure the competency levels of the learners at the end of a certain period of intervention. There were tests for Language, Mathematics and Social Sciences.

In the middle of 2005, another data collection protocol was planned to capture the learners' achievements for the same baseline group. This time another set of data was collected from a nearby government school for learners of the same age group and level (Class-II) in order to compare the baseline groups' achievements with the mainstream learners.

The data was collected through two separate tests at the ARP (Idolpur ARP School) and government (Sonadighi Government Primary School, Godagari, Rajshahi) schools. The tests were prepared by the teachers of the respective schools, and also were administered by them. Thirty students were considered as a sample size in both schools for the impact assessment.

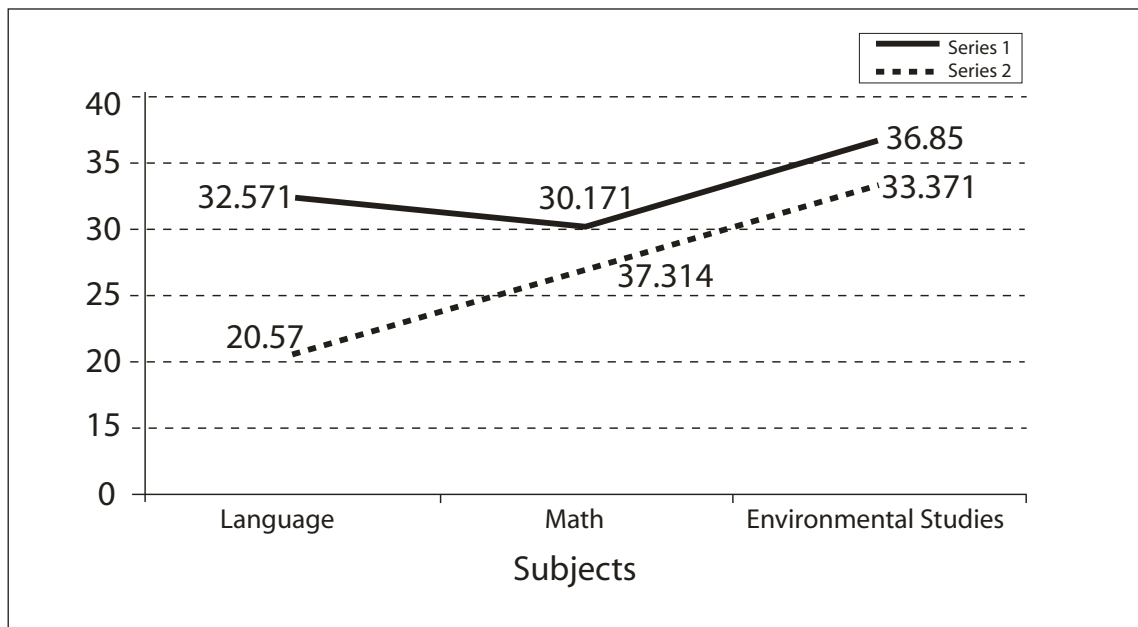
Figure 1: Average Marks of MT Programme Learners



According to the impact data, the average marks for Hamar Boi (language) was 32.571, for Mathematics was 30.17 and for Social Science was 36.85. Figure 2 shows a comparison of the impact testing with the baseline marks of the same subjects.

The top line of the graph shows average marks for the impact study, while the line at the bottom shows average marks for the baseline study. The graph demonstrates that the interventions were highly successful in bringing about a higher achievement in learning among the indigenous children.

Figure 2: Comparison with Baseline Results



Comparison with a Government School

The above chart shows that the learning achievement of the students of the ARP school is, in fact, better than the achievement of the learners studying in the same class grade at a government school. This also shows the positive impact of interventions that use the multilingual model of education. The data shows that the average Language score of the ARP students is 32.57, while the average score of the students at the government school in the same subject is only 29.31. The average Social Science score is 30.17 for the ARP learners, while for the learners in the government school is 28.37. The average mark in Mathematics shows a great difference between the different schools: it is 36.85 for ARP learners, while only 26.9 for the learners at the government school.

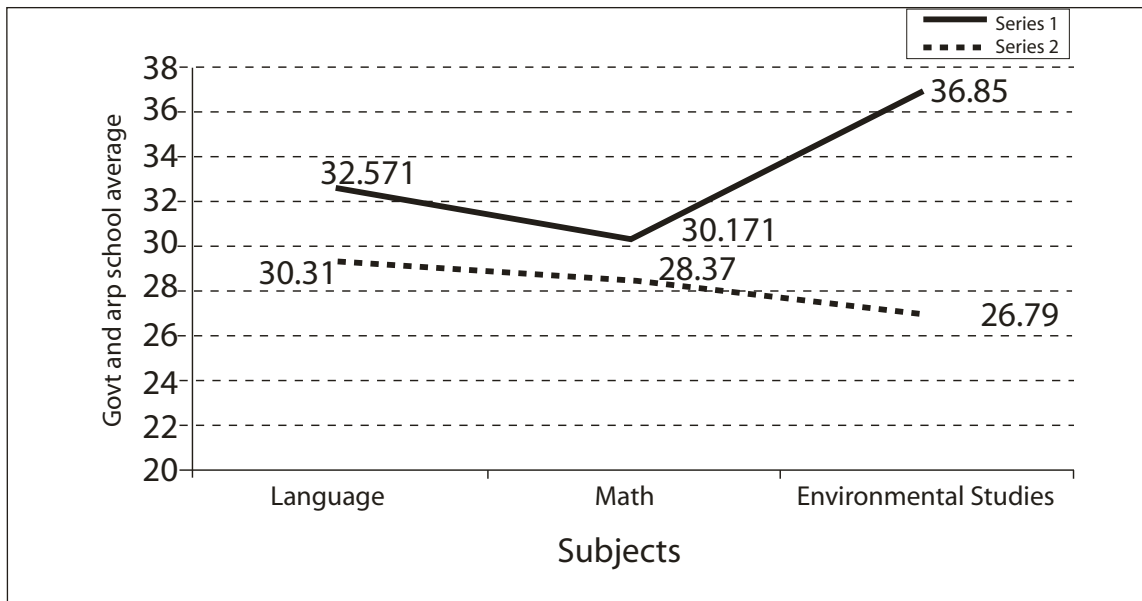
Therefore, the data and analysis presented above show that the interventions made through the Ashrai Action Research Project have been highly successful in bringing about a positive impact in learning achievement of the target population.

Action Research Project successes in the tribal villages of Agholpur and Idolpur have also created a greater awareness among parents that their children are keen about learning, and do so very well when lessons are conducted in their own language. This has positively influenced their belief and thinking that they can also learn, which will be useful and help them in their day-to-day life and livelihood.

From July 25-26, 2004, a 3-member team from UNESCO Bangkok visited the ARP literacy programmes underway in Agholpur and Idolpur villages. During their visit, the team members had intensive discussions with the community leaders, families, School Management Committee (SMC) members and

parents of the children studying in the ARP schools. During these discussions, many women raised the issue of learning for themselves, and expressed their interest in having such opportunities. Visitors shared their experiences about the community learning centre (CLC) where villagers (both male and female) come to acquire or update their knowledge and skills for life and livelihood purposes. Knowing this, community members became so enthusiastic that they demanded such programmes in their villages and requested UNESCO to help them in their pursuit of knowledge and occupational skills. Observing their keen interest and expectation, the team assured them that they would do whatever possible in order to realize their hopes.

Figure 3: Comparison with a Government School



It was, indeed, utter joy for the tribal people of Agholpur and Idolpur villages to see their dreams become reality when, in July 2005, the CLC project, “Tribal Adolescents Development Programme (TADP)” was launched. This programme offered a mother tongue-based literacy programme to the villagers, and included skill training conducted in the Sadri language for adolescent girls, women and the community people.

Under the programme, the community members are now receiving literacy education in Sadri, training in subjects such as social awareness, reproductive health, fuel economy,, and high value crop cultivation.

Following the training, many households are seeing considerable savings on firewood and have started cultivation of vegetables that will give them a much higher return compared to rice cultivation.

Achievement of ARP

Since its beginning in October 2002, the ARP has attained considerable success in achieving its goals and objectives. It has developed curricula and learning materials for the Oraon children in twelve schools.

Graded Primers

At present, ARP has prepared graded materials for classes I, II and III, which includes Literacy, Arithmetic, Social Studies, Physical Science and English. The project has touched a total of 307 children.

Teacher's Guide

The Teacher's Guide is an important tool for the teachers to give effective lessons to the students. After its completion, the ARP offered training so that teachers would know how best to use the Guide for conducting effective learning sessions.

Supplementary Reading Materials

In addition to the prescribed primers/texts, supplementary reading materials are very helpful in reinforcing and broadening children's knowledge. So ARP took the initiative to prepare supplementary reading materials for classes I, II & III. The preparation of these materials has been described earlier in this report.

Collection of Lexicons and Development of Word Book

Globally, the languages of ethnic minorities having no written script are endangered from extinction. Due to the influence of national languages, which are often required for life and livelihood purposes, ethnic minorities are being forced into a condition of abandoning their own languages in favor of the more widely spoken national languages. As a result, words and or vocabulary in mother tongue is gradually forgotten and becomes extinct. Indeed, many Oraon people have already lost many words because they've replaced them with Bangla in their conversations. Realizing this, the ARP research team began collecting Sadri words from various Oraon communities in northwest Bangladesh. Currently, 906 words have been collected and verified. This is a notable achievement for the ARP, and it may serve the purpose of making a dictionary and grammar book for Sadri in the near future.

IPA Transformation

The stock of words gives an idea of a language's range of vocabulary. As noted above, the ARP has developed the Sadri word book, and continuous effort will be given to enrich it. With this in mind, the research team has transformed those collected words into an International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) version.

Support for MLE

ASHRAI not only has successfully mobilized the community, implemented action research and developed curriculum and graded materials in Sadri, it has also quite successfully motivated different donors like, SDC, NOVIB and NETZ to come forward and extend support for mother tongue-based education to the children. At present, SDC is providing support for five schools, NOVIB for two and NETZ for three schools. It is expected that NETZ will support more schools in the next year.

Awareness Creation and Opinion Formation

The ARP, with its prime task of developing literacy materials in MT, is also engaged in spreading the message about the importance of mother tongue-based education. ASHRAI hopes that policy makers will adjust policy formulation and resource allocation, accordingly.

Towards this aim, ARP organized a “Regional Workshop for Popularizing MT Education” in Rajshahi City on August 19, 2006. The workshop was attended by the Deputy Director of the Department of Social Welfare, the District Education Officer, the Upa-zila Education Officer, and instructors from teachers’ training institutes. Attendees also included the elite of the city and media professionals. A large number of indigenous people from all over the district participated and spoke at the workshop.

It is a matter of pleasure for ARP staff that many distinguished visitors from home and abroad have visited the ARP schools:

Sl.	Organization	Name of the Team Member	Period
01	NETZ-German	Mr. Nicko Rickter and his team	27.10.2004
02	RDRS-Bangladesh	Mr. Afser Ali and his team	24.11.2004
03	SDC	Mr. Ramo Gautchi, DG of SDC Mr. Markus Wald Vogel, Country Director of Bangladesh & their team	03.12.2004
04	UNESCO-Dhaka	Mr. Wolfgang Vollmann UNESCO Representative in Bangladesh, Mr Golam Kibria & Ms. Shahida PO UNESCO Bangladesh	07.12.2004

Cost-Effectiveness of the Project

As was stated earlier, the ARP research team involved community people directly in developing course curriculum and education materials. This included leaders and educated community members who contributed writings in Sadri. Moreover, tribal staff working in ASHRAI’s training unit also wrote texts on different topics. The community members were very motivated and accepted the writing assignments as their own. During the materials development phase, writers and research team members would sit together at the school premises of a tribal village to share, review and receive feedback from each other on weekly holidays (Fridays). For these sessions, the research team spent a very minimal amount of money, which covered the cost of snacks and lunch for the participants. Organizers noted the enthusiasm of the participants, despite the often routine nature of the work. It is worth mentioning that a non-literate community person named Mr. Lalmohon Minj was inspired and wanted to contribute. He was encouraged by the research team, and took up the issue of Haria drinking (a big problem for the Adivasi communities). He prepared a short play to create awareness about the harmful effects of Haria. His short play (drama) was then transformed into written form in Sadri. After editing by a resource person, it was printed and published in Sadri. Now this drama is played by the children of the ARP in cultural functions on the occasion of festivals and other ceremonies.

Thanks to community participation, too, the research team was able to prepare a word book of 900 Sadri words with both Bangal and English definitions. The book was published, and has since been translated into IPA .

Likewise, when the research team decided to publish stories, folktales and songs that had been carried over by successive generations among the Oraon community, it involved key members of the communities to move around and collect material from the oldest community members. In this way, stories and songs were able to be included as supplementary teaching material.

This approach of closely involving the community in the preparation of materials enabled the ARP research team to accomplish the desired tasks with minimal cost and time, while at the same time insuring quality and upholding the cultural heritage of the Oraon communities.

Sustainability of the Project

The Oraon Foundation of Sirajgonj District has expressed its keen interest to organize mother tongue-based literacy programmes for the Oraon children living in different villages of Sirajgonj. They have been trying to manage resources and would like to set up Sadri schools if resources are available. The Foundation has also asked ASHRAI to help it in this respect. The ARP has assured the Foundation that it will help in every aspect of technical support.

Programme Expansion

ASHRAI had undertaken the Action Research for Developing Mother Tongue Literacy programme with an aim to gradually expand to other parts of northwestern Bangladesh. It was, thus, with great pleasure the the agency accepted an offer from NOVIB to support ASHRAI in opening up new schools. NOVIB began supporting two schools for Oraon children in a new area, Joypurhat District, in January 2005. In addition, NETZ (who was already supporting the ARP) has been supporting two additional new schools in Gomostapur Upazila under Chapai Nowabgonj District since January 2005, as well.

In January 2006, SDC extended its support, and five new schools were set up in Naogaon District. Therefore, at present 307 children are learning in ARP schools.

Table 2: At-a-Glance Status of MT Schools

Sl.	Name of the School	Name of the Teacher	For Class	Students			Location	Distircts	Supported By
				Boys	Girls	Total			
01	Agolpur School	Ms. Nanda Rani Minj	IV	12	13	25	Godagari Upa-zila	Rajshahi	UNESCO, Bangkok
02	Edolpur School	Mr. Swapan Toppa	III	17	18	35*	Do	Do	NETZ, Germany
03	Agolpur School-2	Mr. Prodip Toppa	II	16	12	28*	Do	Do	ASHRAI
04	Koromjai School	Ms. Bharoti Minj	II	13	14	27	Gomostapur, Upa-zila	Chapai Nowabgonj	NETZ, Germany
05	Khejurebona School	Mr. Nironjan Toppa	II	07	18	25	Do	Do	"
06	Gopalpur School	Ms. Sumitra Rani Minj	II	10	10	20	Panchbibi,	Joypurhat	NOVIB,
07	Uchai Surjapur School	Mr. Amal Minj	II	14	05	19	Do	Do	"
08	Usti ARP School	Ms. Kamini Linda	1	08	22	30	Patnitola Upazila	Noagoan	SDC
09	Kuaram ARP School	Ms. Sukurmoni Ekka	1	11	14	25	Patnitola Upazila	Do	"
10	Bidirpur ARP School	Ms. Shandhya Rani	1	18	10	28	Shapahar Upazila	Do	"
11	Gurkhi ARP School	Ms. Shefali Mardi	1	10	10	20	Shapahar Upazila	Do	"
12	Chalkmonohar-pur ARP School	Mr. Nitai Ekka	1	13	12	25	Shapahar Upazila	Do	"
Total students				149 (49%)	158 (51%)	307			

Challenges

During the course of ARP's implementation, the research team encountered several challenges. It was very important to overcome these challenges successfully; otherwise the project would not have reached its goals and objectives. It's a matter of great satisfaction that ARP could handle the issues very carefully and resolve them in order to bring about the Oraon communities' concerted participation and work for the development of the language. The challenges were:

Language Selection

Language selection was an early key problem, as two different languages (Sadri and Kurukh) were both being used by the Oraon people living in different parts of the country. Since language is a very sensitive issue and is associated with one's emotion, love and expectation, it was very critical for the ARP research team to handle the selection diplomatically.

Script Selection

This was the most challenging task for the ARP research team to deal with because the Oraon people had different and strongly held opinions. Under the circumstances, it was very tough to overcome the differences and reach an agreement to work coherently for the development of their own language.

ARP successfully resolved the above two critical issues in large part thanks to its Participatory Action Research approach. This approach, while time-consuming, insured extensive participation from the

target community in exploring modalities and developing language for mother tongue education. Every forum and interactive event included Oraon representation from all walks of life and from various places in the northwest of the country.

Continuation and Expansion

After development of the graded curriculum and learning materials in Sadri and successful acceptance by the Oraon children in Agholpur and Idolpur villages, the ARP wanted to expand and replicate the same project in other areas in order to test the effectiveness of teaching in mother tongue on a larger scale. However, resource availability for this expansion and testing was a big constraint. Given this situation, ARP initiated dialogue with potential bodies/donors. This approach was fruitful. NETZ came forward and extended their support to the ARP. This paved the path to invite other donors, like NOVIB and SDC, who later joined with NETZ. Gradually the number of Sadri schools has reached 12.

Integration into the Mainstream

ARP wants to bridge all the ARP children into mainstream education. For this purpose, an appropriate level of support for the children for a certain period of time is needed. Of course, governmental support and action is also essential for institutionalizing MT literacy programmes.

Bridging to the National Language

For mainstreaming into the national education system, the bridging of MT to the national language is very crucial. Therefore, ARP wants to develop appropriate methodology and materials to introduce Bangla and English for the Oraon children, and finally mainstream their education into the national language.

Recommendations

Expectations from the Community

Community leaders and parents of the children have expressed their expectations about the duration of ARP. Currently, ASHRAI is implementing a 3-year educational programme for the tribal children. The Government, however, provides five years of primary education. Recently, an NGO, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, has also changed its NFPE policy, and is implementing its non-formal education for five years. Under these circumstances, the community people want to see ARP extended to five years so that, their children can receive primary education for a full five years in the same school and then go directly to high schools for secondary-level schooling.

Hence, ARP should be extended up to Grade-V so that course materials are developed and children are given the opportunity to study in their mother tongue, which would thereby allow them to complete their primary education in the mother language.

Tasks for National and International Organizations

Further, it is very important that the Government extends its support and takes necessary action for the continuation and expansion of mother tongue literacy programmes for the ethno-linguistic groups in Bangladesh. Since there is no governmental policy in this regard, there is a crucial need for a mass campaign to popularize mother tongue-based education. Only in this way can favorable conditions be created so that the Government will come forward to take legal action and financial support for implementing MT literacy programmes.

For this purpose, UN and international donor agency assistance is needed in two areas. One is supporting NGOs for undertaking development and implementation of mother tongue education for the ethnic minorities living in different parts of the country. The second is supporting activities for advocacy and networking in order to popularize demand for institutionalization of the MT education programme. In this regard, awareness-raising workshops, rallies, observations of international languages and discussion forums with stakeholders could be planned and organized at various levels of the civil society.

Conclusion

The involvement of indigenous people in their own development process is a mandatory precondition for sustainable development. Education is one of the most powerful tools for bringing people into the development process so that they may attain socio-economic development. The right to education in one's own language is well recognized by UNESCO, and it is now on the global agenda for action. Through its ARP schools, ASHRAI has been working to allow tribal communities in northwest Bangladesh to realize this right. As a result, the Oraon children's interest for education has grown and their early successes give them hope for bettering their lives.

The project is now standing at a turning point where it has to successfully bridge the mother tongue and the national language. The adopted methods, activities and strategies have made the ARP team, as well ASHRAI as a whole, very optimistic about its success. But this does not trivialize the importance of the 'learning through action' method in the least. The ARP team is still enthusiastic enough to learn more and shape a fruitful model of literacy in mother tongue, one of the first of its kind in Bangladesh.

There is no doubt that this initiative from ASHRAI and UNESCO has enhanced confidence and enthusiasm within the disadvantaged tribal communities for protecting and developing their endangered languages. This enthusiasm is an important factor, too, for achieving the pledge of "Education for ALL" by 2015.



CAMBODIA

A Bilingual Education Programme for Youth and Adults
from the Bunong Community

Background

Current Situation of Minorities



Cambodia has a population of 14 million people, of which there are an estimated 19 languages and 30-40 ethnic minority groups. The majority of the population is Khmer, which is also the national language. Most of the indigenous minority groups live in Cambodia's remote highland provinces, in much the same way as they have for the last few hundred years. Now with improved infrastructure, they are increasingly exposed to the national society. Schools, roads, and markets are increasing in number and bringing fast change and opportunities that the hill people have never had before. However, widespread illiteracy prevents them from accessing these opportunities and participating in the development of their provinces.

- ▲ The Bunong skillfully use the natural resources of their environment. They are known for their ability to hunt and tame elephants.

Mother-Tongue and Bilingual Education in Cambodia



With the promotion of Education for All, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) is aware of the need to make education accessible to all. The Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS) is beginning to see that bilingual education may be an effective way of meeting the educational needs of Cambodia's ethnic minorities while enabling them to participate in Khmer society.

Although there are no explicit policies for mother-tongue and bilingual education in the country, the RGC has supported several efforts to provide

mother tongue and bilingual education programmes in the country during the last decade. These include the non-formal education (NFE) programmes in the northeastern province of Ratanakiri, through the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as International Cooperation Cambodia (ICC) and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP). ICC started classes in the Krung and Tumpuen minority languages in the mid-1990s. Later, the programmes were expanded to include the minority language groups Brao and Kavet. Youth With a Mission (YWAM) is working with the Kavet in Stung Traeng Province, using the orthography and programme developed by ICC. In 2002, the NGO Care started a pilot bilingual education

project, called “The Highlands Children Education Project” in four Tumpuen and Krung villages, using the RGC-approved orthography that ICC had already developed for these languages. In 2004, ICC also started NFE classes among the Bunong people in Mondulkiri Province, south of Ratanakiri. To date, the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport has approved the orthographies of the Krung, Tumpuen, Brao, Kavet, and Bunong languages. Within the near future, the MoEYS is planning on implementing bilingual education programmes within the formal school system in the five northeastern provinces of Cambodia. This will include the Kuy and Kraol languages, which do not yet have approved orthographies.

Project Profile

The bilingual NFE project implemented by the Provincial Office of Education, Youth, and Sport (POEYS) is located in the eastern province of Mondulkiri, neighboring Viet Nam to the south and east. Newly graded roads make the town accessible from the capital city of Phnom Penh within eight hours; a journey which formerly took three days’ rough drive. Mondulkiri is covered by large areas of uninhabited dry forest, and has a population of just over 40 000 people that is mainly concentrated in the highland areas. Minority groups make up 80 percent of Mondulkiri’s population and, of this, the majority are ethnic Bunong and speakers of the Bunong language. The Bunong are largely dependent on swidden agriculture, in which they clear a patch of land in the forest and plant rice for a few years before they move to a new location with fertile soil. The old farms grow back into forest, which the Bunong depend on for their survival. Increasingly, however, these areas are becoming vulnerable to the effects of hunting, logging, and mining.



According to a baseline literacy survey by ICC in 2003, Mondulkiri Province has an estimated 4 percent functional literacy rate¹ in the national language, Khmer. Ten percent are semi-literate and the rest illiterate; making Mondulkiri the province with the lowest literacy rates in Cambodia. The survey also revealed that 73 percent of Bunong women and 57 percent of Bunong, in general, consider themselves to have no or very poor ability to speak Khmer. These numbers are supported by similar figures from the MoEYS, which showed the literacy rate as 5.3 percent.² This is undoubtedly a huge impediment for the Bunong when trying to engage in national society. Insufficient literacy and numeracy skills put the Bunong at a disadvantage when accessing the market and education, as well as in knowing about their rights.

The formal education system in the province is improving and the number of schools has increased rapidly during the last few years. The formal school system uses the national language as the medium

1 Functional literacy as defined by UNESCO: People are functionally literate when they can engage in all activities for which literacy is required to function effectively within their group and community, and also for enabling them to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for both their own and their community’s development.

2 From the joint MoEYS/UNDP/UNESCO “Report on Assessment of the Functional Literacy Levels of the Adult Population in Cambodia, May 2000”

of instruction, but the Bunong children who attend school know very little spoken Khmer. Bunong families depend on their children to help on the fields, go to the forest, watch the animals and look after their younger siblings. Failure in school and the pressure to help the family survive, result in high student attrition rates and repetition. Despite the fact the Bunong are the majority group in the province, they only contribute an estimated 20 percent to the student population in both lower and upper secondary school combined.

It is hoped that bilingual education will help Bunong students in school to be successful and, through NFE programmes, help those who have failed in school already to acquire the education they have missed.



Strategies and implementation Process

The POEYS in Monduliri had already for a couple of years strongly supported ICC's bilingual NFE programme in the province. Seeing the success of the mother tongue-based programme, the POEYS decided to use the materials and the programme developed by ICC in four Bunong communities that needed literacy classes.

Selection of the Project Sites and Facilitators

Careful consideration was taken in selecting the project sites. Two main factors were taken into consideration: (1) the availability of Bunong-speaking teachers, and (2) the proximity to the provincial capital for ease of monitoring and supervision.

Four villages were chosen in three different districts, Bu Hyam (school area), Bu Loung, Srae Omboum, and Bu Tru villages. For the second phase of the project, two new locations have been chosen, Bu Hyam (Yesu village), and Bu Hyam (Bu Ntrong village). The new villages were chosen using the same criteria as the original four villages from the first phase.

For each village, trained teachers who graduated from teachers training colleges were chosen to pair up with community teachers to teach in the classes. An added intention was also to see what type of teacher would work best in this type of setting. Two of the community teachers already had responsibilities in the village. One was a village chief and the other was the leader for a smaller part of a village. These persons were specifically chosen for their



knowledge about the community and about the needs of the participants. The trained teachers and community teachers have a salary of US\$25 per month.

Each location already had school buildings, which could be used for the night time bilingual NFE classes.

Orthography Development

Several efforts at orthography development for the Bunong have taken place over the years. The closely related Mngong language group in Viet Nam has had an orthography using the Latin script since the 1960's. In 2001, linguists MiMi and Didi Kanjahn did extensive linguistic research into the Bunong dialects in Cambodia. After studying the phonology of the language, a committee representing all of Cambodia's Bunong dialects was gathered to agree upon an orthography that used the Khmer script as its basis. This orthography was chosen based on Smalley's Maximums:



- *Maximum motivation among the speakers.* The orthography must be accepted and approved by the community so that they are enthusiastic to learn it. The best way of ensuring this is to involve them in the process.
- *Maximum representation of speech.* The orthography must accurately reflect the sounds of the language and the peoples' understanding of their language to ensure that there is no ambiguity in the written form.
- *Maximum ease of learning.* The sounds of the language should be represented in the most simple way in order to make it easy to read and write the language.
- *Maximum transfer to other languages.* Script and spelling rules should be based on those of neighboring languages (most importantly the national language) to help learners transition from the mother tongue to neighboring languages.
- *Maximum ease of reproduction.* New or unusual symbols should be kept to a minimum to avoid print problems. Ideally the language should be able to be written with existing computer fonts.

ជេសរីមេមមីពាង់ នីតមើសនតុរ
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 ញូចំលង មុកទាក ជេសរីតុចឆុតុច
 ហាន់ប្រោះអោបពាង់អារី" ។

▲ Orthography for the Bunong literacy materials employs the already familiar Khmer script.

The Bunong orthography was approved by the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport in 2003.

Process and Cost of Developing and Producing Materials



Following the approval of the orthography, ICC started to develop teaching materials to be used for adult bilingual literacy classes. Bunong staff were trained to produce all the teaching and post-literacy materials under the guidance of literacy specialists. The use of the material in classes later allowed participants and facilitators in the villages to provide important feedback. With more and more students being able to read and write, stories and biographies are being channeled for further production. The POEYS, through a literature review committee, has also been very involved in the process of checking teaching materials and other books. The first three primers are now in the process of being edited for approval by the MoEYS. The oral Khmer lessons, the Fluency Primer, and the Transition Primer are still

in the process of being evaluated and revised as feedback is received from the POEYS and ICC bilingual NFE classes.

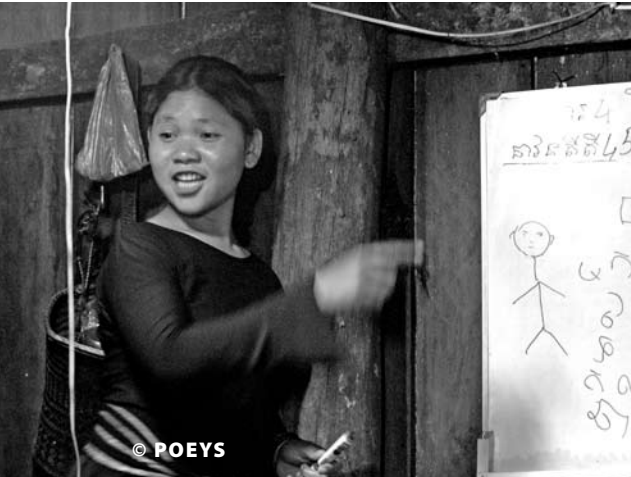
The major cost of developing materials has been accrued from the employment and capacity-building of staff. However, since the materials were already developed, the POEYS has only needed to supply the re-printing cost for their classes. The POEYS has also played a very active role in terms of giving input/feedback and in checking books. Limiting the use of color pictures, encouraging the use of complementary activities to be conducted on the blackboards or on slates, and using games that can be used multiple times have decreased the need for extensive written exercises in student primers. This has also helped to reduce costs.

Identification of Learning Needs



The Bunong people, being traditionally dependent on swidden agriculture and the forest for their livelihood, work hard during the day and come home to the village exhausted at sunset. Teachers, therefore, decided to meet the needs of the learners by meeting at night. During times of foraging or during seasons of busy farming, however, the students tend to spend several days in a row away from the village. This requires the classes to be held in such a way as to provide flexible learning opportunities for the adults, who still need to provide for their families while striving to learn. With this great amount of personal commitment and no traditional need for literacy, the Bunong also need motivation and reason to see the value of being literate. The learners, therefore, needed a

curriculum that would teach valuable life skills as well as allow room for discussion and reflection to make the lessons as applicable as possible to real life. The learners' strongest motivations for learning are linked to the opportunity literacy brings to access new jobs and to improve their agriculture and



health. They also mention the need for keeping their own traditions and language alive.

The materials for the programme were developed for adults, but programme organizers have found that the majority of students are teenagers or young adults who have not had the opportunity to go to school. Thirty-year-old adults often consider themselves too old to learn. Some classes have chosen to separate the adults from the younger students to make sure that the learning needs of each group are met. The younger students often tend to learn faster, whereas the older adults would like to discuss other issues and may have young children to nurse and care for, making their learning slower.

When asked what type of books students would like to read, they mention the need for short, easy, informative books about life skills and other reading for entertainment, with lots of pictures.

Curriculum and Learning Materials Development

The POEYS use a multi-strategy approach to teaching, using a primer and a story track to include the use of both phonics and whole language methods. These methods are easy for the teachers to use and provide a range of approaches to meet the needs of different learners.

The story track uses whole language teaching methods which are meant to draw from the experience of the learners to involve them in the process of reading and writing as much as possible. This makes the activities and the learning process more meaningful and interesting. Whole language activities include the use of Big Books, creative writing, language experience stories, and listening stories. These methods also encourage wider community involvement. When the students write stories as a group, the older people in the community who think they are too old to learn how to read and write are encouraged to come to the classes to share traditional knowledge and stories.

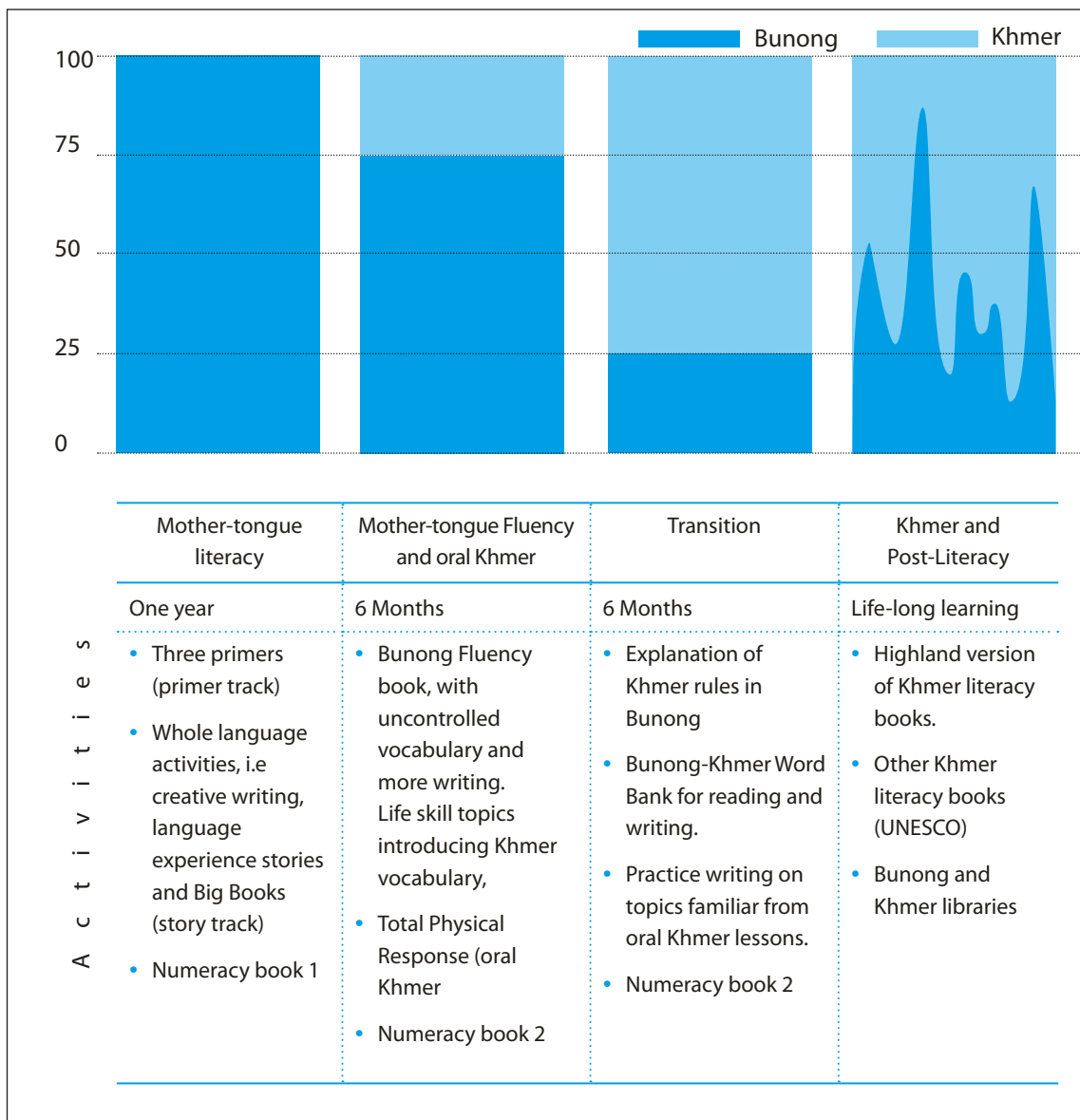


▲ A phonics lesson page from the Bunong literacy primer

The primer track, however, focuses on accuracy. With the orthography being very phonemic, the phonics approach in the primer track helps to explain how the words are built. The phonics approach is based on the widely implemented “Gudschinsky approach,” in which letters are taught gradually using key words. The use of the letter is then demonstrated in boxes, breaking a word down to its smallest sound level and building up the word from the smallest sound level. The primer track also includes opportunities for other activities, including letter formation and spelling. The lessons include texts with controlled

vocabulary, containing only sounds already taught in previous lessons. The students read the text and then answer comprehension questions through discussion and writing exercises.

Figure 1: Multi-track Strategy for Learning



Literacy Teaching Plan and Methods

In the first phase of the programme, which focuses on providing a firm foundation in the mother tongue, the primer track consists of three initial primers. Games and the whole language activities described above are also part of the first phase of the programme. Programme organizers have found that it takes approximately three months to teach Primer 1, four months to teach Primer 2 and five months to teach Primer 3, adding up to a total of 12 months to teach the first three primers.

The second phase of the programme, which is the bridging stage, introduces oral Khmer lessons using Total Physical Response (TPR) lessons. Along with TPR, the students continue to go through a fluency primer with relevant life skill topics. These texts were written by the teachers after having invited other NGO's to teach in areas of their expertise. The fluency primer introduces new technical vocabulary in Bunong, which includes many loan words from Khmer as a help in the bridging process. After reading each text, the students discuss the topics and write longer texts together and individually based on a discussion question.

After six months of learning oral Khmer and getting a strong foundation in Bunong, the students progress to the Transition Primer. This book is aimed at explaining the differences between the Bunong and Khmer writing systems to allow the students to start transferring their skills from their mother tongue to the national language. Each lesson provides a word bank of Khmer and Bunong words, enabling the student to read and write texts using the vocabulary which they have learned in the oral Khmer lessons. Khmer is less phonemic than Bunong and, therefore, more whole language techniques (such as sight word matching games) are used to reinforce word level reading. Teaching of the Transition Primer takes an estimated 6 months.

The third phase of the programme is the Khmer stage, in which the focus is on learning the national language. The adult bilingual literacy classes in the province have not yet reached this stage, but plan on using the Khmer literacy books developed by the MoEYS that have been adapted for highland minority people in Ratanakiri Province. These books are estimated to be much easier to learn because they include a firm foundation in the mother tongue and a good bridge into the national language.

Although the focus of the third phase is on the national language, classes will be encouraged to discuss topics in the mother tongue to enhance learning in Khmer and to continue using literacy skills in the mother tongue to preserve the minority traditions and culture.

Cost of the Project

The POEYS has been able to focus on the actual implementation of the programme and not on the production of materials. Each student received a primer for each stage, which cost a total of approximately US\$1.25 per book. The teachers also received a set of easy readers to complement the primers, most of them costing less than US\$0.5 per book to reproduce. The Director of Education in the province felt the cost of salaries for personnel was expensive. Costs of training has also been a challenge, since the teachers needed to travel to the provincial capital for training and be paid per diems for each day they had been away from their home villages. In addition, monitoring costs are difficult to keep low due to the bad road conditions.

Category of Expenses	Cost
Personnel	\$3,000
Training	\$3,643
Materials	\$2,128
Monitoring	\$1,484
TOTAL	\$10,255

Impact of the Project



Impact on Education Policy

The Government has had an open policy toward bilingual education for several years, but has not been able to implement programmes. During the last few years there has been a greater involvement in bilingual efforts targeting the northeastern provinces of Preah Vihear, Ratanakiri, Stung Traeng, Mondulkiri, and Kratie. These include programmes in both formal and non-formal education.

Impact on Learner Enrollment

Compared to the former monolingual non-formal education programmes implemented in the past, the communities have embraced the idea of learning in their mother tongue first, before bridging to the national language. Although participants experience pressure to feed their families and often have to go to their fields far away, a core group of participants have continued to participate. Other members of the communities come and watch or listen, and even Khmer speakers come to learn Bunong. Although they are not a target of the programme, this increases the language's value and demonstrates to the Bunong that their language and traditions are valued outside of their own community, thus instilling a sense of pride. Participants are encouraged to actively participate when they also see the value of the programme in terms of learning life skills. The material and activities focusing on teaching life skills are carefully chosen and prepared in a culturally appropriate way to have an impact on the Bunong community through reflection and discussion about relevant topics.

Capacity in Learning the National Language

During the first year, the classes have all been through the first three primers and started teaching the fourth primer. As the first three primers focus on teaching Bunong, it is too early to say how fast they will learn the national language. Having learned how to read and write in Bunong well, some students, however, are already picking up some Khmer as they are discovering sound and symbol correlations. The print now has meaning. Some younger students have been able to go back to school, as learning has become meaningful in their lives.

Socio-economic Impact on the Learners

With the families depending on each other to help on the farms and in the forest, the participants are more able and willing to attend classes in the evening, with less detrimental short-term impact on their ability to provide for their families.



Kveart Sren - Bilingual Literacy Student



My name is Kveart Sren. I was born on April 10th, 1978, in Bu Tru village, Mondulkiri Province. I have one brother and three sisters, and I am the oldest in my family. When I was a child, I did not go to school because my family was very poor and also my village had no school building or teacher, yet. In 1990, when I was twelve years old, my father died and my mother moved to Bu Lung village.

When I was 22 years old, I attended a literacy class. I studied only one year and after that I left my literacy class to work and support my family. I work very hard, tending to my rice fields and keeping my animals. In 2005, I came back to literacy class one more time, but this time it was a Bunong-Khmer bilingual literacy class. I knew this class was supported by UNESCO and MoEYS. I was interested in this new class because, as you know, my language is Bunong. When I studied only Khmer with a Khmer teacher, it was difficult to understand what my teacher said, but now it is better for me and for the other students. We can learn easier and clearer than last time, because now we learn with a local teacher (from the minority Bunong people) who can speak Bunong and explain clearly all the content in the books, which are in the Bunong language.

Today, I can read and write in the Bunong language. I am very happy that the MoEYS and UNESCO enabled me and my people to learn in my language first and Khmer second. This is the first time in my life and for our community. I try to learn more and more because the books used for literacy classes tell about the history of our community and culture and they also teach me about agriculture, health and business. I try to learn to be a good woman that can read and write in both Bunong and Khmer in order to help my community in the future. If MoEYS and UNESCO would like to meet me, please contact me at Bu Lung primary school in Bu Lung village, Rumnea commune, Senmonorum district.

For the long term, it is too early to make any general statements about the impact these classes may have on life improvement and poverty alleviation; yet, the skills that the learners are acquiring have great potential to make a difference in their lives. Apart from the knowledge gained from life skills lessons (such as hygiene, environmental issues, animal health, and agriculture), their ability to communicate in written form about land rights or medical information has great potential. The opportunity to meet and discuss community problems also opens the door for reflection and problem-solving within the community context. The Fluency Primer, for example, provides information on key socio-economic topics, such as land-law, income generation, and agriculture. These are then discussed as a group to promote community and individual decision-making and self-improvement.

Networking

The MoEYS and UNESCO have given this project a chance to impact the Bunong people of Mondulkiri. The POEYS has also had very valuable collaboration at the district and commune levels in helping to spread information about the classes. The village chiefs have been involved in actual monitoring of the classes and village situations, and the communities themselves have whole-heartedly supported the project, some even allowing classes to be held in their homes.

Cost Effectiveness of the Project

The number of students has varied and will continue to vary depending on the agricultural cycle, but there is great value in the project in terms of impact on the community and motivating the community to start valuing literacy. Employing local teachers from within the community not only helps in acceptance of the community, but also helps to reduce costs. If the POEYS were to hire-in teachers from outside, they would need to supply living accommodation or higher salaries to provide for their needs. In cases where the village has Bunong-certified teachers, they have been able to continue to teach during the day in the formal school system and, in that way, best use the limited human resources available.

Sustainability of the Project

Community Participation and Ownership

The Bunong communities are very loyal to their extended families, but villages are often spread out over large areas and the members of the communities do not have a given loyalty to the community as a whole. There has been no natural forum for group decision-making and endorsement of learning as a village. In a country dependent on outside funding for many of its community services, the communities are not used to needing to take their own initiative to change society. The Bunong in the past have seen little need for self-improvement, in general, but are now starting to feel increasing pressure to catch up and learn from outside the Bunong world in order to survive. This project has intentionally chosen well-respected members of the community to be teachers or to somehow be involved in the project with the hope that these individuals can facilitate positive change and encourage the participation of the community to take ownership of the classes.

The bottom line of sustainability is that someone somewhere pays. Programme organizers are hopeful that when teachers are sufficiently competent, and the community begins to see fruit in the lives of those who have gone through the bilingual NFE classes, the community will be inspired to continue this work with their own resources. Effort has been made to ensure that materials and teaching methods do not require on-going high expenses. Materials are easy to reproduce in black and white, and teaching methods are simple and do not require expensive equipment and materials.

The POEYS has also arranged for a community learning centre in one village to try and see how the Bunong community will endorse it.

Thon Sarin: Bilingual NFE Programme Organizer



My name is Thon Sarin and I am 25 years old. I live in Cri Saen village in Saen Monorom district in the province of Mondulkiri. Here I am working for the Provincial Office of Education Youth and Sports (POEYS) with vocational training. I studied in school to grade nine. After I passed the test in high school to become a primary school teacher, I went to a teacher training college in Stung Traeng for two years. When I finished my training, I went to serve as a teacher in the primary school in Bu Cu village, O'Reang district.

After attending primary school headmaster training in 2003-2004, I became headmaster in Bu Cu.

In 2004-2005, I attended training at the POEYS to become a bilingual non-formal education teacher for adults. Then I started to work as a bilingual NFE teacher in the village of Bu Hyam, in O'Reang district.

Because of the need, I was in 2005-2006 chosen to work with NFE and vocational training by the director of the POEYS, Mr. Tim Songvat. Now I am responsible for carrying out the NFE bilingual education programme, which is supported by UNESCO and cooperating with ICC in the province of Mondulkiri.

The reason why I am running this programme is to help educate the minority people so that they can gradually reduce poverty and illiteracy. This is also the aim of the Government of Cambodia (Education for All, All for Education). The goal is to especially help the minority people to have knowledge, skills, life skills, literacy skills, and be able to write down their own language correctly and clearly. Also, it is a bridge for the minority people to more easily access and study the national language, while preventing the loss of the culture, language, and traditions of the minority people so that they remain firm.

Policy

If the MoEYS finds the bilingual NFE classes and the planned bilingual formal education classes in Mondulkiri to be successful, they are more likely to have a supportive policy toward bilingual education in the future. How strong this policy will become in the future will help determine the sustainability of these bilingual NFE classes. Without a growing acceptance of the need for bilingual education, there will be a lack of personnel and a lack of freedom in the provincial offices of education to be able to implement these strategies. In his last visit to bilingual literacy classes, His Excellency Chey Chab from the MoEYS strongly agreed to allow the POEYS to use six contract teachers for bilingual literacy classes for the following year. He also said that he would like the POEYS to take over these activities for sustainability.

Komly Boek: Bilingual NFE Teacher



My name is Komly Boek. I am a 23-year-old Bunong woman from Bu Hyam village, which is in Saen Monorom commune, O'Reang district in Monduliri Province, Cambodia. I work as a bilingual literacy teacher in Bunong-Khmer, teaching in Group Seven in my village.

In my family, I am the fifth of eight siblings. I studied in the formal school system up to seventh grade but, since my family was poor, I decided to not continue. It was a decision of my own.

It is only because the Provincial Office of Education Youth and Sport (POEYS) chose literacy teachers out in the villages that I am a bilingual literacy teacher in Bunong and Khmer today. This plan for the minority people was supported by UNESCO. The POEYS had seen that I am able to both speak and write the Khmer language clearly, and that I also know my own mother tongue well. As a result, they chose me to be a Bunong-Khmer bilingual literacy teacher in the village that I lived in. I also volunteered to teach to help my brothers and sisters in the village. After that, I was trained in how to teach bilingually at ICC in Monduliri by POEYS, who also trained me in adult education methodology.

There are many reasons why I wanted to become a bilingual teacher of Bunong and Khmer. In the past, there was no alphabet nor any way of recording my language. But now I have a writing system to record things, which clearly represents my way of speaking. I believe that language is a unique bridge that we ought to teach all minority people so that they get better access and are able to study the national language. It is also valuable to preserve the Bunong minority culture, traditions and language and prevent a loss of them in the future.

Challenges

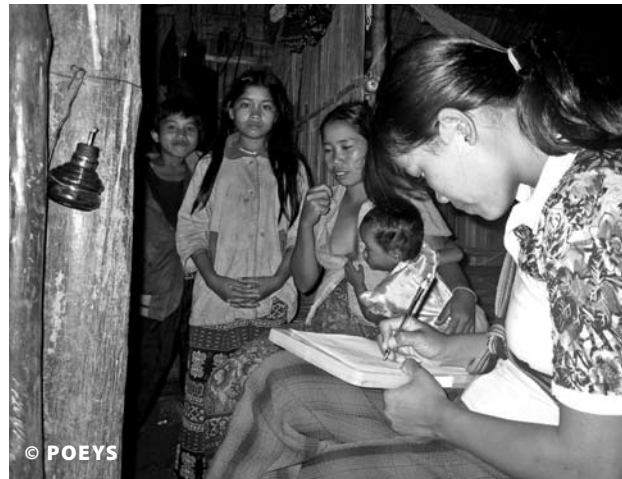
One challenge has been to oversee the needs of the project without sufficient Bunong staff in the PoEYS. One of the trained teachers of the project was therefore employed as Coordinator for the bilingual NFE classes. He is still being trained to gain a better understanding of the components of running a bilingual education programme. A new teacher is now being trained to take over his teaching role in the village.

Another challenge has been the differences in learning needs with both young and older participants. By dividing up the time or dividing the classes into groups, the teachers were better able to meet the needs of all students. Learning games and extra reading material have been provided to teachers to allow more reading opportunities apart from the texts and activities in the primers.

The POEYS desired gender equality and managed to recruit two female trained teachers for the programme. Later one of the teachers had a baby, which disrupted her classes for a few months. She is now back teaching full force. Finding women with qualifications as high as men's is difficult, but programme organizers have made a stronger effort to find women teachers for the second phase. As a result, two of the four teachers in this new group are women. The POEYS is not alone in this struggle.

Of ICC's 30 literacy teachers, only a third are women in spite of their efforts to find women and their acceptance of less qualified women.

Material production has until now been entirely dependent on ICC. Both the POEYS and ICC recognize this is not a good situation, and so are taking measures to address this shortfall. The POEYS is allowing the new coordinator of the bilingual NFE classes to be trained in material production, teacher training, and monitoring. ICC is also taking measures to decentralize material production. An increased amount of reading material is being produced by students and facilitators, themselves, which should be expected from the POEYS bilingual education classes when they enter their second phase of the project. By the end of this year, ICC together with POEYS hopes to trial "Village Material Production Centres" in three locations in the province. Further cooperation with other NGOs is also hoped to provide more stakeholders of Bunong material production and use.



Although there is a common view that bilingual education has the potential to provide a bridge to learning in the national language and help preserve minority languages, there is also a strong pressure to quickly move into the national language. The risk is that the bridge would lack a firm foundation in the mother tongue and that the benefits for acquiring the second language would be less than optimal.

Recommendations

One year of implementing pilot bilingual literacy classes has allowed the POEYS to see the value and the importance of bilingual education in a province of mostly minority groups. The POEYS has started to notice the potential impact on the communities and the need to continue working with the communities to adapt the programme to be most suitable to the needs of the participants.

With a lack of Bunong staff in the POEYS, the close working relationship with ICC will need to continue in order to receive expertise about the Bunong language and materials. Although limited in time, the Bunong POEYS staff should continue to work closely with ICC to acquire necessary skills for running bilingual literacy classes.

The initial teacher training allowed for one week to learn the Bunong orthography, getting familiar with reading and writing Bunong, and learning how to use the materials. The programme organizers found this initial training period to be too short. It has now been extended to ten days for the newly selected teachers who will be teaching the second phase. The POEYS and ICC will try to work out a plan to more practically share experiences and feedback from the communities.

The Royal Government of Cambodia is determined to work toward the goals of the EFA. The alarming statistics of the very low numbers of minority children accessing education in Mondulkiri calls for the Government to act specifically, targeting the needs of the minority communities. When building education programmes, they need to be based on the linguistic and environmental needs of the communities. Bilingual education is therefore the most viable means for the minority people of Cambodia to access education and, consequently, progress in the wider Cambodian society.



CHINA

A Kam-Mandarin Bilingual Education
Pilot Project for Children



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▲ A Kam village in Guizhou

Background

The Kam¹ of south central China are one of China’s minority language communities (nationalities). Many of them live in narrow river valleys nestled in the mountains and hills of Guizhou Province. Famous for their architecture, the Kam often build their houses so that they are connected with one another.

In Tongdao County in Hunan Province, a village named Yuton has 400 households, all connected to each other, so that one can reach every family in the village in heavy rain without ever needing an umbrella...

Edmondson, Somsong and Zhou (2000) Introduction to the Kam-Chinese-Thai-English Dictionary (p. viii)



© Dennis Malone

▲ A small preschool Kam girl

Imagine a rainy morning and a five-year-old village girl, with her little bag for Kam books and some baba (a snack of sticky rice), on her way to Kam preschool. She sings a Kam song as she makes her way along the connections among her neighbors’ houses. In her thoughts are happy tunes, and perhaps images of her friends and cousins also on their way to preschool. She expects to hear more Kam stories and to learn new Kam songs. She makes her way to a classroom where she learns in her own language. A year later, she will begin using a second language (Chinese) that she seldom hears outside of the classroom. It is a language of great importance to her future life and learning. Two languages: she is participating in an experiment called the Kam/ Mandarin Bilingual Education Pilot Project.

The little girl imagined above is a member of the Kam minority nationality, which number 2.96 million. About 1.6 million Kam live primarily in the southeastern region of Guizhou Province with most of the rest living in the adjoining Hunan Province (0.8 million), the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (0.3 million), and Hubei (0.07) in the People’s Republic of China (PRC).



© Rick Waggoner

▲ Wind-and-rain bridge

The Kam are renowned in China for their remarkable architecture using wood, especially the wind-and-rain bridges that visitors cross as they enter Kam villages and the unique drum towers at the center of villages.

The Kam people are also well known for their musical abilities, especially their choral singing. It is easy to imagine that their

1 “Kam” is the name this nationality uses to refer to its own language and culture. It is pronounced “gum” as in “chewing gum.” People outside the ethnic community often refer to the Kam people as the “Dong.”



▲ Kam inhabit parts of four provinces of the People's Republic of China

singing ability is somehow related to the fact that even their speaking seems musical: the Kam language has nine tones, which means that many words can only be distinguished by the pitch of the speaker's voice. Edmondson, Somsong and Zhou (2000) provide an example of nine distinct words, with the tone shown by the final letter of the word:

saol "smelly"	saot "grass carp"
saoc "feeding pen for cattle"	saov "soup"
saop "information"	saok "egret"
saos "hot to the touch"	saoh "to weave a basket"
saox "husband"	

Source: Edmondson, Somsong and Zhou (2000) Introduction to the Kam-Chinese-Thai-English Dictionary (p. xvii)

Kam music has developed into an art form over the centuries. It can be divided into various different types: for example, love songs, which may or may not be accompanied by musical instruments; a cappella songs, such as those imitating sounds from nature (e.g., the cicada), "roadblock" songs (that the people sing to visitors before they let them into the village, to which the visitors sing songs in response), ceremonial songs and mountain songs. The Kam music also includes Kam opera (drama with alternate singing and speaking).



© Long Yaohong

▲ Kam women singing in the drum tower

‘Rice feeds the body, songs feed the spirit.’ The Kam people consider singing as important as eating. From ancient times there has been a tradition of elders teaching songs and children learning them. At the outset of the bilingual education project in autumn of 2000, Zaidang Primary School introduced Kam singing into the curriculum. Children both studied the writing system and learned how to sing. Today, whenever you wander through the village or into someone’s home, you invariably hear the sound of children singing.

*Interim 5-Year Report,
Jiasuo Primary School in Zaima Xiang*

Mr. Yang Shengqi, Headmaster

Before their language was expressed in written form in 1958, the Kam had developed a strong oral literature: myths, ancient songs, legends, folk tales, folk songs, long narrative poems, riddles, shuochang (which combines poetry and prose) and drama. Edmondson et al. (2000) provides a sample of a Kam song with English translation (p. xvii):

Dos yeec

Ngaemc sius keip wap pap jenc jemh.
Dens lagx nyenc Gaeml lyangp dos kgal.
Saemh xonc saemh map kgal menh dos.
Soh emv jenc nyangt yungt angl hac.

As wild flowers bloom on the mountainside,
So the Kam in their hearts love to sing.
From generation to generation they pass on this gift of song;
So the melody in mountain, forest and brookside will ring.

*Edmondson, Somsonge and Zhou (2000)
Introduction to the Kam-Chinese-Thai-English Dictionary (p. xvii)*

An appreciation of the rich depths of the Kam people’s cultural accomplishments underlies the bilingual education pilot project that is being implemented in a remote Kam village in Guizhou Province.

Current Situation Relating to Ethnic Minorities in China

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) lists 56 official nationalities, in which—as some scholars suggest—as many as 200 different languages are spoken (Kosonen, 2005; Stites, 1999). Although the ethnic minorities make up only 8 percent of the total population of China, the number of individual members of minority communities approaches 100 million, a population larger than any country in Western Europe.²

2 Germany, the largest country in Western Europe, has approximately 82 million people.

Children from China's ethnic minorities face the dilemma common to ethnic minority children throughout the world: they often live on the geographic and socioeconomic margins of the dominant language society. They frequently have only limited access to the national education system. When they do gain access to formal primary education, the medium of instruction is a language the children do not speak or understand.

The PRC Constitution asserts the freedom of all nationalities to use and develop their languages, including the freedom to use the nationality languages as the media of instruction where conditions permit. However, in many places, and for various reasons, the multilingual education implied in the Constitution has not been implemented (Kosonen 2005).

Mother Tongue and Bilingual Education in China

Mother tongue-based bilingual education has been implemented for some of the 56 recognized nationalities. However, multilingual education programmes can range from very weak to very strong, with many variations in between.

A weak bilingual education programme uses the minority language only in the very early stage of primary education, usually one or two years at the most. The goal of weak programmes is to move the children into the national language as soon as possible. These programmes are "weak" from the point of view of the mother language because they are not concerned with encouraging the children to maintain their ethnic language. They are also weak from the national language point of view because the lack of time given to developing the learners' mother tongue results in less effective learning in the second language.

A strong bilingual education uses the minority learners' mother tongue orally and in written form, along with the national language, all the way through the upper primary grades. This approach has the goal of producing children who are bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate in their mother tongue and the national language.

Policies on Mother Tongue and Bilingual Education

In China, as in many countries throughout the world, bilingual education³ policies do not always match educational practice. During the past several years, the Government's concern for and promotion of its ethnic minority communities have been genuine, but its practice in terms of support for minority language education has been uncertain because of the national emphasis on Mandarin language

3 It should be mentioned here that in Chinese there are several words that are translated as "bilingual education." Not all of those terms include the idea of biliteracy—reading and writing in both languages—that is assumed when the term is used in this report.

(Putonghua) in education. Nevertheless, ethnic minority communities in cooperation with concerned leaders in the academic and education fields have planned and implemented some interesting educational experiments. The Kam/Mandarin Bilingual Education Pilot Project is one such experiment.

Brief Profile of the Project Site



▲ Zaidang Village, Rongjiang County, Guizhou Province

The Kam village of Zaidang lies in an upland valley in Rongjiang County of southeastern Guizhou Province. The village is divided into two sections, lower and upper, separated by rice paddies.

In spite of the relatively large number of Kam language speakers in China (approximately 1.6 million), the prospects of continued ethnic language maintenance are becoming dimmer as opportunities arising from economic globalization emerge within easy traveling distance from Zaidang. Zaidang villagers are among the many Kam ethnic people attracted to jobs with pay that is significantly higher than any they can obtain through traditional occupations in the village or in new occupations like teaching in the Kam language. Most young and middle-aged adults from Zaidang are now working outside the village, mainly in the

booming urban economic areas of Zhejiang Province (Geary, 2006, personal communication). Strong social and economic forces are at work eroding much of the traditional Kam language and culture that forms the foundation of Kam traditional society.

Strategies and Implementation Process

Selection of the Project Site

Interestingly, the Kam Pilot Project began with the idea of a Kam university. This idea belonged to Kam scholar Professor Long Yaohong of the Guizhou Institute of Nationalities and a representative at the annual People's National Congress in Beijing. Professor Long was interested in establishing a university to promote key aspects of Kam life and culture: for example, agriculture, forestry, music and textiles. Kam students at that time were not experiencing success in completing Chinese secondary schools and, therefore, not many were gaining entrance to universities. However, discussions about the educational challenges facing Kam children persuaded Professor Long to postpone the idea of a Kam university in favor of an experiment in bilingual education that would build on the foundation of the learners' own mother tongue (Geary and Pan, 2003).

Like minority children elsewhere in China, Kam learners who succeed in passing through the Chinese mainstream school system "need to alienate themselves from their cultural heritage (their religion, language, and history, in particular) in order to be successful..." (Hansen, quoted in Geary and Pan, 2003, p. 277). Kam leaders are looking for a way to make their children successful in the Chinese education system without having to give up their ethnic language and cultural heritage.

Unlike educated members of some nationalities, most Kam intellectuals strongly support the idea of including Kam language and literacy in their children's education so that the children gain appreciation and love for their own language and culture as well as competence and literacy in the Chinese language.

Leaders of the Kam community and the Rongjiang Education Office identified Zaidang village as the best site for the project in 1999, using two main criteria. The first was that the village should be similar to other villages in the area so that, if successful, the project could confidently be replicated in neighbouring villages. The second was that the community members needed to support the idea of bilingual education in Kam and Chinese (Geary & Pan, 2003).

As mentioned above, Zaidang is divided into two parts, an upper village (Jiasuo) and a lower village (Zaidang) that are separated by rice paddies and linked by a dirt road. Therefore, the pilot project includes two Kam pre-schools and two primary schools. Currently, a new primary school is being constructed in Jiasuo that will have classrooms for grades 1 through 6. The primary school in Zaidang includes only grades 1 and 2. Zaidang students from grades 3 to 6 walk to Jiasuo each school day.



▲ Zaidang village with wind-and-rain bridge



▲ Pilot project preschool building

Preparation for Kam Literacy

The Kam nationality uses a writing system developed by Chinese linguists in the late 1950s, but not yet officially authorized by the Government. Kam is written using roman letters and is based on hanyu pinyin, a system of writing Chinese that also uses roman letters.⁴ When the Kam sound is the same as or similar to Chinese, the same letter that is used for the sound in pinyin is used for Kam. Where Kam has a sound not present in Chinese, a double letter is used. Also, a consonant symbol is used at the end of each syllable to mark one of nine Kam tones (see the tone examples under “Introduction to Kam Language and Culture” above).

Long and Zheng (1998) include a significant response to the testing of the Kam orthography in the mid 1980s:

“Numerous students, speaking from first-hand experience, were saying: “In the past we studied Chinese for many years and still were not able to record songs, write letters, or

4 Roman-based writing systems are used for many languages including, for example, English, French, Spanish, Vietnamese, Indonesian, and Malaysian.

do anything else with Chinese. Now we've studied Dong script for two or three months and already we can write songs. The gains from studying Chinese for several years do not match the gains from studying Dong for several months. The Dong script helps to further the use of the mother tongue in the everyday lives of the Dong people." (p. 211)

Not only did the introduction of the Kam orthography help Kam speakers write their own language and strengthen their own cultural heritage, Long and Zheng note that learning to write Kam helped the students learn Chinese.

"Studying Chinese after studying Dong can make progress in Chinese extremely fast. Take for example the young lady Wu Liangmei...from Liping's Yandong. She never before studied in school and was illiterate in Chinese. In 1983 she studied the Dong script for three months in the village evening class and was able to master it. Then she was able to use the script to annotate the sounds and meanings of Chinese characters, using Dong to study Chinese. By 1985, she was able to recognize the Chinese characters in the first volume of the Dong textbook, more than 1,000 characters. Since her study methods were good and her progress fast, the Liping Nationalities Commission made an exception to its normal rules and enrolled her as a teacher of Dong." (p. 211)

The fact that a Kam orthography already existed and had been successfully learned and used over the previous two decades supported the idea of a Kam/Mandarin bilingual education pilot project. Project organizers were confident that it would be possible to develop the literature and instructional materials needed for an effective programme.

Identification of Learning Needs

Pilot project leaders identified two main learning needs for Kam children: (1) the need to acquire Kam literacy prior to being introduced to Chinese literacy, and (2) the need to learn enough oral Chinese prior to Grade 1 in order to help them "bridge" into Chinese literacy.

Because of the experiences of Kam learners described in Long and Zheng (1998) above, pilot project leaders felt that Kam children would profit two-fold from gaining literacy in Kam. First, their Kam literacy abilities would increase their ability to acquire Chinese literacy, and through this to improve their overall school performance. Second, they would gain and maintain a love and appreciation for Kam language and culture. This Kam hypothesis is supported by dozens of research studies on bilingual education and second language learning in other parts of the world.

Kam children hear very little Chinese language spoken in their homes and communities and, therefore, could understand very little of the instruction given to them in Chinese in Grade 1. When teachers asked the Kam children to respond to them, the children were unable to speak in Chinese. This led some Chinese teachers in Kam primary schools to consider the Kam children as "slow learners" and "not very bright."

Minority language children throughout the world share in this experience. Their inability to understand and speak the majority or national language is often interpreted by the majority population as an intellectual deficit that the minority children inherit, rather than what it actually is: the product of an education system that requires some of its students to learn in a language they do not know. The Kam

learners, like their minority language counterparts throughout Asia, need multilingual educational innovations that will build on what they do know (their own language and culture) and provide a good bridge to what they do not know (the national language and culture curriculum).

Thus, the leaders of the Kam/Mandarin Bilingual Education Pilot Project—a three-way collaboration among the Rongjiang County education authorities, the Guizhou University Social Science Research Institute⁵, and SIL International—designed their educational innovation to include the following components:

- a two-year preschool programme for five-year old and six-year old Kam children that uses Kam exclusively as the language of instruction;
- oral Chinese to be introduced to the children in the second preschool year, using communicative language learning approaches (e.g., total physical response [TPR]), with Chinese language gradually introduced as the language of instruction in Grade 1.
- Kam as a language of instruction in the early primary grades to be used as follows: 50% in Grade 1, 40% in Grade 2, and 22% in Grade 3.
- a continuing component of Kam language, literacy and culture from Grade 4 through Grade 6, with Chinese used as the main language of instruction.

The initial challenge to implementing such a programme was two-fold. The first challenge was in developing the needed Kam literature and curriculum materials. The second challenge was in training Kam teachers to implement the classroom instruction in Kam.

Development of Curriculum and Learning Materials

The lack of printed literature and instructional materials in minority languages is often cited worldwide as an insurmountable obstacle to bilingual education. This is true also in the Chinese nationalities' context. Stites (1999) describes the lack of minority language teachers and texts as a key explanation for the failure of bilingual education projects to gain support in the Zhuang nationality language area. (Zhuang is a closely related language to Kam, both linguistically and geographically.) Thus, the leaders of the Kam pilot project began the programme well aware of the need for Kam instructional materials.

Mindful of the UNESCO recommendation that at least 800 titles need to be available to readers if literacy is to be maintained in a language, the project organizers scheduled a Kam Writers' Workshop in July of 1999 at the Rongjiang Teachers' School in Qiandongnan Miao Dong autonomous prefecture of Guizhou Province. This was the "first step" towards achieving the goal of having ample mother tongue literature for the Kam learners. The workshop was led by Prof. Long Yaohong and included 17 participants, together with two participants from SIL International (Geary, Geary, Long and Pan, 1999).

Organizers and participants set the tone for the Kam project at this workshop: the materials developed would be: (1) graded for ease of reading for the young Kam learners, (2) well-illustrated, and (3) based on cultural themes and topics familiar and interesting to the Kam children. Past experience in education in multilingual and multicultural contexts shows that readers think of the materials in terms of space:

5 In 2004, the partnering work unit in Guizhou University became the Guizhou University Southwest Minority Language and Culture Research Institute.

reading material in their own language about their own homes, neighborhoods and communities is felt to be “near”; reading materials about other people, in other places, doing and saying unfamiliar things is felt to be “distant.” Culturally distant literature is much more difficult for new readers than literature that is culturally near (cf. Malone, 2003). The workshop organizers reported the following (Geary, Geary, Long and Pan, 1999):

“The goal of the workshop was to produce some written materials in Dong, especially for children. Three kinds of material were produced. The first consisted of ‘Level 2 books,’ slightly more advanced than ‘Level 1 books’ and actually easier to compose. Typically, these are stories about 10 A5-pages long⁶, with one or two sentences per page. Each page has a picture that accompanies and illustrates the text. The second genre was that of ‘big books.’ These consist of stories about 20 A3-pages long, also with one or two sentences per page. Each page of the text is illustrated by an A3-sized drawing on the facing page. The third genre was that of ‘listening stories,’ intended for reading aloud to the children and not (in the first instance) to be read by the children themselves. (p.2)”

At a later workshop, in November 1999, a list of Kam cultural themes (one for each week of the school year) aided the authors in writing the materials. These themes were based on a Kam cultural calendar that had been developed earlier.

Curriculum Content

The Kam Multilingual Education Pilot Project began in September 2000 by adding a two-year preschool to the already existing Zaidang Primary School programme. Five- and six-year old Kam children begin their formal education with four 40-minute classes per day, two classes in the morning and two in the afternoon. Two of the four classes are Kam language classes, during which the children are introduced to the Kam alphabet and to reading and writing Kam. The instructional programme uses two tracks—a story track and a word-building track—with one 40-minute class for each track (adapted from Stringer and Faraclas, 2001).

Programme organizers frequently find the task of developing instructional materials for a bilingual education programme among the most serious challenges to providing effective learning for the children. How can national language educators develop these materials in the minority language? The answer is, of course, they cannot. Then who can? The answer to that is simple: the minority people themselves. Drawing from the Kam community leaders’ and teachers’ expert knowledge of their language and culture, Kam programme organizers developed a wide range of curriculum and instructional materials for use in the preschool:

- 160 stories based on Kam cultural themes written and illustrated for 1st -year preschool and 2nd-year preschool (320 stories all together).
- 100 stories based on Kam cultural themes written and illustrated for Grade 1, 100 for Grade 2, 90 for Grade 3, 70 for Grade 4, 40 for Grade 5 (projected) and 40 for Grade 6 (projected).

6 A4 is a normal size sheet of paper. A5 is half as large as A4. A3 is twice as large as A4.

Story Track	Word-building Track
<p>Experience Story: The teacher introduces a theme from the children’s culture (e.g., water buffalo); the children talk about the theme and the teacher encourages them to do something together related to the theme, then make up a story together about what they have just done. As the children tell the story to the teacher, she/he writes what they say on the chalkboard. When finished, the teacher reads the story to the children, and then helps the children to read the story with her/him.</p> <p>Listening Story: The teacher reads a story to the children from a book of short stories. The listening story is on the same theme as the children’s Experience Story. Each listening story has one large corresponding illustration.</p> <p>Shared Story. The teacher reads a story from a Big Book. There is a picture on each page that goes along with the words. After the teacher reads the story to the children, she/he reads the story with the children. Then she/he asks for individual volunteers to read with her/him or by themselves. Then everyone reads the story again together. Each child has a small book with the same story.</p> <p>Children’s Own Story. The teacher then encourages the children to think about all they have read and learned about the theme for that week. She/he tells them to write their own story about the theme and/or draw pictures to tell the story. Then she/he asks the children to read their stories to their classmates.</p>	<p>Key Word: The teacher uses a key word to introduce a new vowel or consonant or a tone letter and shows how the letters and tone marks are combined to make the word.</p> <p>Syllables. The teacher shows the children how words are made up of syllable initials (onsets), syllable rhymes and tones, and helps the children put the onsets, rhymes and tones together to make new words.</p> <p>Sentences. The teacher helps the children understand how words can be put together to make sentences.</p> <p>Writing & Spelling. (1) The teacher demonstrates how to write the new letter with her/his back to the children, using her/his finger to “write” the letter in the air, then tells the children to do the same; (2) she/he writes the letter on the chalkboard; and (3) she/he helps the children practice writing the letter in their notebooks.</p> <p>The teacher dictates the keyword (with the new letter) and the children write it down in their notebooks. The teacher writes the word on the chalkboard and children check to see if they wrote it correctly. She/he dictates other words as time allows. Later, the teacher also dictates sentences for the children to write.</p>

That adds up to 760 Kam stories. Combined with another 240 supplementary stories being developed for independent reading practice, these 1000 stories provide a strong foundation on which Kam learners can build a love for reading and writing.

The majority of the stories were written by a team of 12 Kam people at story-writing workshops organized by the Bilingual Education Pilot Project, although teachers in the Zaidang school also wrote many stories during workshops convened in the school holidays.

Other subjects in the Kam preschool curriculum taught in Kam include:

- math (four classes per week)
- singing (two classes per week)
- art (two classes per week)
- physical education (two classes per week)

Kam Children Sing

The singing classes are particularly worthy of note. A song has been written for each of the 80 weeks of the two preschool years, and for each of the 72 weeks of the primary Grades 1 and 2. When you walk through Jiasuo village on any particular day, you often hear children humming or singing one of the school songs. Even pre-preschool children, younger than five years of age, can be overheard singing the songs. The Kam love to sing, and the preschool affords a wonderful opportunity for young children to be apprenticed early into the art. A VCD was produced in November 2001 showing Zaidang preschool children performing 37 of the songs from the first preschool year. This is very popular in Kam villages (most of which now have several VCD players).

(Geary and Pan, 2003, p. 284)

Building a Good Bridge to Mandarin Chinese

One unique feature of the Kam preschools is the introduction of oral Mandarin. Traditionally, the national language was introduced through the written characters. However, since the children rarely hear Mandarin spoken to them, the Kam/ Mandarin Bilingual Education Pilot Project includes these lessons as a way of preparing the children for instruction using Mandarin in Grade 1. Bilingual Kam teachers employ a learner-centered, language learning method known as TPR (total physical response) to teach basic vocabulary and grammar in an enjoyable, meaningful and non-threatening way. These oral lessons are carried over into the beginning of Grade 1 in order to make a good “bridge” for the Kam children as they enter the Chinese language classrooms.

Teaching Chinese reading and writing begins in Grade 1. The Kam children in the Bilingual Education Pilot Project have already learned to read and write Kam by that time, including frequent opportunities to write stories and experiences in Kam. That experience helps the Kam children develop literacy skills in Chinese. One Grade 4 teacher commented that in the past Kam children could not write stories in Chinese. However, now, the children who began their education in Kam preschool are in Grade 4 and they are able to write interesting and creative stories in Chinese. Whether better Chinese writing ability is a general benefit of Kam/ Mandarin bilingual education will not be known



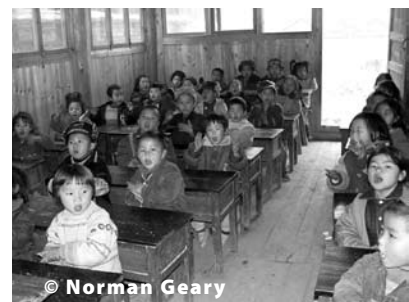
▲ A preschooler “reads” her story to her classmates



▲ A preschooler learns to read Kam tones correctly



▲ A selection of Kam reading and instructional materials



▲ Kam children sing enthusiastically both in and out of class

until formal testing can be done at the end of their primary school education.

The English Component

In keeping with a government plan to introduce English language learning in all Chinese schools, Kam/Mandarin bilingual education programme organizers have decided to do an experiment by monitoring English instruction for Grade 5 during the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years. The purpose of this experiment, which is still on-going, is to discover how the Kam children's initial schooling in the mother tongue, including acquisition of mother tongue literacy, affects their ability to learn English. The Grade 5 Kam students in 2005-2006 did not participate in the Kam/ Mandarin Bilingual Education Pilot Project. The Grade 5 Students in 2006-2007 will be the first group of Kam students to have participated in Kam education for the preschool years and early primary grades. Does the Kam children's early language education in the mother tongue provide an advantage to them in learning English language and literacy as a subject in the upper primary school grades? The results of this experiment will eventually be published as part of the over-all evaluation of the Kam/ Mandarin Bilingual Education Pilot Project.

Cost of Materials Development

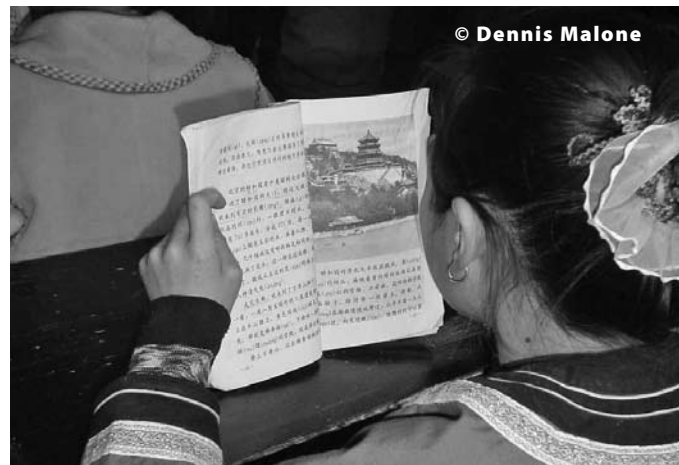
The Kam/ Mandarin Bilingual Education Pilot Project is being planned and implemented over a 10-year period from 1999 to 2009. The total cost of reading and instructional materials during this period is estimated at US\$24,000. If that cost is distributed among the children who have and will use the materials, the figures below can be estimated:

1st year preschool:	13.5 yuan	(US\$1.73)
2nd year preschool:	13.9 yuan	(US\$1.78)
Grade 1:	13.9 yuan	(US\$1.78)
Grade 2:	8.7 yuan	(US\$1.11)
Grade 3:	5.9 yuan	(US\$0.76)
Grade 4:	4.4 yuan	(US\$0.56)
Grade 5:	4.2 yuan	(US\$0.54)
Grade 6:	4.2 yuan	(US\$0.54)



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▲ A Total Physical Response (TPR) lesson in Mandarin for Grade 1 children



© Dennis Malone

▲ Grade 4 Kam student reading Chinese textbook

Thus, the book-fees for a child to pursue the whole Kam programme – excluding teachers' aids - are 68.7 yuan (US\$8.81).⁷

Several factors should be taken into account when calculating the cost effectiveness of the materials. First, the materials are not quickly outdated and are durable enough to last over a period of years. Second, the materials have been tested and found effective, meaning that future Kam schools need only reproduce more of the same if and when the programme expands. The number of students who will use the materials over the 10-year period reduces the initial per capita cost of materials to a very reasonable amount.

Training and Equipping Kam Teachers

If the provision of a large quantity of Kam literature is one key to the success of the programme so far, then a second key is surely the Kam teachers who have been selected and trained to teach the Kam curriculum. Programme organizers estimate that prior to the start of the Kam/ Mandarin Bilingual Education Programme, fewer than 10 Kam adults possessed the reading and writing skills in Kam that are required for teaching in a Kam language classroom.

In January 2000, officials from the Rongjiang County Education Office interviewed 19 potential teacher-trainees in Zaidang. Seven were selected for training. They were all mother tongue speakers of Kam and inhabitants of Zaidang. Their own schooling backgrounds varied, each having spent between 3 and 12 years in the national education system. In March 2000, the seven trainees participated in a 4-week workshop for learning to read and write Kam. Four weeks was not enough for fluency, but laid a good foundation for Kam literacy upon which to build later.

Thereafter, in August 2000, a further 3-week workshop in teaching methods was convened in Zaidang, attended by the same seven trainees as in March. Selection of four preschool teachers was then announced. Two were to serve in the upper community (Jiasuo), and two in the lower community (Zaidang). At each place, one teacher taught Preschool 1 (5-year-olds) and the other taught Preschool 2 (6-year-olds). Classes began in September of 2000, using the same curriculum for 5-year-olds and 6-year-olds in the first year of the project. There were 16 or 17 children in each of the four classes. (Geary and Pan, 2003, p. 282-283). A fifth teacher was employed to substitute for other teachers in the case of enforced absences.

How were these Kam teachers paid? Because of their educational backgrounds and the limited amount of training provided, the Kam teachers are not “qualified” in the same way as are the trained, certified teachers in the formal education system. A modest payment of about US\$365 per year was allocated, though this was 67% more than salaries of the 5 temporary teachers at the primary school. That yearly figure has since been doubled due to the strong pressures on the Kam teachers to leave the village and go to urban areas where they can make twice as much money in unskilled construction or factory work.

⁷ Based on personal communication from N. Geary in November 2006. The dollar figures are computed based on the exchange rate of 7.8 yuan to 1 US dollar.

Kam Language Education Teaching Plan and Methods

Pilot project organizers decided upon an instructional methodology that takes into account an appropriate balance between learning activities that focus on meaning and communication and those that focus on correctness and accuracy: a two-track Multi-Strategy Method (see “Contents of Curriculum and Materials” above).

In the Story Track, the teacher’s role is to provide a good model of reading and writing for the children to imitate. She/he encourages the children to read and write and be creative without calling attention to “mistakes” the learners may make in their attempts.

In the Word-Building Track, the teacher’s role is to demonstrate correct ways of combining letters into words, and words into sentences. Here the teacher emphasizes accuracy, correcting the children’s mistakes immediately, but in an encouraging way, always praising them for their successes.

The purpose of the two-track approach to mother tongue literacy is to awaken the children’s creativity, especially in their writing ability, and provide them with confidence in their learning so that they will be well prepared to bridge into Chinese language and literacy in grades 1 to 3.

Networking with Other Organizations

Ethnic minority communities are frequently under-resourced and need help from outside if their goals of language and cultural maintenance, along with good-quality bilingual education for their children, are to be achieved.

As in most successful ethnic minority bilingual education projects in other parts of the world, the local Kam community collaborates with several other agencies and organizations in order to implement their educational programme. SIL International, a non-government organization (NGO) that works in language development among minority language communities in over 60 countries around the world, provided technical support for developing the educational capacity of the Kam language. Norman and Ruth Geary have been SIL International technical



▲ Story Track, in which the children participate in reading a “Big Book” cultural story



▲ Word-Building Track, in which the children learn the parts of the Kam word lioge

advisers to the Project since its beginning in 1999. Additional SIL International staff have also helped along the way.

The Rongjiang Education Office provided the necessary approval and related support without which the Project would not have been possible.

The Guizhou Nationalities Research Institute, working under the supervision of the Guizhou Nationality Commission (a government body), released a member of its staff, Mr. Pan Yongrong, to support the research.

A separate institution, the Guizhou University for Nationalities, where Professor Long Yaohong is on staff, was likewise supportive.

Cost of the Project

The over-all cost of the 10-year Kam/ Mandarin Bilingual Education Pilot Project will come to approximately US\$118,000 (or about \$12,000 per year). Most of the expense has been in paying salaries to preschool teachers and topping-up salaries to the poorly paid “temporary teachers” in the primary school.

Impact of the Project

Impact on Education Policy

Programme organizers realize that it is still too early for the Kam/ Mandarin Bilingual Education Pilot Project to have an impact on education policy in China. The nature of effective bilingual education programmes is that the real impacts are not demonstrated until the learners reach the secondary levels of the formal system and display their advanced skills in the national language. The programme organizers, therefore, plan to evaluate the programme participants over a longer period of time. Students leaving the Zaidang Primary School for secondary education elsewhere will be tracked, and their progress documented. Their performances at the secondary level will then be compared with those of Kam students who did not participate in the Kam/ Mandarin Bilingual Education Pilot Project. If there is to be an impact on education policy, it should be observable by that point at the latest.

Impact on Learner Participation

The Kam/ Mandarin Bilingual Education Pilot Project addresses the learning needs of Kam minority children in two basic ways: (1) by beginning and building the children’s education in the Kam language, which they know when they enter the preschool classrooms; and (2) by using learner-centered instructional methods that involve the children actively in meaningful learning activities. What is the impact of this kind of education on the learners? A participant gives her own view:

Wu Seip Fanc, Grade 2 Student

I like reading. The stories are great fun. In class, I like being praised for re-telling the stories. Often I see old people from our village go to the market in town to sell vegetables. They get cheated because they don’t even know how much money is being discussed. When I grow older I want to help other children learn to go to school and study well to help them avoid such problems.”

For three years from 2002 to 2005, four other primary schools in the same administrative area as Zaidang convened two years of preschool in Kam. Although all four headmasters asked for support to continue the Kam preschools, financial support was not available in 2005. Two of the headmasters wrote as follows:

Guiliu Primary School Headmaster

During these three years the project classes have been pitched at the right level for 5-6 year-old children. The textbooks are designed for children of these ages, with the content of the texts facilitating study for them. In mathematics classes, the children master simple addition and subtraction, with the help of various games. In language class there are "experience stories", and the workbook track approach with syllable initials and syllable finals, exercises for distinguishing different shapes, and so on. These are all appropriate for developing the children's intelligence, and they help to build a good foundation for future education. Each week there are also music, physical education and art classes, and these are favourites with the children. These all improve the children's educational skills, develop their reasoning abilities, and improve their ability all-round. They help by building a good foundation for entering grade 1 of primary school.

Those children who have never been in the Dong preschool are far behind those who have, with regard to studying quickly, studying well, and ability to receive and understand the teaching given. Parents and children have learned that "For the children to have good examination results, they need first to study in the Dong preschool."

(Zaima Township, Rongjiang County, 20 May, 2005, translated from Chinese by D.N. Geary)

Miaolan Primary School Headmaster

Miaolan primary school has researched the children and parents involved in the project. We have found that those children who first studied Dong and then studied Mandarin Chinese are superior in every respect to those who never studied Dong. This applies not only to reading and writing Chinese pinyin, to simple mathematics, and to verbal expression, but also to music, physical education and art. In every respect, those children who have not studied Dong are not as good as those who have. Those children who have studied Dong are more independent and have more initiative with respect to study and to life generally.

The parents of Dong preschool children reckon that the curriculum studied by the children in the bilingual program is strong on knowledge and on interest value, and these are important ingredients in the preschool process of initiation into the schooling system. Moreover the studies are simple, and the academic demands are light, so that the children do not feel much pressure. They enjoy going to school to study and to play. This eliminates from the very beginning the feeling of nervousness that the children typically have towards study. They themselves are willing to go to school, and they look forward to school life. This has a decisive impact on the whole future course of the children's lives.

(Zaima Township, Rongjiang County, 20 March, 2005, translated from Chinese by D.N. Geary)

Interestingly, the preliminary reports have also highlighted a key assumption of the bilingual education programme model followed in Zaidang: beginning in the language they know best and learning to read and write in that language helps the Kam children do better in learning Chinese.

Capacity to Learn the National Language

Mastering the Chinese writing system by learning as many as 6,000 distinct characters is a long, daunting process, even for Han children. The idea that minority children will improve their learning of Chinese literacy by developing their literacy skills in their mother tongue through preschool and grades 1 to 6 seems absurd to many people. How can you take away that much time and have the learners do *better*? As illogical as it sounds, it works. The confidence, knowledge, and skill the children develop in reading and writing their own language prepares them for learning a second language much better and more thoroughly than if they were “submerged” in the second language immediately.

Headmaster of Zaidang Primary School

People aged above 50 or 60 in Zaidang cannot speak local Mandarin correctly, never mind standard Mandarin. In practice, some women cannot communicate at all in Mandarin. In the school, grade 1 and 2 students do not understand Mandarin. This is a great hindrance to education. In light of this situation, after implementation of the bilingual education pilot project in the village, Grade 1 students only studied Dong.⁸ By the time they reached Grade 2, students studied both Dong and Mandarin, comparing and contrasting the two. In this way, progression was from simple to complicated, step by step, and easier for the students to grasp. This has been advantageous for the Mandarin levels of the children, and standards have clearly improved. For example: before the project, the average Mandarin language mark in Grade 1 was 42%, and average mathematics mark was 53%. After the project, the average Dong language mark in Grade 1 was 81% and the average mathematics mark was 79%. The first ever project children have now reached Grade 4, and have always been producing good examination marks. You can already see the good effects of bilingual education on Mandarin Chinese.

Mid-Project Report by Yang Shengqi, Headmaster at Zaidang Primary School

Socio-economic Impact on Learners

Kam people are among the poorest in China. They work very hard, day-by-day, to maintain a subsistence standard of living. Their hard life and the difficulty of earning cash income make employment outside the Kam geographic areas a strong temptation.

A recent investigation shows an amazing phenomenon taking place in Zaidang village (and likely elsewhere in the Kam nationality): the migration of villagers to paid employment in the economically booming large cities within traveling distance.

Both parents at home: 59 (21 in Zaidang, 38 in Jiasuo)

Both parents working outside the village: 65 (38 in Zaidang, 27 in Jiasuo)

Father working outside the village, mother at home: 31 (19 in Zaidang, 12 in Jiasuo)

Mother working outside the village, father at home: 3 (3 in Zaidang)

Total: 158 children (N. Geary, personal communication, July 2006)

8 For the first six years of the Kam/Han Bilingual Education Pilot Project, the curriculum for Grade 1 of primary school was taught almost entirely in Kam. Beginning in the 7th year, the curriculum for Grade 1 was weighted more towards Han Chinese, with children studying the usual Mandarin textbooks used by all their contemporaries.

The phenomenon imbedded in the numbers above will likely have a negative impact on the Kam primary school learners affected by their parents' absence. Often their continued residence in the village is being put under enormous stress. Certainly, unless the Kam learners are able to stay in the programme for its duration, they are not likely to realize the anticipated potential socio-economic benefits of the programme.

Considering the economics of education, the impact of strong bilingual education programmes will most often be noted in young people who successfully complete secondary school and gain employment in the larger society. That, of course, is also something that only future research will determine in respect of the Kam/ Mandarin Bilingual Education Pilot Project.

Cost Effectiveness of the Project

As above, this feature is also difficult to assess at this point in time. If the percentage of Kam students entering into and completing the secondary level increases significantly, then the programme will be judged as very cost effective. If no change in those percentages can be determined, then the programme will not have achieved one of its primary goals. It should be noted, however, that there will very likely be other benefits that redeem the costs of a bilingual approach to primary education, including increased levels of academic achievement in Mandarin, as well as maintenance of the ethnic language and increased self-esteem and confidence among the Kam students.

Sustainability of the Project

Kam Pilot Project organizers have tried to prepare for ongoing and sustainable mother tongue-based bilingual education, especially in the two key areas that have proven to be obstacles in other nationalities: teacher training and materials production. However, the key to sustainability and expansion of bilingual education in the Kam area appears to be the willingness of Rongjiang County education officials to support the expansion of the programme. In short, unless the value and practicality of Kam/ Mandarin bilingual education is recognized and supported at that level of government, there is little chance of the programme being sustained. Nor is the Kam community likely to find the financial resources to sustain an innovative education programme on its own, no matter how successful the programme may be.

The project has been particularly successful in terms of training teachers, developing curriculum and instructional methods, and in enabling Kam children to do well in school. Regardless, if the county and provincial governments do not approve and support the programme there will be no chance of expansion to other Kam communities. Without expansion to other Kam villages, there is little likelihood of sustaining the programme.

The extra costs in implementing the Kam/ Mandarin bilingual education programme are relatively low. However, the programme organizers do not have funds to implement and sustain a growing bilingual education programme that will provide the same benefits to Kam children elsewhere that it has provided to Kam children in Zaidang.

Community Participation and Ownership

Generally speaking, the Zaidang community has supported the Kam/Mandarin Bilingual Education Pilot Project. Community members originally participated in and supported the programme, not because

they were persuaded of its value (they had no collective experience of past successful programmes to have such confidence), but because they trusted the programme organizers. They soon saw the excitement and enthusiasm of the children who went to Kam school, in contrast to before when they went reluctantly to Chinese-only classrooms. One grandmother of a Kam BEPP student put it like this:

“I think it’s good for our children to start their studies in Dong and then transition into Mandarin Chinese. The children’s study of Dong will help our stories and songs to be preserved. I hope this project will continue to develop in our village.”

Policy

At present, the Rongjiang Education Office does not have a policy of language and education that explicitly promotes the use of minority nationality languages in the classrooms of formal primary schools. The Kam pilot project has benefited from the Rongjiang County Office’s approval of the bilingual education experiment for Kam children at Zaidang. As indicated above, an additional four schools were encouraged to experiment with Kam preschool classes between 2002 and 2005. The results were positive in each school. However, without official Education Office approval and financial support at the county level, pilot project organizers have little chance of maintaining and extending this kind of multilingual education to Kam children in other communities in Guizhou Province.

Challenges

Learning Chinese Literacy

Probably the greatest challenge to the Kam/Mandarin Bilingual Education Programme is the fact that, as designed, it falls into the category of “early-exit bilingual education” which multilingual education scholars from around the world consider a “weak” programme. In research studies conducted elsewhere, a general condition of success for minority language learners in the national language education system was the amount of time they had in mother tongue instruction. In other words, the more time they spent learning in their first language (along with the official school language) the better they did in and through the new language. Research suggests that the use of the minority language at least 50 percent of the time from grades 1 through 6 is the minimum for ensuring a strong multilingual education programme that will yield positive results all the way through the secondary level of formal education, and beyond (cf. Thomas and Collier, 2002; Hakuta, Butler and Witt, 2000, Lindholm-Leary, 2001).

As the Kam/Mandarin Bilingual Education Pilot Project is currently being implemented, percentages of classroom time with Kam instruction are as follows: Grade 1 (50%); Grade 2 (40%); Grade 3 (22%); Grade 4 (10%); Grade 5 (10%); and Grade 6 (10%). Thus, the Kam/Mandarin programme will likely fall rather short of the optimal results from bilingual education.

However, minority community learners in China face a somewhat unique educational challenge: they must learn 4,000-6,000 Chinese characters for practical and functional Chinese literacy. Rote memory approaches are commonly used for this task and rote learning takes time. The challenge for the Kam/Mandarin Bilingual Education Programme is to provide Kam learners with enough literacy and oral language practice in their mother tongue to help them develop higher thinking skills while simultaneously providing them with enough time to learn the required Chinese characters and gain confidence in using the characters meaningfully for communication.

Unauthorized Orthography

Without an officially authorized orthography, any expansion of the Kam-language education might be hampered. Because of the relatively small programme and limited location, the unauthorized orthography has not been an obstacle. However, if the programme were to expand, the need to print large numbers of instructional and reading material may pose a problem.

Negative Attitudes of Some Community Members

There are a few educated and influential Kam individuals who see no value in their ethnic language, are not transmitting it to their children and, in fact, do not speak it anymore themselves. These individuals may be able to influence others to abandon their heritage language and culture. However, the Kam/Mandarin Bilingual Education Pilot Project has already touched Kam people's awareness of their cultural and linguistic treasures. Perhaps the best defense against the defection of Kam members is the delight and satisfaction that Kam children are experiencing in their bilingual education classrooms.

Recommendations

Kam Pre-primary and Primary Bilingual Education Components. Because the optimal time for Kam language instruction is in the two pre-primary years of schooling, the pre-school curriculum and instructional programme needs to remain strong. The selection and training of teachers in this level should be given highest priority in the programme.

Also, because the language of instruction moves rapidly to Mandarin, the Kam bilingual education programme needs to include a component of continuing development of and experiences in Kam literacy and learning skills. Indeed, that is already in the programme plan. Its importance is emphasized here because it is crucial if the long-term benefits of mother tongue education are to be realized.

If possible, time should be given in each of the primary grades for the Kam children to revise and reflect on their learning in Chinese by discussing their lessons in Kam. They can practice translating new concepts from Mandarin to Kam, or ask questions in Kam for clarification. Such a segment need not be longer than 30 minutes, but its value would be: (1) in giving teachers a clearer idea of what concepts are understood and which are not, and (2) in enabling the Kam learners to continue the development of their mother tongue for higher thinking skills. Research elsewhere has confirmed that first language cognitive abilities transfer readily to the second language that is being learned.

Community and Government Support. The Kam/Mandarin Pilot Project still has three years to run. During that time, the project coordinators will need to continue their efforts to maintain and increase community and government awareness of and support for the Project. Educational innovations like the Kam programme cannot be sustained without the commitment of the local community to a multilingual education for their children. Nor can such a programme be sustained—much less expanded—without the moral and material support of the Government Education Commission. If governmental support can also extend to the official approval of the Kam orthography, so much the better.

Where does all this leave the little girl we imagined at the beginning of this booklet? As mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this booklet, the houses of some Kam villages are all connected to each other. Is the community's primary school also connected to those homes? Or is it a separate building,

detached from the village and different, “home” of an unknown language? Is it a place the little girl will feel at ease, or is it a strange and alien world of incomprehensible words and activities?

The Kam/Mandarin Bilingual Education Project is, in one sense, an effort to connect the home life of the little Kam girl, her friends and cousins in Zaidang village with the school in which those children are being educated. Such a connection will enable the young Kam learners to travel both directions between their home language and culture and the language and culture of the Chinese nation. Then they can be productive participants in the development of both the Kam community and the larger society in which the Kam live. Such a connection will communicate to the children that they can be Kam and they can also be valued and equal citizens of the People’s Republic of China.

Not that hard to imagine, is it?



INDIA

A Mother Tongue-based Literacy Programme for
the Rabha Ethnic Community

Background

India is home to a large number of indigenous ethnic minorities. Some of these indigenous groups are quite large and others number a few thousand. Some groups of ethnic minorities get a chance to learn their language, and some also learn in their language. The northeastern part of India has the largest number of ethnic minorities. In Assam, there are 23 ethnic minority committees according to the 1991 Census, which was the latest report available at the time of starting the Rabha Mother Tongue Literacy Programme. The population data of Assam's ethnic community is as follows:

No.	Tribes	Population	Language spoken
1.	Assam	2,66,38,407	
2.	Bodo	12,67,015	Bodo
3.	Miri	4,67,790	Missing
4.	Karbi	2,85,811	Karbi
5.	Kachari Sonwal	2,51,725	Assamese
6.	Rabha	2,36,931	Rabha
7.	Lalung	1,43,746	Tiwa
8.	Dimasa	65,009	Dimasa
9.	Deori	35,849	Deori
10.	Kuki	21,883	Kuki
11.	Garo	17,998	Garo
12.	Naga	15,354	Ao, Angami etc.
13.	Barmans of Cachar	13,378	Assamese
14.	Khasi, Jiantia, Synteng, Pnar, War, Bhoi, Lyngngam	11,358	
15.	Hmar	11,189	Hmar
16.	Mech	6,738	Mech
17.	Hojai	4,582	Hojai
18.	Chakma	4,187	Chakma
19.	Man	2,582	Man
20.	Hajong	1,638	Hajong
21.	Mizo	1,031	Mizo
22.	Pawi	777	Pawi
23.	Syntheng	368	Synten
24.	Lakher		
25.	Lakher		

Of these, Bodo is taught from Class I through to graduation. Most of the language groups do not have a script, and have either adopted Roman, Devnagari or the Assamese script.

India is unique not only in that a large number of languages are spoken here, but also in terms of language families represented: Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Burman and Andamanese are constantly interacting with each other. Nowadays, it is an accepted fact that bilingualism or multi-lingualism confers definite cognitive advantages.

Policies on Mother Tongue and Bilingual Education

The Government of India has introduced a 3-language formula in an attempt to address the challenges and opportunities of the linguistic situation in the country. The 3-language formula says a child has to learn the mother tongue/ regional language, Hindi and English. If the medium of instruction is the mother tongue or a regional language, Hindi and English are introduced between Class I and Class IV. Hindi is continued up to Class VIII (end of the elementary school) and the child completes high school in English and the mother tongue/regional language.

This policy should serve as a launching pad for learning more languages. One of the guidelines also states that the “home language(s) of children should be the medium of learning in schools.” According to Article 350a of the Indian Constitution, “It shall be the endeavour of every state and of every local authority within the state to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage to children belonging to linguistic minority groups.”

There are 22 languages recognized by the Indian Constitution. The languages listed under the 8th Schedule of the Constitution are:

Assamese	Konkani	Punjabi
Bengali	Maithili	Sanskrit
Bodo	Malayalam	Santhali
Dogri		Sindhi
Gujrati	Manipuri	Tamil
Hindi	Marathi	Telugu
Kannada	Nepali	Urdu
Kashmiri	Oriya	

Source: Government of India¹

Hindi is the official and main link language of India. Its homeland is mainly in the north of India, but it is spoken and widely understood in all urban centers of India. It is written in the Devnagari script, which is phonetic and, unlike English, is pronounced as it is written. Hindi is a direct descendant of Sanskrit through Prakrit and Apabhramsha. It has been influenced and enriched by Dravidian, Turkish, Farsi, Arabic, Portugese and English. It is a very expressive language. In poetry and songs, it can convey emotions using simple and gentle words. It can also be used for exact and rational reasoning.

The official languages of the different states are the 22 scheduled languages in addition to English. For example, in Assam, the official language is Assamese. Other than these, there are 92 languages included in the non-scheduled list. What was actually proposed at the time of adopting the 3-formula policy was that elementary education in Class I would start with a child’s mother tongue (irrespective of it being a scheduled or unscheduled list language) and then gradually the regional language would be introduced. However, for practical reasons this facility was not followed for minority language groups like Rabha, Deori, Sadri (Santhali), Tiwa, etc. As a result, many minority language children continue to speak their mother tongue at home, but learn to read and write in the dominant regional language. This practice goes against the principle of learning in one’s mother tongue contained within the spirit of the 3-formula policy.

1 http://india.gov.in/knowindia/ethnicity_of_india.php

In the case of adult literacy, we have therefore started literacy in a person's mother tongue in the initial phase of literacy (total literacy campaign). We propose to introduce the regional language along with the mother tongue in the second phase of literacy (post literacy) using bilingual primers and supplementary reading materials.

Brief Profile of the Project Site



Goalpara district, the selected project site, is situated in the southwestern part of Assam. The river Brahmaputra is to the north of the district. The headquarters of the district is Goalpara town. The district is primarily agrarian, with 90 percent of the people depending on agriculture for their livelihood. The district is home to a large number of ethnic communities, of which the Rabhas, Bodos and Garos are dominant groups.

Goalpara district has the largest number of Rabha-speaking people. The Rabhas are the fifth largest ethnic community among the 23 listed communities of Assam. When the Zilla Saksharata Samiti (ZSS) Goalpara District Literacy Committee conducted a

survey of illiterates in the district, it was found that a sizeable number did not want to join literacy classes because they were in Assamese. The survey identified about 5,000 learners of Rabha in the community. This made project organizers realize that literacy for adult learners should also be conducted in the mother tongue, and the Rabha language was targeted for the project.

Strategies and Implementation Process

Needs Assessment and Situational Analysis

There are eleven sub-classes among the Rabhas. Among these sub-castes, the Rabha language is spoken by a handful belonging to the Rangdani, Maitori and Kosa groups. The languages spoken by the Rangdhani and Moitori are 99 percent similar to each other, and are about 50 percent similar to the Kosa dialect. The others have already taken up Assamese as their mother tongue, but the project needs assessment indicated that there is a push inside the community to learn the Rabha language. Thus, in collaboration with the Rabha Literary Society (Rabha Sahitya Sobha), the project initiated activities to teach literacy in the mother tongue.

Orthography Development

The Rabha Literary Society has unanimously adopted the Assamese script for teaching the Rabha language. The development of orthography is, therefore, not required. This is because most of the indigenous speakers use Assamese as their link language with people speaking other languages. Also, Assamese can be easily used to express their language.

Identification of Learning Needs

The Rabhas are spread over a large area of Assam and Meghalaya. For this project, organizers chose the site with the largest concentration of Rabha speakers in Goalpara district. As already mentioned, among the eleven sub-classes of the Rabhas, only three sub-classes have retained their language. The other sub-classes have adopted the dominant regional language, Assamese, as their mother tongue.

Based on this community, the project identified two primary learning groups. The first group included those learners who needed to become literate in the mother tongue so that they could move on to the regional language. The second group were those Rabhas who knew the regional language, but had forgotten their mother tongue. They were also keen to relearn the Rabha language. Project organizers believed that this second group could be readily served by using bilingual books, since the script would be the same. They also deduced that inclusion of this second group would be a big step towards mainstreaming the community to address the feelings of inferiority that are often shared by all minority language speakers the world over. In this way, the project would put forward the idea of affirmative action.

The methods adopted to identify the learning needs were:

Interaction: Interaction with groups, individuals and the Rabha Literacy Society result in the creation of a survey.

Survey: When the people showed interest in learning Rabha, a survey was conducted to identify the number of learners.

Awareness meetings: Awareness meetings organized in the community strengthened the idea of literacy through mother tongue-based instruction.

Discussion with Rabha Literacy Society: Project organizers had a series of discussions with the Rabha Literacy Society that were very encouraging. The Society welcomed the idea of propagating literacy through mother tongue-based instruction, and also took an active part in preparing primers.

In discussing the learning needs, the overall intent was understood to be the need to mainstream the Rabha language speakers into the regional Assamese language once they had become literate via their mother tongue-based studies.

As per the National Literacy Mission Authority, New Delhi, there are three phases in the Rabha Mother Tongue Literacy Programme: the total literacy campaign (TLC), the post-literacy programme (PLP), and the continuing education programme (CE).

The first phase of the project is currently underway. Thusfar, mother tongue-based instruction for the two target groups has begun and bilingual reading materials in Assamese-Rabha have been produced. Project organizers expect that by Phase II PLP, the Rabha neo-literates will have bilingual primers and supplementary bilingual reading materials. Preparation of these primers is now in progress.

In the CE phase, the neo-literates will be able to read and write in both mother tongue (Rabha) and regional language (Assamese). The reading materials (bilingual/ Rabha/Assamese) will be more topical in nature (skill upgrading, legal literacy, women's empowerment, Rabha culture, stories, etc.).

The initial challenge of learning in the mother tongue has been successfully crossed. The bilingual materials for Assamese-speaking Rabhas have also been appreciated by the community.

Curriculum and Learning Materials Development



The Rabha Mother Tongue Literacy Project is tagged to the National Literacy Programme and, thus, the curriculum must conform accordingly. The national programme curriculum includes such topics as local environment, culture, small family norms, reproductive/child health, and gender equality. All these topics are included in the first three primers. The primers in Phase II will deal with these issues, as well, but include more ideas and additional detail. In numeracy, the figures from 1-100 are included. Simple arithmetic (plus, minus, multiplication, division) is also part of the curriculum.

From the project's beginning, the State Resource Centre (SRC) of Assam has consulted with the community and the Rabha Literacy Society on the production process. The writers were identified with help from the Rabha Literacy Society. A language expert from the Department of Linguistics, Gauhati University, and material production experts from SRC Assam, the Department of Modern Indian Languages, Gauhati University, and SIL International participated in the writers workshop.

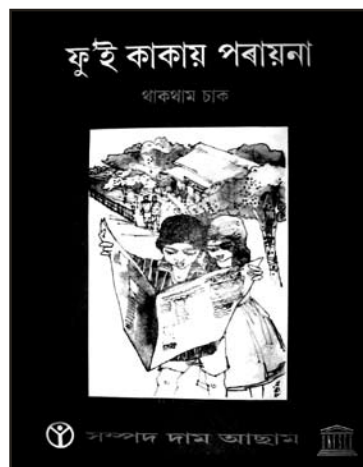
The primers for the literacy programme are being prepared using the IPCL (Improved Pace and Content of Learning) method. In this method, instead of teaching the alphabet first, words from pictures are introduced. When the National Adult Education Programme was introduced in 1978, the whole programme took 350 hours of learning using standard books. After much deliberation, the country's Adult Education experts decided to use the word method. Using this method, the actual learning time to become literate was brought down to 200 hours.

During the week-long workshop, identification of the content for the primers and lessons was finalized. Each primer would have nine lessons and one self-evaluation sheet after three lessons. The three primers would thus have nine self-evaluation sheets. The primers would cover the Assamese alphabet and conjunct letters, as well. As noted above, some numeracy would also be included.

After completing Primer I, the contents for primers II and III were decided upon and drafts for the same prepared. A second and third workshop were subsequently held, where the primers II and III, as well as a teacher's hand book for each primer, were finalized. Care was taken so that Rabha life and culture were reflected in the primers along with national issues.

After the primers were completed, review workshops were held. Experts went through the material and commented on it. The primers were revised and the draft copies field tested among Rabha learners. After further revision, the final copies were ready for printing.





During the period, project personnel went to Rabha-populated areas to identify learners through a survey process. The Goalpara District Literacy Society (GZSS) was involved in this process by providing field investigators who had been trained by SRC Assam. The survey also identified volunteer teachers and more than 5,000 learners. The survey workshop and field investigators were instrumental in bringing the project personnel, GZSS (the implementing agency) and community together to build a learning environment. Great enthusiasm was shown by the community members, who were understandably happy to get a chance to become literate in their own language.

After the primers were printed, the volunteer teachers were trained. They started the actual teaching/learning process within 48 hours of this training. Elected members of the panchayat (grassroots governance institute), Goalpara Zilla Saksharata Abhijan Samiti, were also involved in the project.

Teachers/Facilitators

As already mentioned, the Rabha project has been tied to the outgoing literacy programme. As per the National Literacy Programme Mission Authority, New Delhi, the District Literacy Committee (Zilla Saksharata Samity or ZSS) takes charge of the actual teaching-learning process. In this programme, the teacher facilitator is from the community and offers his/her services as a volunteer. At the time of identifying the illiterates through survey, willing teaching volunteers were also identified. A committee from the community then does a matching - batching of suitable learners with volunteer teachers.

One teacher/facilitator may teach a maximum of ten learners at one time. The time and place is decided according to the convenience of learners and volunteer teachers. Ideally, the teacher/facilitator should have completed a high school education. Sometimes, due to unavoidable circumstances, people who have completed elementary education (Class VIII) are also chosen as volunteer teachers.

After the materials are printed, the volunteer teacher is given a total of eleven (11=7+2+2) days training on how to use the primers. The first training is a 7-day workshop. In addition to teaching the technique of using the primers, they are also instructed on how to interact with adult illiterates without hurting their feelings and dignity. Further 2-day trainings are also given before starting primers II and III. Separate modules for this purpose were developed [1. Training Strategy, 2. Training Curriculum]. The ideal time to start the actual classes is within 48 hours of completing the first training of volunteer teachers.

About 70 volunteer teachers were engaged for 70 classes by Goalpara Zilla Saksharata Abhijan Samiti. Each volunteer taught around 10-15 learners. Most of the learners were women.

The volunteer teacher-learner approach has another advantage over a fixed class room method. As adult learners, each person's pace will be different. With a smaller group, the volunteer teacher can monitor an individual's progress better and go forward without the slow learner feeling disadvantaged.

Literacy Teaching Plan and Methods

The first phase of literacy programmes aims to eradicate illiteracy. Thus far, the adult learners have become literate in their mother tongue. In the next post-literacy phase, the Rabha language neo-literates will begin learning Assamese. Bilingual primers in Rabha-Assamese are in the process of development. The learners will also be given supplementary bilingual reading materials.

As mentioned above, the word method is being used throughout the project. For example, the teacher points to the illustration alongside the first lesson. It shows a house in a rural setting with a kitchen garden and poultry. There is a man working with tools and children are playing. The teacher asks the learner to identify the things that he/she can say the target language. From the words, the alphabetical spellings are identified.

Networking with Other Organizations

The success of the project has depended on good networking. SRC Assam has been collaborating with Gauhati University and the Rabha Literacy Society for the materials production process. The actual survey of illiterates was done by GZSS, which also identified the volunteer teachers. The training was done by SRC Assam. The monitoring meeting was jointly overseen by Goalpara Zila Saksharata Abhijan Samiti, SRC Assam and Prochesta, another NGO working for promotion of micro-finance among rural women.

Political will is needed for successful implementation of literacy and bilingual education. In the recently concluded state election, some of the political parties stressed this point in their election manifestos.



Cost of the Project

The actual cost of the project must include the value of people's participation. In this project, the money spent does not include this amount. In most cases, when the cost of a project is calculated, this value of people's participation is never taken into account. Obviously, a project cannot be successfully implemented without the good will and the participation of the people.

In our project area, more than 5,000 illiterates were identified during the survey. SRC Assam provided the first thousand copies of primers I, II and III under the project. Later, because of demand from the Rabha community, the chairman of the Goalpara District

Literacy Society requested funds from UNESCO to print 5,000 additional copies. UNESCO granted this request, and the printing is currently underway.

The actual per book cost of the primers comes to Rs. 12 (Indian Rupee), based on a print-run of 5,000 or more copies. For project purposes only, 1,000 copies each were printed for primers I, II and III. This made the cost per primer Rs. 25 (Indian Rupee).

Impact of the Project

Impact on Education Policy

Since this project was begun, mother tongue education has received its due recognition within national education policy. This has been reflected in a revised curriculum framework at the national level.

Impact on Learner Participation

Most of the learners were women. The whole process of learning was new to them. They were eager to learn. The fact that they could select their own time to study with people with whom they were familiar helped. The volunteer teachers reported a sense of pride in doing something for the community. The learners were able to identify themselves with the project.

There are many examples of learners valuing the Rabha language they received. An interesting story is that of Dipti Rabha. Dipti belonged to a Pati Rabha group that has adopted Assamese as its mother tongue. The Pati Rabhas have forgotten the Rabha language. However, Dipti was married to a man from a family who are Rabha language speakers. So, in order to communicate with her family and community, she joined a Rabha literacy class. Today she is a fluent Rabha language speaker.

Another learner, Bharati Rabha, who is about 35 years old, says, "All my life I wanted to read and write in my mother tongue. I could not speak the language, but I can read and write, and this makes me proud."

The volunteer teachers (VIs) also feel proud to be able to do something for the community. Arati Bala Rabha says, "It was a pleasure to teach my group of 10 learners because of their interest and enthusiasm. I used to take the class in the afternoon after the daily classes were done, and often found that they were waiting for me before time, after taking care of all their work." To which, a learner, Tulani Rabha replied, "My husband is not keen on my coming to attend classes, as it upsets the household routine at times. But he cannot stop me. I managed to have my way and attend classes regularly."



The majority of the learners have completed the first three primers and want more books to read. As there is no library, they have requested project organizers to provide them with reading materials. A Karabi Rabha says, "You have taught us to read, so now give us more books like story books and other books."

Capacity to Learn the National Language

At the moment, it is still too early in the project to evaluate whether there will be an increased capacity among students to learn the national language.

Socio-economic Impact on Learners

The most important aspect of literacy is that it gives self-confidence. This, in turn, makes people capable of expressing their views. The voluntary teachers also feel proud that they have done something for the community.

In terms of quality of life improvement, one community-based organization (CBO), Prochesta, started the formation of self-help groups (SHG) among the women learners. They were taught the mechanism of thrift, how to take loans for income generation, leadership techniques, etc. The whole process took time, but the end result is that many of these women are now earning some money and helping to ease the financial burden of their families. This has made the neo-literate women become aware of their surroundings and their status in society. They have become much more confident and their interacting capabilities have improved. After learning to read and write, their feelings of inferiority have dramatically lessened.

Indeed, some of these women have money in their own name for the first time in their lives. Usually in this agrarian society women help in all types of agricultural work from planting paddy to reaping. But once the harvest reaches the granary, they can not sell even a fistful of grains without the permission of the men folk. It's never equal work and equal share. Yet, by being SHG members, many have improved their lifestyle. During monthly meetings, they may also learn about RCH, reproductive health and child care, contraception, immunization, etc.

This has helped in poverty alleviation. While literacy may not have opened all doors, it has at least opened a few important ones for these neo-literates.



Community Participation and Ownership

People always work better when they have a stake in whatever they do. It's a part of human nature. In the same way, for a project to be sustainable, the community must have a stake in it.

People's participation is one way to stake a claim. When the people realize that it is their own achievement (of course, with help from others) which has produced results, they will see to it that the project continues

when the outside help is withdrawn. The multilingual project has been successful because the teachers were working voluntarily for the community. They have a claim on the success, too, which has given them a sense of pride. The whole community has been involved, right from the preparation of primers to the teaching/learning, making it truly a “people’s project.”

Cost-Effectiveness of the Project

For successful implementation of the project, teaching-learning materials were developed in the Rabha language with the help of local writers. The actual process of teaching-learning was carried out with the help of the District Literacy Committee. The training of the volunteer teachers was completed on time and the process of teaching the illiterates started on schedule. The people were quite enthusiastic. At the end of the period, drop out was low. Therefore, in terms of material produced, the number of learners and fewer number of dropouts, the project was a success in terms of cost-effectiveness.

Challenges

An affirmative political will is an important factor in carrying out such a project. To complete a project successfully, the initial period is very important. A lot of time, effort and money are needed to let it grow. For literacy projects, two important issues are time and financial resources. In the initial stages, sometimes it is necessary to invest more in entry point activities, e.g. the case of Papua New Guinea with so many different language groups. Even with the Rabha multilingual project, the extent of need and sheer number of learners has made it difficult to work with a shoestring budget. Support - both institutional and participatory - helps to maintain a project for a longer period, and is thus essential in the present case. For instance, the strategies adopted to team with ZSS and form SHGs among neo-literate women seem to have succeeded in meeting some very important project goals.

Recommendations

It has been observed that an environment for learning is essential. By propagating literacy in mother tongue, the Rabha Mother Tongue Literacy Project is trying to create such an environment. By educating adults in their mother tongue, the children, too, are encouraged to learn in their mother tongue instead of the dominant language.

For adult education, it is recommended that the transition from mother tongue to regional language be approached in the following way:

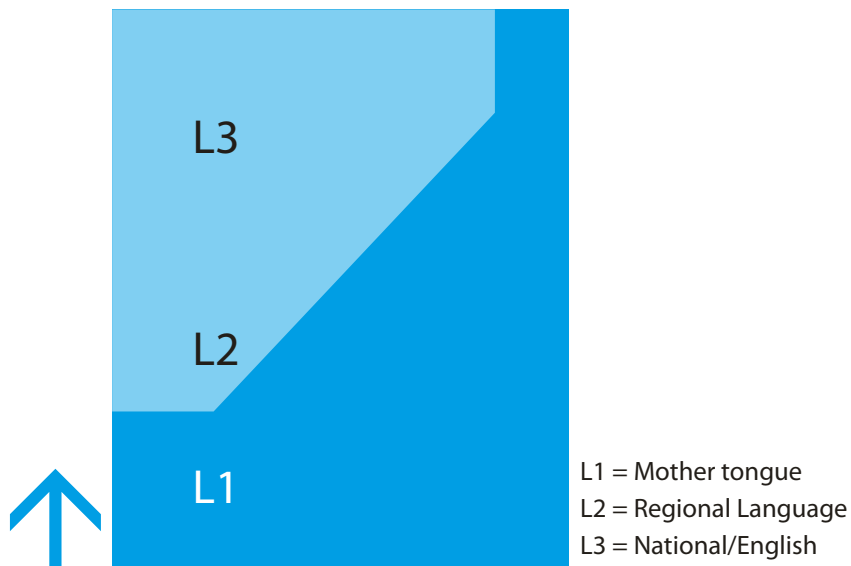
Phase I	TLC	Only Mother Tongue	
Phase II	PLP	MT (60%) + L2 (40 %)	
Phase III	CE	Supplementary reading materials	
	MT	L2	
	Type I	50%	50%
	Type II	100%	—
	Type III	—	100%

Negotiations are currently underway with the state government to take up two elementary schools and start mother tongue-based teaching at the lower primary stage. Children would gradually move on to

the regional language and finally to the 3-language formula as follows in Figure 1.

Class (I)	MT (100%)	+	L2 (0%)
Class (II)	MT (80%)	+	L2 (20%)
Class (III)	MT (40%)	+	L2 (60%)
Class (IV)	MT (20%)	+	L2 (80%)
Class V	(Medium of Instruction – As subject – MT		L2 (100%)

Figure 1: Different Stages of MT Learning



L 1 = Mother tongue/ Regional language	instead of	L 1 = Mother tongue
L 2 = Hindi	instead of	L 2 = Regional Language
L 3 = English	instead of	L 3 = National / English

The opportunity to learn in one's mother tongue should be available to everyone. People lag behind in those communities where they don't have the opportunity to learn in their mother tongue. Also, learning in one's mother tongue at the early stages boosts a learner's confidence to take up the mainstream language later on. Such confidence-building can have long-term repercussions for a region's development. Everybody is proud of their mother tongue, and this pride will make them better people.



INDONESIA

Functional Literacy Through the Mother Tongue
in Kampung Cibago

In attempting to meet one of the goals of UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) programme and address the pre-literate adults in an isolated community, the Indonesian Non-formal Education Department began a mother tongue literacy project using a functional literacy approach. The language of Sunda has over 16 million speakers, most highly literate. However, on the densely populated island of Java, there are isolated pockets of Sundanese speakers that have not taken advantage of literacy in the national language (Indonesian), and still use Sundanese as their daily language. One of those pockets is found in the community of Cibago, four kilometres from the nearest elementary school. The site of Cibago was chosen because it is within travelling distance of the regional Non-formal Education Centre, where staff could operate the pilot programme and still conduct their other duties.

After Phase I and II, which were primarily in the Sunda language, Indonesian literacy was incorporated into the programme. Besides the small businesses that have begun, the attitudes of the Cibago residents towards education have changed as they have become literate in their mother tongue and in the national language. They now have a preschool for their young children and are actively encouraging their school-aged children to stay in school. They are even interacting with district leadership to ask for a paved road so that public transportation can enter the village and transport their youth to middle school.

By addressing the needs of the community to study topics of interest to them and by honoring their heritage language, this functional literacy programme has kept adults interested and provided a lifelong learning environment in the Sunda local community. Good lessons learned from this programme have been disseminated by the Non-formal Education Department and several other areas are currently using the same approach to reach the unreached.

Background

Present Language Situation

The Republic of Indonesia is the most linguistically rich country in Asia with more than 700 languages. *Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian) is the official language used in government, business, and education. Since it is the main factor that unites the many diverse ethnic groups of Indonesia, Bahasa Indonesia is known as "*Bahasa Persatuan*" (language of unification). Local languages still play an important role in Indonesian life, however, and are considered a valuable part of Indonesia's cultural heritage that everyone hopes to maintain, develop and preserve. A local language is commonly known as "*bahasa ibu*" (mother tongue), though not necessarily a language taught by a mother to her children. According to Abdul Chaer (1995:107), "*bahasa ibu*" is the first linguistic system naturally learned by a child from its mother or other family members.¹

Although many languages exist in Indonesia, surprisingly, most do not yet have school curriculum using the mother tongue. BP-PLSP, Region II Jayagiri (regional non-formal education training centre) has initiated a pilot project for literacy education based on the principles of functional literacy for adults and language of instruction in the mother tongue. Based on these principles, the Jayagiri literacy team developed a programme called KFBI (*KFBI: Keaksaraan Fungsional melalui Bahasa Ibu*, which translates into Functional Literacy through the Mother Tongue) located in Kampung Cibago, Mayang village, Cisalak sub-district, Subang, West Java district.

1 As quoted on page 6 in: *Meniti Jalan Kemajuan*. 2006. Editors: Ade Kusmiadi, Agus Sofyan, Mia Rachmiati, Endin Suhanda, Sriwahyuningsih, and Kay Ringenberg. BP-PLSP Regional II Jayagiri, West Java. Soon to be published.

Kampung Cibago is located on top of Mount Canggih and is difficult to access, as well as being far away from public education facilities. Sundanese is the language of everyday communication. Among the native Cibago people, only two have attended schooling above Grade 6 of elementary school. The KFBI programme in Kampung Cibago was begun in June of 2004.

Bilingualism in Indonesia

Research on literacy levels indicate that fluency in reading, writing and arithmetic in the first language (L1) or mother tongue of the learner provides a strong foundation to bridge into learning a second language (L2). In Indonesia, this second language would be the national language, Indonesian. Being fluently bilingual in both Indonesian and one's local language encourages lifelong learning and enhances the learner's own language and cultural heritage while strengthening nationhood. Dr. Jim Cummins² writes that:

“When children are learning through a minority language (e.g. their home language), they are not only learning this language in a narrow sense. They are learning concepts and intellectual skills that are equally relevant to their ability to function in the majority language.” (See also Sudjarwo, 2006: hal 7)

Dr. Sudjarwo, Director of Community Education, Directorate General of Non-formal Education, Ministry of National Education, writes in his book *Keaksaraan Melalui Bahasa Ibu*³ (Literacy Through the Mother Tongue) about the importance of using the mother tongue to improve literacy rates, especially in remote areas where people are not yet literate and do not fully comprehend the national language.



▲ An observer watches as learners and facilitators design together media for use in the KFBI programme



▲ Cibago learners study topics of interest in Sundanese, their mother tongue

2 Cummin, Jim. 2000. “Bilingual Children’s Mother Tongue: Why is it important for education?” found at: www.iteachilearn.com/cummins

3 *Keaksaraan Melalui Bahasa Ibu*. 2006. Dr. Sudjarwo and Dr. Hurip Danu Ismadi, editors. Department of National Education, Jakarta.

Indonesian Policies on Mother Tongue



- ▲ Learners discuss in the mother tongue before they begin the lesson

The 1945 Constitution (UUD) encourages people to use, develop, and preserve local languages. Law (UU) No. 20, passed in 2003, states in Article 33, Section 2, that:

Local language can be used as the medium of instruction in the early stages of education, if needed, in the delivery of particular knowledge and/or skills.

In spite of these policies, the formal learning system in Indonesia generally uses only the national language for instruction in schools. Only nine out of more than 700 local languages have local language curriculum for grades 1-3 of elementary school. In 1996, an act concerning *muatan lokal* (local content curriculum) was enacted. Use of the local language was among the

topics included in the act. This law opened the door to encouraging bilingual curricula development in the national language and the local language when a community desires to use the mother tongue.

Strategies and Implementation Process

The Functional Literacy through the Mother Tongue (KFBI) programme enhances and preserves the richness of the local language, incorporating folktales, traditional arts, and other aspects of local language and culture that can be in literacy learning materials.

This approach has the considerable advantage of eradicating illiteracy while simultaneously enhancing the use of the mother tongue. While the majority of participants are women, ten men have also been learning through the programme.



- ▲ A positive environment for discussing topics in the mother tongue is important

KFBI is a collaborative programme with UNESCO Bangkok, BP-PLSP Regional II Jayagiri, and the Subang District Non-formal Education Office. It has undergone three phases of activity. Begun in June 2004, the programme continued through to the last phase in December 2006. A detailed listing of the KFBI programme design can be found in Annex 1 of the book, *KFBI : Meniti Jalan Kemajuan*, which is currently being finalized for publication.

Project Site Selection

Previously, most Kampung Cibago people did not respect formal education. They did, however, learn to read the Al-Quran and to write in Arabic and ancient Sundanese script in a religious institution called a “*pesantren*.” Not until Indonesia’s independence was a “*madrasah Ibtidaiyah*” (an Islamic school equivalent to elementary school) built in Kampung Cibago.

With a very low functional literacy rate due to very little access to formal education, Kampung Cibago was an excellent choice as the pilot project site. Other factors were also considered in choosing the pilot project site including:



▲ Houses of Cibago people are simple, but do not yet incorporate healthy environmental practices

Health

Some health factors:

- Poor sanitary conditions because most households have no toilet
- Poor household conditions, as most houses were not well arranged and lacked proper ventilation
- Bad habits of tossing garbage into the river (or any other place they liked)
- Inaccessibility of a public health centre because the nearest centre is quite a far distance away

Economy

Some economic factors :

- Low per capita and irregular cash income
- Limited resources for income generation
- Long distances to the nearest market places

Education

Some education factors :

- Low community awareness regarding the need for education
- Limited education facilities (public schools); the only available school was hard to access on foot (4 kilometers away)
- Community misperceptions about education, that education is not an income investment and unnecessary
- Low rate of basic education, no participation for children going to middle or high school

Nature and Livelihood

Community people utilize nature to improve their income. Some of the community issues concern:

- Outsiders taking more advantage of natural resources than the local community of Kampung Cibago
- The community's dependence on the forest, which is the main resource for daily income (including palm trees for making brown sugar, *uyun* [a tough grass] for making brooms, and other kinds of wood to sell)

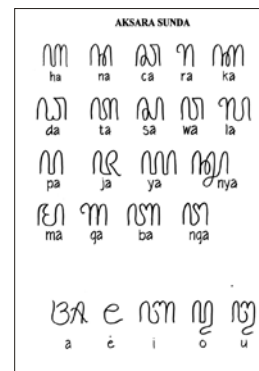


▲ Grass is a natural resource used by the community to feed livestock. Many forest products, however, have been exploited by people who do not live in Cibago.

Orthography

Sundanese possesses a unique, archaic writing system (see illustration) that closely resembles Sanskrit. This orthography is known as *Aksara Sunda* (Sundanese script). Unfortunately, *Aksara Sunda* is no longer being taught in formal schools, so younger Sundanese people no longer recognize it.

The formation of the KFBI programme encourages bilingual learning and reaffirms the role of the ancient Sundanese script as it complements the cultural identity of Sundanese speakers. A book has been published which is generating a renewed interest in preserving and using the ancient script to produce historical legends and songs.



◀ The ancient Sundanese script is rarely used by community members, but as the population develops literacy skills, interest in it is growing.

Historically, Sundanese people have learned Arabic script, which was taught in mosques and the *pesantren*. At that time, the Latin alphabet used in the national language was not well known. The KFBI programme enhances the use of Latin script in both the national and local language. Since Indonesian is based on a Latin script for its writing system, the KFBI programme uses Latin script for writing activities while continuing to present the ancient script.

Learning Needs of the Cibago People

The KFBI programme utilizes learning methods that are based on learners' needs and interests. Needs assessment procurement is an essential first step and is conducted by tutors using pre-tests, checklists or informal brainstorming sessions. Village leadership and individual families were interviewed to assess the potential for community-based economic projects. The learners' needs assessments revealed the following



▲ Forest products such as coffee are processed and sold in markets or to brokers in order to provide income.

perceived needs in Kampung Cibago:

- Local food processing techniques for banana chips and snack foods
- Processing food that is healthy for family consumption
- Maintaining a healthy living environment
- Human resource management
- Small home business ownership and management such as palm sugar production and making brooms to sell
- Marketing products produced by locating business partners
- Financial management

Tutors and Learning Materials Development

Selecting Tutors

The main criteria for selecting tutors was the desire to teach adults. Characteristics included:

- At least middle school education with some high school
- Experienced in facilitating the non-formal adult learning process
- Completion of tutor training and education for KFBI programme
- Resident of the local area
- Actively involved in daily community life, well-known and respected by the community
- Comprehension of the local culture and characteristics of the community and its living environment
- Concerned about the KFBI programme



▲ Tutors are trained how to use appropriate interactive teaching-learning strategies.

The programme began in Phase I with five tutors, but added three more by Phase III. Also, two guides were added to keep things running smoothly. The following table provides the details.

Table 1: Tutor and learner participation in the KFBI programme

Name of group	Total in KFBI Programme						Total of Classes	Guides	Level
	Tutors			Learners					
	M	F	M+F	M	F	M+F			
Kandaga Mas I	1	1	2	0	11	11	1		Advanced
Kandaga Mas II	1	1	2	0	9	9	1	1	Advanced
Kandaga Mas III	1	1	2	0	10	10	1		Advanced
Kandaga Mas IV	2	0	2	0	10	10	1	1	Advanced
Total	5	3	8	0	40	40	4	2	

Table 2: Subjects Included in Tutor Trainings

No.	Material	Time
1.	The Policy of Subang District	60 minutes
2.	The Duty of Competency Tutors	120 minutes
3.	Functional Relations	180 minutes
4.	Curriculum	120 minutes
5.	Learning Management	120 minutes
6.	Learning Assessment Systems	120 minutes
7.	Module Discussion	120 minutes
8.	Micro Teaching	20 minutes

Learning Materials

Based on the results from the learners' needs assessment, learning materials were developed through the collaborative efforts of programme managers, tutors, and the learners, themselves. Reflecting learners' stated needs, the learning materials was of practical value to the community:

- Content was focused on improvement and development of reading, writing and arithmetic skills, entrepreneurship, and mastery of both the national and the local language (mother tongue)
- Content was presented using a variety of participative approaches, especially for those materials adhering to business management.
- Content reflected efforts to solicit learners' participation in problem solving.
- Content and medium of learning materials were interesting and comprehensible for tutors.
- The type of learning materials met the everyday needs of the learners in Kampung Cibago.

A major component of the learning materials was the Sundanese bi-monthly brochure called "Buletin Kejar," which cost a little over US\$8.00 an issue. It was issued 24 times a year at nearly US\$200.00. As Table 3 indicates, the KFBI programme produced numerous kinds of learning material.

Table 3: Types of Learning Material Produced through KFBI

Type of Learning Material	Number	Level of Literacy
Buletin Kejar	24 sets	Basic
	12 sets	Intermediate
	12 sets	Advanced
Environment Poster	4 sets	Advanced
Health Poster	3 sets	Advanced
Collective Business Poster	3 sets	Advanced
Learning Materials in Indonesian and Sundanese		
Environment Health	2 sets	Advanced
Making Proposals	2 sets	Advanced
How to Make a Good Place for Business	2 sets	Advanced
How to Manage Business and Capital	2 sets	Advanced
Gadung Processing (snack food)	2 sets	Advanced
Business Management	2 sets	Advanced

KFBI Educational Methods in Kampung Cibago

Learning activities in the KFBI programme emphasize mastery in reading, writing, arithmetic (the 3Rs), discussion, and interactive learning methods. In Phase I, learning activities were mainly aimed at mastering mother tongue communication skills, along with an introduction to the 3Rs skills in Sundanese. Most learners only possessed a basic, or less than basic, level in the 3Rs skills. In Phase II, learning activities moved beyond mother tongue skill mastery by combining Sundanese language literacy and numeracy with bridging efforts to understand oral Indonesian.

Learning methods applied in Phase I and Phase II, local and national language mastery, are presented in balance with functional learning content concerning daily activities. During Phase III, in particular, learning methods emphasized national language mastery so that learners became intermediate or even advanced readers.

In each phase of learning as mentioned earlier, tutors made use of *Buletin Kejar* as a medium to increase learners' motivation to participate. This locally generated bulletin, in fact, was able to motivate learners and made learning enjoyable for them.

Buletin Kejar was designed with the learners' own language level in mind. Learners were both the main writers and readers of this bulletin. Because the bulletin included their own writings and ideas, the learners were proud and happy to keep reading and learning.



- ▲ A consultant from UNESCO, Bangkok, visited the KFBI program in Kampung Cibago to observe the ability of learners in practicing their writing



- ▲ Support from community figures motivates learners to be active in the learning process



▲ Supervision from various village, sub-district and district leaders motivated learners to participate in KFBI.

Networking with Community Members, Governmental Organizations and NGOs

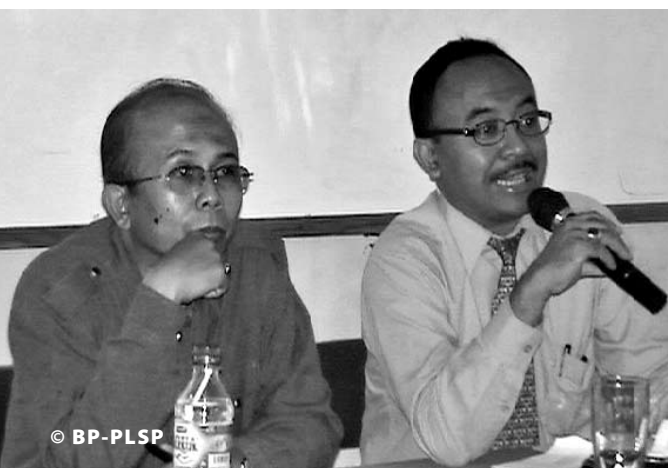
It is evident, whether directly or indirectly, that the KFBI programme in Kampung Cibago has been a significant influence on people's lives, in general. This impact is reflected in the positive relationships with community members, governmental organizations (GOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Relationship with Community Members

The KFBI programme was open to every member of the community and everyone could freely join in the activities offered by KFBI. Because of its inclusiveness, responsibility for KFBI rested with the entire community, rather than any one individual.

Relationship with NGOs

Organizations at the village, sub-district, and district levels were partners in implementing the KFBI programme. Many organizations contributed learning materials according to the learners' needs and as were spelled out in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed at the beginning of the KFBI programme with the Subang district leaders. Whenever necessary, tutors could contact various organizational partners to provide the needed learning materials. The KFBI leadership team has a cooperative agreement with the Department of Cooperation for Home Industries, which has given seed money (US\$200.00+) for savings and loan projects. The Health Department has provided materials about reading expiration dates on food labels and about nutrition.



▲ The Head of BP-PLSP Regional II and another leader address local officials.

Relationship with GOs

At its start, few government departments were interested in KFBI, as not a lot of awareness-raising had gone on in preparation for the KFBI programme. Within 6 months, however, many governmental organizations from village to district level put their support behind the KFBI programme.

Major support came from local government officials of the Subang district, including:

- Setting local policies favorable to the KFBI programme, and conducting monitoring visits to the project site; and

- Facilitating the development of infrastructure for the community learning centre (CLC) and other facilities for Kampung Cibago people.

Support from the village government included:

- Conducting the initial survey and presenting the results, which demonstrated the programme's importance. This survey was mainly concerned with community members as prospective programme beneficiaries;
- Giving moral support through monitoring activities and informal discussions with learners concerning integrating literacy learning with entrepreneurship activities; and
- Facilitating the development of needed community infrastructure that supported literacy learning.

Support from *Rukun Tetangga* (RT) and *Rukun Warga* (RW) (local representatives for governmental administration in villages) included:

- Helping with survey activities; and

Supporting and motivating those who joined the KFBI programme.

Costs of the Programme

To implement Phase I and II of the KFBI programme, BP-PLSP Regional II Jayagiri spent around US\$24,267.00 (Rp 218.404.000,00). Phase III is still in progress at the time of this writing. Among the programme expenses are :

- Cost for coordination, consolidation and awareness-raising
- Cost for survey activities including recruitment of programme manager, tutors and learners
- Cost for stationary and other supplies necessary for programme implementation or learning activities
- Cost for local transportation including allowances for programme managers, tutors and learners
- Cost for monitoring and guidance activities
- Cost for tools and equipment needed in vocational learning
- Seed capital for learners to begin small businesses based on agreement between programme managers, tutors, and learners
- Cost for designing and replicating learning materials and media
- Cost for designing reports
- Cost for replicating products of the programme
- Cost for dissemination activities

Local community members also contributed significant resources to the programme in the form of labor, materials needed in building PKBM (*Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat/Kandaga Mas*/community learning centres), and provision of the venue for the CLC.

BP-PLSP Region II has distributed around US\$300.00 for vocational activities related to initiating a business. Programmes developed include:

No.	Type of vocational activity	Number of learners	Level
1	Making palm sugars	40	Basic
2	Making banana chips	40	Basic
3	Making donuts	40	Basic
4	Making laundry soap	40	Intermediate
5	Making palm sugars (2)	40	Intermediate
6	Making palm sugar baskets	40	Intermediate
7	Making pungpa (snack food)	40	Advanced
8	Making gadung chips (snack food)	40	Advanced
9	Collective business	40	Advanced

Evaluation

Evaluation was an important factor in the KFBI programme. Evaluation consisted of two types, namely: evaluation during the teaching-learning process (formative) and evaluation afterward (summative). In addition, proficiency in reading and writing for both Indonesian and Sundanese was measured using an Informal Reading Inventory (IRI), which had previously been used successfully in Eastern Indonesia to measure Indonesian and mother tongue proficiency. All three evaluations are described as follows:



▲ A family-friendly atmosphere motivates women to participate in KFBI.

Formative Evaluation

The purpose of formative evaluation in the KFBI programme was to measure ongoing improvement in reading, writing, arithmetic and functional daily life skills of learners. Techniques used in the evaluation measured learner performance on a variety of skills and activities as well as personal interviews.

Evaluation during the learning process aimed to collect data on the progress of learners as well as feedback for facilitators on the learning system, including both content and method used which might need revision. As a result, the formative evaluation allowed for aspects, techniques and instruments of the programme to be improved upon.

The on-going evaluation measured the ability of learners to apply reading, writing, arithmetic and communication skills in their daily lives, such as in making notes on daily expenditures, calculating daily income, and so on.

2.1. Summative evaluation

The purpose of summative evaluation at the conclusion of each phase of the learning process was to measure the ability of learners in life skills, reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. Evaluation at the end of each phase gave data on learners' abilities in reading, writing and arithmetic skills as integrated with life skills. The resulting data was analyzed to determine whether individual learners had mastered enough skills to be promoted to the next phase of learning.

Learners not meeting the minimum activities for advancement received remedial instruction from the tutor and were tested again so that they could join the next phase.

Questions in the formative and summative evaluations revealed comprehension in reading, writing and arithmetic skills. In Phase I and Phase II, the questions used the Sundanese language and incorporated appropriate materials from the learners' environment in Kampung Cibago with varying levels of difficulty.

To determine whether learners passed the examination or not, the following scoring and criteria were used:

Scoring of Reading, Writing and Arithmetic Results :

No.	Score	Criteria
1.	0-15	Poor
2.	16-30	Sufficient
3.	31-50	Good

Score of Reading/Writing Speed Points :

No.	Rate / Second	Criteria
1.	0-3	Fast
2.	4-6	Average
3.	7-10	Low

Proficiency Measures

In 2005, BP-PLSP staff learned of an Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) used by SIL International in Eastern Indonesia to measure reading and writing proficiency. SIL agreed to let the tool be adapted and used in Kampung Cibago. From July to September 2006, reading and writing proficiency in both Indonesian and Sundanese were measured using the newly adapted instrument. A random sample of 70 residents was surveyed in both Sundanese and Indonesian using the instrument. Results have been reported in a book produced by BP-PLSP, Jayagiri.⁴



▲ Summative evaluation is sometimes watched by the learners' children, which can motivate the next generation to value education.

4 Final Report : Using an Instrument to Measure Literacy Levels. 2006. BP-PLSP Regional II, Jaragiri, Lembang, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia.



- ▲ Income-generating activities during KFBI include the making of straw brooms with resources found in the learners' environment.

Impact of the Programme

The KFBI programme in Kampung Cibago has impacted several facets of community life:

Impact on Educational Policy

Before the KFBI programme, people in Cibago lacked the ability to read, write and do arithmetic or to communicate in the Indonesian language. Some were pre-literate. The educational situation of the majority of Cibago people was low, as many had dropped out from Elementary School at Grade 4 or less. Therefore, Cibago residents needed the KFBI programme to help them in mastering necessary reading, writing and arithmetic skills applicable to daily life, as well as

to learn how to communicate in the Indonesian language while maintaining their local culture and language heritage.

After joining the KFBI programme, the Cibago people could use their newly acquired reading, writing and arithmetic skills in their daily lives. These skills enabled them to read Sundanese newspapers, write articles to be included in the newspaper, fill in forms, calculate income and profit or loss of their home business, and so on. Little by little, they were also beginning to read and write in Indonesian well. Cibago parents now encouraging their children to stay in school and they have begun a new preschool programme for mothers and young children.

A major impact of the Cibago programme has been interest generated in other areas of the country for beginning mother tongue programmes. The Jayagiri staff held a dissemination seminar in December for Non-formal Education leaders from the other four regions, which continues to generate interest.



- ▲ Paddy fields serve as an appropriate backdrop for discussing agricultural topics.

Impact on Learner Participation

Prior to joining the KFBI programme, the Cibago people didn't dare express their ideas to strangers. But after joining the programme, they could express their ideas in class and actively asked for clarification from the tutors (who were outsiders) about unclear items.

The learners joined in the tasks of preparing the learning place, providing cooking utensils, or cleaning up after instructional times.

Learners' comprehension of the material was quite varied. Some learners could grasp the material easily, but others had more difficulty understanding the

material. In general, however, the learners all could better understand the material, because their reading, writing, arithmetic and communication skills were much improved upon finishing each phase.

The existence of the KFBI programme in Kampung Cibago also helped resolve the problem of school dropouts. Now learners with the KFBI programme have better understanding of the importance of education and have the desire to send their children to school. As a result, the dropout rate of school children in Kampung Cibago has decreased.

Capacity to Learn the National Language

In the beginning, learners couldn't speak the Indonesian language well. Since they were used to communicating in the Sundanese language in daily life, the KFBI programme in Phase I was implemented in the Sundanese language. Learning activities, materials, and other media were all in Sundanese. Once Phase I was completed, learners could effectively communicate, read, and write in Sundanese.

In Phase II, learners were introduced to Indonesian reading and writing. Learners could learn Indonesian more easily because of their strong foundation in Sundanese. They could obtain Indonesian literacy more effectively after mastering reading, writing and arithmetic skills in Sundanese.

In actuality, Sundanese is more difficult than Indonesian because it includes sounds and symbols which are not found in Indonesian, for example the use of 'eu' and 'é' letters to represent unique Sundanese sounds. After mastering Sundanese, learners' skills in Indonesian came more easily as they compared reading and writing in the two languages.

In Phase II, learners still had difficulty in translating a text from Sundanese into Indonesian. They took quite a long time to do it because it was difficult for them to find the appropriate translation of some words. This challenge can be solved by continuous vocabulary development in Indonesian. In Phase III, the ability of learners to communicate in Indonesian is greatly improving.

Socio-economic Impact on Learners

The KFBI programme also provided socio-economic impact for learners. The impact can be described as follows:

Improvement in Quality of Life

After joining KFBI, learners improved their quality of life in the following ways:

- Improved family and environmental health

Learners were made aware of the importance of home and environmental health in order to avoid disease. The knowledge of environmental health was obtained from learning activities, especially in



▲ Learners make use of bamboo for developing small home businesses to provide them with extra income.

Phase II. Learning activities included the use of posters, booklets, learning materials and articles in *Buletin Kejar*. Learners also discussed solutions to problems in environmental health which were presented in posters or from actual experiences of learners, such as the importance of throwing garbage away in proper places and the importance of having one's own toilet in each house.

- Served healthy food to children and the whole family

In the beginning, learners didn't know about healthy food. Now they serve healthy food to their children and families, because they know the importance of nutrition in increasing the intelligence of children. Learners received information about nutrition from theme posters on healthy food as well as from discussion with tutors and through booklets they read.

- Educating children

By joining the KFBI programme, the Cibago participants learned many new skills, such as singing, telling stories, and making educative games from things found in the environment. These activities enabled them to make their own learning tools without buying them. In addition, they could change the attitudes and behaviors of their children. For example, now when they talk to children, they speak cultured Sundanese, and don't snap at their children. They ask their children to be respectful and say "thank you" when receiving something from other people.



▲ The community learning centre provides children with a place to play and learn while their mothers study Early Childhood Education (ECE) principles.

Poverty Alleviation

The KFBI programme included collective home business enterprise development as an integrated component. The purpose was to develop the abilities of learners in mastering and using reading, writing, arithmetic skills, analyzing, listening/speaking skills and managing collective home businesses as mediators or motivators. Learners now understand how to be independent through their small business ventures. Examples of collective home businesses started through the KFBI programme include making food to sell like *gadung* (a root crop) crispy chips or *pungpa* (combination of flour and coconut meat) and other products to sell like palm sugar and straw brooms. These products are then marketed and the profits become family income. By integrating collective home businesses into the programme, KFBI has helped the people of Cibago to eradicate poverty and increase their cash income.

Personal Success Stories

Ratna, a learner:

"I feel happy because I have been able to read, write and calculate without any help of tutors. I am proud of being one of the KFBI learners. Besides, I was on TV . . . and interviewed by the reporter of TVRI about the KFBI programme."

Lili Yulianingsih, a tutor :

“I am proud of helping learners in reading, writing and calculating. Also, I have guided them in business activities. They were so happy because they were interviewed by TV reporters. I get a lot of experiences because I joined the workshop in Bogor [to disseminate the Informal Reading Inventory tool for measuring progress] where I also improved my insights and was refreshed.”

Cost Effectiveness of the Programme

Based on field experience, the most effective learning material was the local news magazine, *Buletin Kejar*. *Buletin Kejar* enabled the development of creative skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. *Buletin Kejar* consists of learners’ writings, such as short stories, letters, personal experiences and so forth. Other columns are designed to sharpen the reading, writing and arithmetic skills of learners with quizzes, crossword puzzles, recipes and other articles. *Buletin Kejar* also provided tangible benefit to the community as a piece of entertaining reading material in the language they know best. Because it is developed within the community, the cost is kept low and the enthusiasm for new readers remains high.

Other important learning materials used were posters and pictures because the participants liked to learn things through visual media. Learners grasped the material more easily if it was complemented with pictures.

Sustainability

Community Participation and Ownership

The Cibago community supports the KFBI programme and is enthusiastic to join in the activities. Forty people were involved in the KFBI programme from Phase I through Phase III.

Learners positively contributed to the teaching-learning process. One learner offered her house to be a learning place so that the programme could continue to work well. The majority of learners are married, but their spouses and children support them to continue learning the reading, writing, arithmetic and communication skills taught through KFBI programme. No one has ever been turned away from the programme.



▲ Simple houses are an indicator that the economic level of the community has been low.



▲ Active learner participation is necessary in order to ensure the future sustainability of the KFBI programme.

After learning some skills, learners have given back to the programme by sharing tools for skills practice such as their stoves, woks, knives and so on. The learners have a high sense of belonging to the KFBI programme and join in the learning and business activities of their own volition.

Areas for Improvement

- Increased support for the learning centre called “Kandaga Mas” or CLC during the KFBI programme is needed, especially in seeking business partners for marketing the products of collective home businesses that have developed.
- Improvement of tutor facilitating competencies is needed, especially relating to methodology, media preparation and motivating learners.
- Supervision from Mayang village is needed by learners, tutors and the organizers of Kandaga Mas/ CLC.
- The contribution by Cisalak sub-district and the Education Services of Cisalak Sub-district is needed to provide additional technical support of KFBI as it takes on new learners.
- Periodic assistance by the Subang NFE Learning Centre is needed to sustain the KFBI programme in Kampung Cibago.

Challenges

If learners have a vested interest in solving a problem and there are known options for solving it, there is good movement towards the solution of the problem. Conversely, if learners have little interest in solving a particular problem, then there is very little movement towards a solution. Sometimes the learner doesn't yet have the skills to solve a problem, or doesn't care to spend his/her time on it and therefore an uncomfortable learning situation emerges.

A good activity plan gives detailed clarification about what to do, who will do the job, when the job will be done, the needed material and equipment and the expected result. Monitoring, evaluation, responsibility, and reflection are needed for all the training materials. To make the programme successful, there are some techniques we have learned. The problem-solving component is re-examined to include the purpose of the learning activity. There are three questions for this simple assessment of problem solving activities:

- What have we done?
- How have we done it?
- How have we felt about it?

Finally, it will cause this question to surface: “Are we now ready to select and solve other problems?”



▲ Workshop participants engage in a problem-solving exercise. An effort in problem-solving is carried out during each phase of the programme.

The learners in KFBI try to take the knowledge, skills and experiences learned in solving the problems as their own and apply them to other situations.

The limited available human resources have adversely affected the KFBI programme. Also, tutors have needed more training in facilitating adult learners, developing curriculum, and arranging classes. Supervision from the district leadership is weak. Although the leadership has supported KFBI with words, the understanding of what needs to happen to maintain the programme is still inadequate.

Recommendations

1. Find ways to fund the spread of this programme throughout Indonesia so that other ethnic groups can enjoy the fruits of the KFBI programme.
2. For all ethnic groups in Indonesia to have the feeling of language equality, programmes like KFBI need to be conducted in all locations.
3. This dual-focus programme needs to be tried out in several environments, such as in mixed language communities and in more economically developed areas.

Conclusion

The KFBI programme has benefitted the people of Cibago in many ways, especially in improving reading, writing, arithmetic, communication and functional skills. The learning process was always based on the expressed interests and needs of the learners, so they enjoy learning and want to understand the material. Materials used in the learning activities incorporated interesting media for learners because explanations complemented with pictures are more easily understood.

In the KFBI programme, learning activities in Phase I exclusively used the mother tongue, that is, Sundanese. All learning activities, media and evaluations used Sundanese. Learners understood reading, writing and arithmetic material more easily because it was presented in the language familiar to them. In Phase II, learners were introduced to Indonesian and it was even more prominently used in Phase III. Finally, learners are now able to communicate in Indonesian more fluently. They also have self-confidence and understand the meaning of the television programmes they watch.

In addition, the KFBI programme improved community awareness about the importance of family education, family and environmental health, nutrition and so on. Learners, tutors and organizers of Kandaga Mas/CLC as well as Cibago residents gave meaningful contributions to the programme, so challenges could be addressed as they occurred. The survey results, using an Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) in both Sundanese and Indonesian, demonstrated clearly that the KFBI programme improved the reading ability of the participants. Out of four possible levels from beginning literates to proficient lifelong learners, the residents of Cibago are at level 2 for Sundanese and level 1 for Indonesian. This IRI instrument demonstrated that the majority of the learners are at least semi-literate after the intervention of the KFBI programme.

The success of the KFBI programme in Cibago should be replicated in other locations in Indonesia because of the variety of cultures and many local languages.



NEPAL

A Mother Tongue-based Literacy Programme
for the Tharu Ethnic Group



Background

'If we stop using our language, it will be the end of our culture and tradition and we will loose.'

Kirant, Magar and Khas form a triangular culture called Nepal (Subedi, 2062 BS). Kirants are further classified into five categories (NFFIN & NFDIN, 2004), namely "Endangered," "Highly Marginalized," "Marginalized," "Disadvantaged" and "Advantaged." Tharus belong to the Marginalized category. Tharus are indigenous people living in the Terai plains of Southern Nepal. According to Nepal's 2001 Census, there are 1,533,879 ethnic Tharu (6.75% of Nepal's total population), of

which 1,331,546 speak one of the seven Tharu dialects as a mother tongue.

Including Tharu, Nepal has 102 languages. Nepali is the official national language. The abundance of ethnic languages demands their protection and development. Some of these languages have only oral tradition, while others also have literary traditions. Furthermore, there are languages that have their own script. Many of these languages are classified as endangered, and others are at the verge of extinction because of the state-imposed monolingual policy and decreased utility of other languages in the job market, among the media and in daily life.

Experience shows that schools have been the strong "state apparatus" to strengthen Nepali and limit other languages. Due to the little or no priority given to languages other than Nepali, they remain underdeveloped. This has brought about burning social problems over the years (Dahal, 1999). Even in the present context, the trend of monolingual practice is observed in the classroom, and the mother tongues of the minorities have been largely neglected. As a result, many children face difficulties in their education (Awasthi, 2004). The monolingual practice was emphasized when the second educational plan (ARNEC, 1962) advocated Nepali as the medium of instruction - an initiation of a system that was followed by other succeeding educational plans (NESP, 1970). It was only after the restoration of democracy in 1990 that the issue of Nepal's multi-lingual society and its implications on education came to light. Consequently, the Constitution of the kingdom of Nepal (1990; article 3:18:1&2) provided the right for every group of people to promote and protect their own language, scripts and mother tongue education. Similarly, the succeeding education plans (NEC, 1992, HEC, 2000) championed mother tongue education. During the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP) I and II (1991 – 2001), primary education materials were developed to provide mother tongue education in seven languages: Newari, Maithali, Tharu, Abhadhi, Limbu, Tamang, and Bhojpur. Later on, such types of materials in additional six languages were also prepared. These languages included Magar, Rai, Bantawa, Gurung, Sherpa and Chamling. Thus, to date, primary school materials in 12 languages have been developed and used in Nepal (CRED, 2005, Chirag, 2000).

National and international agencies and individuals have also reiterated the need and their support for mother tongue education (Curriculum Development Centre [CDC] 2004 - 2009; NCLPR, 2051 BS; Fishman 1968 cited in CRED, 2005; and UNESCO, 1951). The National Commission Language Policy Report (NCLPR, 2051 BS) recommended a "3-language" policy to include the mother tongue, Nepali as

the official language, and English as the international language. However, all of these provisions are related only to the formal education system.

In practice, teachers may translate the classroom discussions into the language of the students and allow students to discuss in their own language. Usually, however, this only happens in a monolingual setting. In the case of bi- and multilingual settings, teachers more often use Nepali as the medium of instruction (CRED, 2005). Nepali, English and the mother tongue language are also taught as separate subjects in primary school. The same study found that there weren't any teachers who were using the language conservation and promotion schemes. Rather, it was found that both students and teachers were using the mother tongue education as the medium of instruction as well as a separate subject.

Recent field observation of non-formal education (NFE) instruction for literacy shows that the mother tongue approach has been used for teaching. But only seven languages - Tharu, Tamang, Gurung, Magar, Abadhi, Maithili, and Limbu - have mother tongue literacy programmes. Similarly, for some languages, literacy facilitators are only able to provide verbal instruction because there are neither literacy primers nor post literacy learning materials available in these languages.

In the case of the Tharu language, mother tongue literacy classes have been conducted in different parts of the country with twin objectives: to conserve the Tharu language and to ensure equitable access to basic education for Tharu learners. Dang (in western Nepal) is one of the districts where the Tharu Mother Tongue Literacy Project has been implemented by Backward Society and Education (BASE), a local NGO, with technical assistance from World Education Nepal. This project was designed to address and achieve Education for All goals. However, achieving these goals has been very challenging. For example, there is a lack of a basic literacy curriculum and materials to support teaching/learning activities. Within the basic literacy courses, major topics and sub-topics or contents have not been clearly identified. Similarly, the provision of objective setting, class management, pedagogy, financial management, use of human resources and monitoring/supervision/evaluation are other challenges to implement effective mother tongue literacy programmes in Nepal. Several local NGOs, including BASE, are trying to overcome these challenges by supporting mother tongue literacy and income generation programmes that address a range of social and economic issues, including gender inequality.

Project Site

Dang district is located in an inner valley of the *terai* (plains) of mid-western Nepal. The population size of the district, which consists of 39 Village Development Committees (VDC) and two municipalities, is 386,066. The population density is 156 persons per square kilometer. The total literacy rate (age 6 and above) for the district is 57.7 percent - 69 percent for men and 46.7 percent for women. The Tharu ethnic group, with a population of 147,328 (according to the 2001 Census) makes up approximately 38 percent of the total population of Dang.

Most Tharus are very backward economically and live in very poor conditions. As mentioned before, the literacy rates and levels of education among the Tharus remain very low in comparison to the national averages. As an ethnic group, the Tharu people have had a history of being exploited. Indeed, for generations they have



been forced into bonded labor. Culturally, Tharu communities are struggling to preserve their cultural and linguistic traditions, which are rapidly disappearing from the lives of the younger generations.

Strategies and Implementation Process

Selection Process of the Project Sites

The project sites were identified through a baseline survey conducted by World Education in collaboration with its partner organization - BASE. The eight villages identified and selected for the study were all in Tharu communities (5 in Dang and 3 in Deukhuri Valley). The reason behind this was that this project site had already benefited from previous literacy programmes like the 'Girls Access to Education' and 'Brighter Future' programmes. These programmes were also implemented by BASE with the technical support of the World Education as a testing strategy. In this sense, BASE was recognized as an organization working effectively for the underprivileged with properly trained and capable staff.

After successful implementation of these two literacy programmes, each of the selected communities requested more mother tongue NFE classes. Among them, four communities were selected on the basis of their geographical distribution, response from community people, volume of project work that had already been carried out in the community, and relative low impact of the Maoist insurgency for close monitoring and supervision. The remaining four communities were identified through a consultation process with the local people.

Needs Assessment and Situational Analysis

Two approaches were taken to assess the needs of the mother tongue literacy programmes. First, frequent complaints in the Nepali language literacy programmes were collected and analyzed. Then a separate survey was conducted to find out the specific needs of the eight selected communities. The data collected from these two sources was codified, and the need to have mother tongue literacy programmes in these communities was identified.

Orthography

Primary education materials are already developed in thirteen languages of Nepal (CRED, 2005 & Chirag, 2001). The Tharu language is one of them. This language does not have its own orthography. Rather, it has been greatly influenced by various Indo – Aryan languages, such as Maithali in the east, Bhojpuri in central region and Abadhi in western Terai. So it was decided that the Devnagari script would be used for the Tharu language, as well. In addition, the Tharu language had already been successfully identified as a national language and used in primary level school education (Acharya, ND). Similarly, World Education and BASE had developed a Tharu language textbook and curriculum '*Shoshan Se Shikshyaor*' (*From Exploitation to Education*) based on the needs identified through a survey that was carried out in eight Dang district villages.

Identification of Learning Needs

The problems and needs of the Tharu community in Dang district were identified in a participatory manner before the implementation of the mother-tongue literacy project. Tharu community members,

including potential facilitators, supervisors, learners (the project targeted illiterate groups), Mahatanwa, household male/female heads, and local community leaders were involved in the process. The survey was conducted in the following eight villages located in Tulsipur municipality and four Village Development Committees (VDCs):

Narayanpur V.D.C.:

- Dokrena village
- Jharbaira village
- Khaira village

Saudiyar V.D.C.:

- Besahi village

Tulsipur Municipality:

- Uttar Kaparadevi

Ganga Praraspur V.D.C.:

- Banki village
- Jhali village

Gadhwa V.D.C.:

- Ghoraha village



Most of the Tharu community members were found to be living under the poverty line, and some were found to be living in extreme poverty. Most were found to be illiterate, with the literacy rate being much lower for women than for men. The survey also found gender discrimination to be prevalent in the Tharu community.

It appears that the Tharu community has lost much of its heritage, with many of the social traditions, lifestyles, costumes and ornaments that once used to be an important part of the Tharu community being either extinct or on the verge of extinction. Cultural customs and traditions that used to be part of weddings, festivals and rituals are fast disappearing in the community. Ancient gods and goddesses (*bhuihyars*) that once used to hold important places in Tharu culture are no longer worshipped. Additionally, many historical and religious monuments and other cultural sites of the Tharu culture are completely or partially destroyed. Although there is a script for the Tharu language, the written Tharu language is in danger of disappearing because it is used so little. Similarly, Tharu literature, music, arts and dances are also disappearing.

Agriculture is the main livelihood of the Tharu community. However, Tharus have historically been exploited and stripped of their land and other property and forced into bonded labor, slavery and labor without pay. Although the practice of *kamaiya*, or bonded labor, is no longer legal, the practice does still exist. Many Tharus who are landless and displaced from their original villages continue to be exploited through bonded labor and labor without pay. The survey found that even those who have some land have not been able to yield increased production due to the traditional methods they still use in agriculture. Another problem faced by the Tharu community is the indiscriminate use of forest resources. Forest fires and domestic fires are common pollutants of the environment in which Tharus live.

There is a high degree of superstition and blind faith among Tharu community members. As a result, many of them die early due to lack of proper treatment or access to/use of health services. Health conditions are also affected by the unhygienic conditions caused by the domestic animals (such as

cows, bulls, sheep, and goats) kept by many Tharu people within their own homes. Unplanned and improperly managed families (large numbers of children without proper birth spacing, lack of a sense of responsibility among parents, unequal division of labor) hamper the healthy development of children. Excessive drinking and spending (of money) are common habits that contribute to the social and economic problems of the community.

A key issue found among Tharus is their lack of awareness about their rights as citizens of the country. This is compounded by the fact that Tharus as a community have no considerable presence or participation in any sector of the country.

Based on the above general findings, the following topics were chosen to be included in the Tharu mother tongue curriculum.

Family Life

- Knowledge and information about the work, rights and duties of parents, children and other family members
- Development of feelings of cooperation, help and empathy among family members and neighbors
- Creation of a vision of a happy and healthy family
- Knowledge about reproductive health, life stages, marriageable age, birth spacing, and family planning for teenagers
- Methods of safe delivery
- Awareness of the benefits of a well-planned family



Agriculture and Income Generation

- Farming with advanced methods to increase production
- Storing produce and grains
- Selecting healthy seeds for planting
- Planning and allocating grains for personal use for a year
- Selling in order to manage finances at home
- Investing labor in income-generating work to develop income-generating skills
- Developing positive views on spending within one's means
- Improving behavior to save and spend wisely on cottage industries and trades

Health and Nutrition

- Habits for personal hygiene
- Developing the habit of eating fresh, healthy and nutritious food
- Developing the habit of drinking clean water
- Changing superstitious habits into positive views
- Developing awareness about diarrhea and other diseases
- Taking care of pregnant women
- Methods of safe delivery and care of newborn babies
- Introduction of safe delivery equipment

Civic Awareness

- Developing feelings of mutual cooperation, help and service
- Empowering self and others by developing awareness
- Developing feelings of responsibility among parents and children
- Developing positive attitudes by eliminating gender discrimination
- Increasing public participation in social work
- Developing intimacy and friendship among various castes, tribal and native people

Clean Environment

- Cleaning house and surroundings
- Building and using toilets
- Managing waste

Traditions and Culture

- Preservation, promotion and improvement of the practice of worshipping gods and goddesses in the house and with the family
- Preservation, promotion and improvement of the practice of ritually worshipping village deities
- Ensuring the promotion, preservation and improvement of traditionally celebrated festivals
- Protecting folk dances and other folk culture
- Preserving and promoting various festivals and celebrations as well as other social and religious rituals
- Assisting in the development of the Tharu community by creating positive attitudes towards the concept of *Praganna* and *Guruwa* (old tradition of healers or religious leaders, *guruwas*, being in charge of certain parts of the area occupied by Tharus, *praganna*), which was developed in ancient times for the purpose of conducting social and religious rituals within the Tharu community

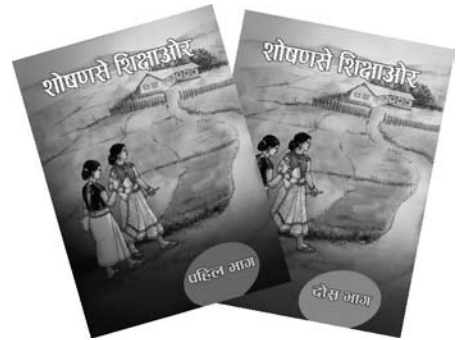
Women's Development

- Developing a positive view towards female participation in every decision taken for the family
- Developing a positive attitude towards the need and importance of education for girls' and women's empowerment
- Providing knowledge about legal provisions related to women and their inheritance, privileges and rights

Curriculum and Learning Materials Development

During the needs identification activity, Tharus of different constituencies showed interest in producing and using more literacy materials in their language. Consequently, different approaches were followed to develop curriculum and literacy materials. First, the local people were consulted to suggest contents for literacy/NFE classes. Second, the process of translating the MOES-produced materials in the Tharu language continued with the support of World Education. Third, the Tharu facilitators felt proud that their traditions and cultural heritage were included in the curriculum and literacy materials. Fourth, local elites were allowed input into the contents related to Tharu culture and religion. Finally, the concerns and suggestions of the respondents were analyzed, and the class materials were developed by the experts as a literacy package.

Most of the NFE programmes implemented in Dang have been using literacy materials developed by MOES and other organizations like *Naya Goreto*, *Naulo Bihani* and *Mahila Shikshya* since 1985 . Feedback from learners and facilitators shows that these NFE materials are not community-specific; the Tharu way of life and culture are not depicted in it. This realization led to convincing NFE service providers to develop materials in their own language. As an important output of this process, a Tharu literacy primer called *Paschim ko Phool*, a Tharu grammar book called *Lirausi Byakara*, and a 'Gurbaba Dictionary' were published. Additional literature like *Barki Maar*, music cassettes and posters in the Tharu language were also developed.



At the central level, World Education organized a 3-day workshop on mother tongue literacy material development in 1997. Three experts each for the Tharu and Limbu languages were brought together. This resulted in the production of *Muthlihai* in the Tharu language and *Chotlung* in Limbu during 1997/98. *Muthlihai* classes were conducted in Bardiya, but initially they suffered from lack of resources. However, in 2005, with some assistance from UNESCO, a new series of literacy primers called *Shosanse Shikshyaor* (*From Education to Education*) was developed.

Teachers / Facilitators

The criteria for hiring facilitators to conduct the literacy classes in the Tharu language was identified, and included:

- (a) Candidates should be trained and experienced in teaching literacy classes, whenever possible.
- (b) Vacancies should be announced in the local papers to ensure a fair competition.
- (c) They should belong to the local community and hence should speak the language and be well familiar with local culture and traditions.
- (d) Candidates should perform successfully in the pre-service training.

Following these criteria, BASE chose the needed facilitators in its project area. In addition, there were other criteria in selecting facilitators such as level of dedication, friendliness, and attitude towards literacy classes. Once the facilitators were chosen, they were given a 6-day training about the learning and teaching processes as well as about the use of Tharu language textbooks. Additionally, a 3-day in-service training was given to update their facilitating skills.

Going through the process, the qualified facilitators opined that the participants highly preferred learning in the Tharu language over learning in Nepali. In Dokrena village, none of the initial 25 participants have dropped out, and three additional individuals have joined the classes. In Besahi village, the facilitator had to refuse many interested individuals because she had already selected 25 participants. Class attendance is very regular in all communities. The most obvious reason for preference of their mother tongue is because they understand the language better. A facilitator shared her experience of having to repeatedly translate Nepali to Tharu while previously conducting classes in the Nepali language alone. All facilitators insist that there is no use of Nepali in the current literacy classes. However, some of the facilitators (in Dokrena and Uttar Kapradevi) have admitted that they themselves found it harder to read

and write in Tharu because, although the alphabets are the same, the Tharu language has significantly more half-alphabets like "I" and "G" and the phonetics are different. The common alphabet also means that the students can read Nepali.

The second reason is that the course contains a lot of information about the local culture, history and religious practices which the participants can relate easily to and enjoy. The consulted facilitators insisted that there has been increased awareness in the community about the importance of conserving the Tharu culture and traditions. For example, in the Ghoraha community of Deukhuri Valley, women were trying to go back to wearing their traditional dress. Participants were also known to have followed the book while conducting certain rituals. In Dokrena, other women from the community repeatedly asked the facilitator for additional classes in the community, so that they too could benefit.

Sometimes facilitators worked according to the demands of participant's interest. For example, facilitators made time for classes at night. The unpredictability of electricity supply and lack of proper places to conduct classes were the obstacles for the literacy classes. Most of the facilitators taught classes at their own homes, while in Dokrena the CMC had arranged for the 0, classes to take place at a participant's home because the facilitator didn't have enough space. Apart from the above arrangement, the facilitator could influence what the participants learned in class. For example, in Uttar Kapradevi, it was not the CMC, but the participants, themselves, who took action against the number of drunken men in the community. In other !-words, the facilitators could make the literacy participants offensive to those who were disrupting the literacy classes. Besides, Tharu women were able to guide the men outside the class and later explain to them about the importance of education.

Facilitators discussed the topics presented in the literacy materials, and then tried to relate the topics to relevant situations in the community. They also asked the literacy participants for additional topics about culture and tradition, as these are the primary stakeholders of the literacy programme. Sometimes, facilitators simplified the mathematical problems raised by the literacy participants. In one instance, one of the participants felt that the long stories needed to be shortened and more illustrations to be added. All of the literacy participants agreed that additional supplementary reading materials in the local language would be useful, especially in the post-literacy scenario.

Regarding the importance of mother-tongue literacy, facilitators like Ram Kumari responded, 'If we Tharu stop using our language, will it not be the end of our culture and tradition?' Facilitators stressed the need to revive, promote and preserve the Tharu language and culture. Basanti Chaudhary of Besahi adds, "While Nepali is important as it is our national language, it is also important that our coming generations know about our own culture and language. Even within the Tharu community, there are great variations in culture and traditions. Further studies will give us more knowledge and we will have a richer culture."

Literacy Teaching Plan and Methodology

Appropriate pedagogy is an important tool to deliver the literacy/NFE programme. This means both the teaching method and the teaching materials should be developed as per participant demand. Following this premise, the pedagogy was designed to suit the local approach to teaching. In doing so, very few non-Tharu words ('*Vatabaran*' [environment] and 'oxygen') were used in them, because of a lack of alternative words in Tharu language. As both facilitators and participants were of the same community, Tharu language was used in all classroom activities and there was no language switching. The only language problem being encountered was that the book contained a mixture of words from Dang and Deukhuri dialects and some words needed to be translated.

The Key Word Approach was used while teaching the *Shosanse Shikshyaor* to literacy classes. It had two objectives: human quality development (i.e., ability to see, listen, think, work, and be aware) and technical skill development (i.e., literary skill [reading, writing and arithmetic] and functional knowledge [childcare, literacy, forest conservation etc.). In a nutshell, the following pedagogical approaches were applied by *Shosanse Shikshyaor* to achieve its objectives:

Analytical (problem posing/thematic) approach – An example was the use of an open-ended poster that led to discussions based on daily life and brainstorming. This process helped in developing decision-making and leadership ability, and also in increasing creativity, self-expression, knowledge and self-esteem.

Motivational approach – The main aim of this approach is to motivate the reader by the use of different types of stories. In this approach, mini-case stories were given to the learners, who were asked to come up with viable solutions to the problem raised in the story. Creative approach – This approach was used as play construction and enactment, which helped in developing creativity and leadership ability.

Networking with Other Organizations

Networking with other organizations, both government and non-government, is an important factor for successful implementation of any community project. There was a considerable amount of networking and coordination in the process of material development and implementation of the mother tongue literacy project in Dang. Key personnel such as the President of the Tharu Welfare Society and members of Tharu Intellectual Council, MS-Nepal, SCF/US and Banyan Tree Foundation as well as the officials from the Dang District Development Council, Chief District Officer and District Education Office were consulted and informed of the process. Information about the classes were also disseminated through both the local FM radio stations of Dang, a national daily called *Naya Yugboda* and *Sanghari*, a BASE publication.

Additionally, there was coordination between the literacy/NFE management committees and the local people. This helped in mobilizing community support for the selection of facilitators, recruiting learners and selecting class sites. This also resulted in getting contributions from the community, including classroom space and electricity expenses. Class Management Committees were formed in each location, and they were involved in solving minor problems related to the smooth running of classes.

Cost of the Project

Effective financial management is another major important part of the NFE literacy programme. Mobilization of resources locally is necessary to make the community feel a sense of ownership in the programme. At the same time, it is also important to make it transparent. There was a good balance of provision of resources from outside (World Education) and mobilization of local resources in this project. However, the total responsibility of managing the finance was given to the local implementing partner and the class management committee. This resulted in making the project both cost effective and transparent.

Impact of the Project

Impact on Education Policy

Usually the word impact comprises the compounded result of the policy, strategy, action, and budget of the programme. The impact of the Tharu language literacy programme can also be analyzed along these categories. Policy-wise, the Government had a policy on mother tongue education for the formal education system; however, non-formal education had not received due attention. Given this backdrop, INGOs like World Education have been actively advocating for mother tongue literacy programmes in collaboration with their local partners. There are also a handful of other INGOs who are involved in implementation of non-formal mother tongue literacy programmes.



Secondly, some local NGOs in the Dang district have been very active in conserving the Tharu language, culture, and identity by developing learning and reading materials in the Tharu language. Thirdly, more Tharus, including children, have been joining NFE literacy and/or formal education programmes, implying that the mother tongue literacy programme is reaching the educationally disadvantaged groups.

The mother tongue literacy programme has also raised a number of relevant questions related to policy. How do the Tharus utilize the literacy programme in their lives? In what ways does it affect their daily lives? A baseline survey conducted at the initial stage of the programme and a simple comparison of its findings with the findings of the study conducted at the end of the project has helped to answer these questions in some ways. A marked progress is found in their literacy and numeracy skills. Their self-confidence in dealing with family issues and their level of participation in community activities were found to have increased significantly.

The literacy curriculum includes several life skills. It also integrates many important issues that are relevant to the lives of the participants, such as sanitation, family planning and forest conservation. A growing number of Tharus are now found to be using some means of family planning. The surrounding forests have been conserved and managed in a better way. Similarly, women are now capable of managing many household affairs and dealing with money matters.

Mother Tongue Literacy in My Life

Radhika Tharu, 25, is a married woman who lives in Uttar Kapradevi. According to her, she was non-literate and hence “uncivilized” when it came to talking with other people. When she joined a literacy class, she learned how to mix up with others and she also understood the importance of mutual understanding. When she shared what she had learnt in her literacy class with her husband, he was surprised and also became interested to attend the NFE literacy class himself. She said that now she and her husband know a lot of things, such as how to protect forests and how to clean the house. Radhika goes on to say, “Besides, we are applying this knowledge in our daily lives. Interestingly, we are able to teach our small son and daughter

how to read and write which helps them easily adjust in school. After going to school for a year, I think our children will start to teach us. As a result, we can start to read and write in the official language, Nepali, as well."

This shows that literacy beneficiaries have been critically aware of everyday activities. Besides, the beneficiaries have been aware of the fact that language choice is their basic right and it enables them to understand and learn important things such as sanitary practices within the household environment, family planning, and other health issues. Likewise, NFE literacy programme beneficiaries have felt proud of becoming "literate."

Impact on Learner Participation

People can obviously learn faster and learn more if they get an opportunity to do so in their own language. In Tharu NFE literacy programmes, participants were given the opportunity to learn not only in their own mother tongue, but also at their own pace. Therefore, multiple teaching/learning approaches were used to address the needs and interests of the literacy participants. These approaches included small group discussions, an observation tour, REFLECT, and analytical problem posing/thematic discussions.

The participants of this program were very much interested in the lessons, especially on topics that informed them about their culture and traditions. No learners dropped out of the classes, and there was increasing demand from both within and outside the community for additional and advanced level literacy classes.

The other impact of the literacy class was observed during the monitoring and supervision system. Community elders and the husbands of the female literacy participants often came to observe the class and provide moral support to the participants. This also served to encourage the learners. Local officials also felt that this development was more beneficial from the standpoint of institutionalization of the monitoring and supervision process at the community level..

A Participant's Perspective

Phul Maya Chaudhari lives at Basahi village. She is a married, 35-year-old woman with four children. She said, "I was interested in joining the Tharu language literacy class because I could easily understand everything. Particularly, it taught me how to read and write in the Tharu language. Now I can write my name and a few words and sentences as well. I am also able to solve simple numerical problems, which helps me to increase my knowledge. Now I am much smarter than I was before. Nobody can cheat me when I go to the market, either to sell or buy things in the village. Furthermore, the Tharu songs used for teaching and learning helped me to understand faster than any other teaching methods. In my experience, this mother tongue literacy class helped people like me to gain additional knowledge and skills, both of which are useful in improving my life and livelihoods."

In summary, the impact of the mother tongue literacy programme can be recorded as

- (a) Tharu mother tongue literacy beneficiaries developed the habit of fast reading and writing and also learnt about life and livelihood-related issues.

- (b) The beneficiaries developed confidence to speak out in front of outsiders.
- (c) The beneficiaries got opportunities to go out of the home to participate in development activities. Some of them have developed saving habits as well.
- (d) They developed the habit of sharing their learning.
- (e) Teaching and learning through songs further attracted the beneficiaries to participate in the class more regularly and actively.

Capacity to Learn the National Languages



A number of questions can be raised about the relationship of the policies to the impact of mother tongue classes. For example, how do learners feel at the time of learning? How do they feel capacitated to learn their own and as well as other languages? What are the difficulties for them in learning language and writing the learnt contents? Phul Kumari's experience (see the box below) in her Tharu language class helps to answer some of these questions.

Tharu Mother Tongue Literacy Empowered Me

Phul Kumari Chaudhary, 40, is a married woman living in Ghoraha village. Last year, her son left home for the Middle East for employment. Her son asked her to write letters in Nepali. "Initially, I asked for assistance from others to write letters to my son. But after joining the literacy class, I tried to write some sentences in Nepali and then I asked my facilitator to check. She helped and encouraged me to write more. I tried at least five times, then I became able to write whatever I wanted to say to my son. Now my son is very happy that I am capable of writing letters to him in Nepali.

Socio-economic Impact on Learners

A mother tongue literacy class offers the participants ample opportunities to discuss their life-related issues in the mother tongue, and it gradually leads them to use the national language (Nepali) with greater confidence. In Dang, the Tharu women found themselves "empowered" in many ways. They were able to take part in family decisions. They were able to raise their voice against domestic violence and exploitation by their landlords.

The second impact that was observed was the increase in their communications skills - both oral and written. They felt less inhibited in participating in community activities. They were also able to use their writing skills in communicating with their relatives living and working in foreign countries or in reading and filling out application forms for different government or banking activities

The third impact of the literacy class on the participants was seen in their capacity to fight for their rights to get citizenship certificates.

In short, the Tharu mother tongue literacy programme has:

- (a) Helped the literacy participants to actively participate in their family decision-making processes;
- (b) Made them more aware of their basic rights, and given them confidence in raising their voices against their oppressors, particularly their landlords;
- (c) Made them able to understand the importance of their local culture and traditional practices; and
- (d) Nurtured mutual understanding by developing a sense of community feeling among the Tharus.

Challenges

It can be said that sustainability of the project depends upon its positive impact on the people and on whether or not they feel ownership of the project. In the case of the Tharu mother tongue literacy programme, the continuous involvement of the local people, NGOs and CBOs in all aspects of the programme from planning to evaluation stages has helped them to develop this sense of ownership. They all value this programme and want to expand it to other areas of the district, as well.

However, there are some challenges/obstacles in running the mother tongue literacy programme in a sustainable manner. These include:

- The programme is lacking a long-term resource commitment from both the people and the donors. Consequently, it is difficult to scale up the programme and meet the literacy demand of the Tharu community.
- Lack of adequate supplementary materials is an obstacle in continuing the learners' interest and retaining the knowledge and skills that they have learnt.
- Lack of financial resources for the Tharu mother-tongue literacy project has led to a deficiency in human resources to continue this effort.
- There is a great need of post-literacy materials, income-generating education programmes, and continuing education packages for sustainable development.
- Even with the presence of the village-level committees at the local level, it hasn't been possible to establish community learning centres in many places due to the lack of financial and technical assistance.
- Although the conditions needed for mobilization and development activities in the Tharu community are there, it hasn't been possible to operate programmes according to the comprehensive needs and aspirations of the community people.

Recommendations

On the basis of the above analysis, the following suggestions are recommended:

- Develop more materials for neo-literates and pictorial materials for illiterates.
- Produce bridging materials that help link Tharu literacy participants' learning with the learning of the formal education classes.
- Create critical mass from among the Tharus for literacy crusades in the communities.
- Mobilize local political leaders for the education of Tharu communities.

- Develop and maintain libraries cum museums in the Tharu communities.
- Organize inter and intra-Tharu community competition programmes and encourage people to be more assertive for literacy and income generation programmes.
- Promote an IG loan scheme for literate individuals.



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THAILAND

Bilingual Education Among the Pwo Karen of Omkoi

In 2006, Thailand celebrated an auspicious milestone: the 60th anniversary of King Bhumibol Adulyadej's ascension to the throne. Not only is His Majesty the world's longest reigning monarch, he is also one of the most loved. This stems in large measure from His Majesty's years of dedicated service to the "least of the least" — the poor, the marginalized, and the economically and socially disadvantaged. Generations of Thai have been raised on images of His Majesty journeying to the most remote regions of the Kingdom, talking with the humblest villagers and working to empower them through economic and social development. The situation of ethnic minorities, such as the northern hilltribes and the southern Muslims, has been of particular concern to His Majesty — an ethos which extends to the efforts of his daughter, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, the UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for the "Empowerment of Minority Children through Education and through the Preservation of Their Intangible Cultural Heritage."

Recent years have seen a growing awareness of Thailand's ethnic diversity. While most Thais assume there are only a handful of ethnic minorities (the northern hilltribes, with their exotic costumes), former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun recently proclaimed on national television that Thailand is home to more than 60 ethnic groups. He boasted that he, himself, is "an ethnic Mon who is Thai."¹ A new term, *chatiphan* or 'ethnic group,' is surfacing in Thai academic and political discourse.

The Northern Pwo Karen Bilingual Education Project at Omkoi District (NPKOM) in the northern province of Chiang Mai has thus emerged at a crucial time in the history of Thailand's ethnic minority groups. It represents the first time the Thai Ministry of Education has supported bilingual education in a minority language. The project has received much attention from the Thai media. Numerous delegations from Thai government agencies, Thai educators from other regions, and UNESCO's Bangkok office have made the journey to see for themselves what Minister of Education Chaturon Chaisang termed a "miracle" -- Northern Pwo Karen children enthusiastically reading and writing both their language and Thai in a student-centered programme. Thai educators see the Omkoi project as the model for future bilingual programmes in the numerous ethnic communities, and local schools have volunteered to host new projects.

This case study provides a brief historical overview of the Omkoi project, placing it in the larger context of Thai education and analyzing the lessons learned.

Background

Current Situation of Ethnic Minorities

The *Ethnologue* (2005) documents the use of 74 languages within Thailand.² Extrapolating the Ethnologue figures, Kosonen (2005) found that 13.8 percent of Thailand's 65 million people speak ethnic languages not related to the national language (and thus, the language of education), Central Thai. An additional 48.5 percent of the population speak languages closely related to Thai, including Northern Thai (Khammuang), Northeastern Thai (Isaan), and Southern Thai (Tai). Speakers of these languages are

1 July 28, 2005

2 Unless otherwise noted, all language population figures are from Ethnologue (2005).

assumed to face fewer obstacles in adapting to the Central Thai school system, but research has yet to be conducted.

Although Thailand boasts a high national literacy rate, research into the specific literacy rates of ethnic minorities is lacking. Anecdotal evidence from multiple sources indicates that many children who grow up in non-Thai speaking environments lag behind their Thai compatriots in educational achievement. A significant portion of the 400,000 out-of-school children mentioned in Thailand's 2005 Education for All (EFA) report are believed to be from ethnic minorities (Charuaypon, 2005).



Meaning of “Bilingual Education” in Thailand

The term “bilingual education” has become popular in Thailand. However, it has only been used to refer to schools operating English submersion programmes for Thai students. Bilingual education programmes involving minority languages are very new to Thailand, and patient explanation is required to explain the processes and benefits to minority students. Interestingly, many problems faced by Thai students in English submersion programmes are shared by minority students in Thai submersion programs, namely the lack of opportunity to fully develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in the first language before being forced to use a second language for academic purposes.

Policies Related to Mother Tongue Education

Section 46 of the Thai Constitution of 1997 contains specific provisions for the rights of “traditional communities” and their cultures:

Persons so assembling as to be a traditional community shall have the right to conserve or restore their customs, local knowledge, arts or good culture of their community and of the nation and participate in the management, maintenance, preservation and exploitation of natural resources and the environment in a balanced fashion and persistently as provided by law. (Government Gazzette, 1997)

As a result of the student-centered emphasis of the *1999 National Education Act*, including provisions for preserving “local wisdom,” some minority languages are being taught as subjects for a few hours per week in local formal schools. Chong, Bisu, Lahu Si, Mon, and Northern Thai (Lanna) are examples.³ In the North and Northeast, NGOs and churches have established community-based literacy programmes among ethnic groups. Sgaw Karen, Lahu Na, Akha, Shan, and Lisu are examples. In the far South, Pattani Malay students study Arabic, Central Malay, and Standard Malay in Islamic Ponoh schools (Kosonen, 2005). The Ministry of Education is currently experimenting with the use of spoken Pattani Malay in twelve southern preschools.

3 Schools may technically allocate up to 30 percent of the curriculum for minority language/local culture study. (Kosonen 2005)

Minister of Education Chaturong Chaiseng, who was appointed on 4 August 2005, is committed to creating educational policies and practices supportive of bilingual education for minority language speakers. The experiences of NPKOM are thus informing policy discussions at the highest levels.

Origin of the Project

Since the 1970s, the Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission (ONFEC) and its predecessor, the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE), had been involved in special educational programmes for the northern Thai hilltribes. Specialized curriculums were developed. Young, idealistic Thai university graduates were posted as volunteer teachers to remote villages, often serving heroically under very difficult conditions. Nonetheless, all teaching was done in the Thai language, and some officials within ONFEC were frustrated by less-than-hoped-for results. National literacy surveys showed that the North lagged behind other regions of the country.

In November 2001, ONFEC officials attended UNESCO's Regional Workshop on Functional Literacy for Indigenous People, held in Raipur, Chattisgarh State, India. There they were involved in discussions about how mother-tongue-first multilingual education programmes could enhance ethnic minority education. Several consultations between ONFEC, UNESCO and SIL International followed, resulting in a September 2002 proposal for a pilot bilingual education programme among the Pwo Karen people of Omkoi. This proposal would be followed by additional proposals as the project expanded.

Brief Profile of Project Site

NPKOM is situated in two villages of the Northern Pwo Karen ethnic minority, located in the mountainous northern province of Chiang Mai. The people of these villages are agriculturalists and have little opportunity to interact with the outside world. Many wear traditional clothing, crafted on the looms of village women. Although these communities are quite rustic, living conditions have improved recently due to Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn's development projects. These have included programmes to improve health and nutrition (through small gardens), provide electricity (through solar panels), conserve the natural environment, and build community learning centres (CLCs).

Implementation Process

A Strong Start (2003)

In 2003, Stage 1 of the project began when ONFEC received a one-year grant from UNESCO for initial research and materials development for NPKOM. Activities in that first year included:

- Selection of project sites and surveying of learning needs (January-February)
- Orthography development (March-May)
- Learning materials production (July-August)
- Teacher training
- Evaluation of initial results

Selection of Project Sites

From the outset, ONFEC realized that, in order to produce statistically valid results that would test the effectiveness of bilingual education in the Thai situation, special attention would need to be given to the selection of pilot project sites. Key factors in site selection thus included:

- Monolingual setting, with little opportunity for villagers to speak Thai
- Community support
- Availability of Pwo Karen teachers
- Presence of an established Community Learning Centre (CLC)⁴

Nong Ung Tai was seen as an ideal site, given the relatively large size of the village (population 298, including 98 school-aged children), as well as the support of the village headman and other community members. During the rainy season (June-October), Nong Ung Tai is virtually cut off from the wider world, accessible only by a day-long hike through thick mud. The villagers are primarily animistic in outlook, and many cultural practices are still intact. A simple bamboo CLC was built by villagers in 1993 and replaced in 2001 by a wooden structure provided through the financial support of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn.

Two smaller villages also were selected: Huay Kwan (population 185, including 52 school-aged children) and Salatey (population 223, including 90 school-aged children).⁵ Like Nong Ung Tai, these villages offered remote locations, monolingual settings, CLCs, and community support. They were also relatively close to Nong Ung Tai, something that would simplify the logistics of teacher training and curriculum development.

The CLCs in these villages are essentially one-room schoolhouses, used for both children and (less frequently) adults. The students are divided into five groups that are based primarily on age, but also ability. These are: preschool, Grade 1, grades 2-4, Grade 5, and Grade 6.



Teachers / Facilitators

As mentioned above, the availability of Northern Pwo Karen teachers was a key facet of the pilot project site selection. Northern Pwo Karen teachers already working in the non-formal system were identified and subsequently trained as bilingual teachers and future trainers of teachers through pre-service and in-service workshops. Thai teachers already working in the non-formal system were also identified, and received the same training as the Northern Pwo Karen teachers. Each CLC thus has one Thai and one Northern Pwo Karen teacher. Specific learning activities are assigned to each teacher, depending on which language is to be used.

4 Although CLCs are more frequently associated with adult education, in remote areas of Thailand they also provide services to children without access to formal system schools.

5 The project in Salatey was later discontinued due to teacher attrition.

All of the NPKOM teachers have associate or bachelor degrees. The teachers themselves receive the standard stipends and benefits provided through the non-formal system.

The NPKOM teachers are greatly valued, and every effort has been made to develop their capacities in such areas as teaching techniques, desktop publishing, editing, etc.

Identification of Learning Needs

Research revealed that few of the adult villagers in the project sites spend much time reading; a culture of literacy has yet to develop. While there is some interest in adult education, the realities of hard agricultural work coupled with a lack of readily clear benefits has reduced personal motivation.

The situation for children is different. Parents want their children do well in school and master the Thai language. Education is seen as a key to the future. At the same time, there are concerns about losing the Pwo Karen language and heritage. Thus, NPKOM has stressed that the bilingual approach can both improve Thai language abilities and help with cultural and linguistic preservation. In this way, community aspirations and government educational requirements can both be realized.

Orthography Development

Pwo Karen is part of the larger Karenic language family, a grouping that includes several related languages spoken by at least 2.5 million people in the Thai-Burmese borderlands (Bradley 1997). Despite some shared words and common cultural items, many Karenic languages are mutually unintelligible. The largest Karenic group, the Sgaw Karen (300,000 in Thailand), uses a traditional orthography based on the Burmese script, which is vigorously used throughout the community and is often assumed (incorrectly!) to represent the standard orthography for all Karenic languages. The Pwo Karen groups, by contrast, have perhaps suffered from an abundance of scripts. In Myanmar alone, nearly a dozen Pwo Karen orthographies were developed by Christian missionaries, Buddhist monks, and Pwo Karen leaders, including Mon-based, Burmese-based, and Roman scripts, in addition to the unique “chicken scratch” script that is attributed to divine revelation (Womack 2005). In Thailand, several Thai-based scripts have been proposed for both the West Central Thailand Pwo Karen (50,000 in Thailand) and the Northern Pwo Karen (60,000 in Thailand), although there appears to be both a lack of consensus on how some sounds should be written, as well as a lack of interest in the issue among the Pwo Karen community, at large.

From the outset, ONFEC expressed a desire to learn about each step involved in building a bilingual education programme, beginning with orthography development. For this reason, an SIL International linguist affiliated with Payap University who had experience researching West Central Thailand Pwo Karen was utilized as a consultant on Pwo Karen phonology and orthography development. Three ONFEC Pwo Karen teachers spent five days at the Payap University Department of Linguistics (10-14 March 2003), recording and word list-looking for the sounds that were responsible for the different meanings of words (minimal pairs) in order to determine the consonants, vowels and tones of Northern Pwo Karen. The word list was later carefully checked with the villagers on-site in Nong Ung Tai village. In addition, a folktale was recorded and transcribed to illustrate the various sounds found in the Northern Pwo Karen language.

Building on the principal of maximum community involvement, from 12-24 May 2003 an orthography design workshop was held. Twenty-nine persons attended, including 12 Northern Pwo Karen from Nong Ung Tai village and other Northern Pwo Karen from the Omkoi area. At this workshop, they chose letters to represent the sounds of their language. The Northern Pwo Karen, themselves, had the final say on all orthography decisions.

Once the participants agreed on the appropriate Thai script representation for each Pwo Karen sound (including several sounds not found in Thai that required special symbols), they practiced using the orthography by writing out word lists and short stories. Materials produced at the workshop included a 288-word Pwo Karen/Thai/English picture dictionary, a manual for using the orthography, and a short folktale, "The Rabbit and The Snail." These materials have been used throughout the course of the project, and have been revised as the teachers have gained more experience using and teaching the orthography.

At the end of the orthography design workshop, the participants were sent home with the assignment to gather information in their village for a cultural calendar.



Learning Materials Production

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Additional learning materials for NPKOM have been produced through a series of workshops, in addition to materials developed independently by teachers and learners in the villages.

To facilitate learning materials production, ONFEC and Payap University's Applied Linguistics Training Programme (ALTP) cooperated in a writers workshop, held in the Om Koi District Center (22 July - 1 August 2003). SIL International multi-lingual education consultants introduced ONFEC to the "Multi-Strategy Approach" to literacy (Stringer 1992 and 1993). This methodology emphasizes group reading exercises, group writing experiences, and individual free reading/writing, in addition to traditional "primer" lessons.

Various techniques were used to help Pwo Karen writers think of appropriate topics for "Big Books" (culturally familiar stories using

simple sentence structures and much repetition, printed on portfolio-sized paper for group reading exercises) and “small books” for individual reading. Information that had been collected for the cultural calendar provided themes for many stories.

Materials produced at this workshop included:

- “Big Books” (6)
- “word card sets” (6--based on key words from “Big Books”)
- “small books” (10)

In addition, the teachers received lesson planning forms for recording their daily lesson plans. The forms include short summaries of activities included in the “Story Track” (reading and writing meaningful texts) and the “Primer Track” (reading and writing letters, syllables and words) components of the Multi-Strategy Approach.

All of the materials were used in CLC classes immediately after production.



Initial Results

By the end of 2003, the teachers reported positive responses on the part of both parents and children. Older children, who already had learned to read Thai, were able to master the Pwo Karen orthography quickly, and many of them began writing their own stories, some of which were later incorporated into the curriculum.

ONFEC presented their initial results at the November 2003 “Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalization and Multilingual Education in Minority Communities in Asia” (sponsored by UNESCO Bangkok, Mahidol University, and SIL International). The presentation and a display of the project attracted the attention of several high-ranking Thai Ministry of Education officials, while providing encouragement for the Northern Pwo Karen teachers and students who attended the conference.



Expanding Project Learning Materials (2004)

To maintain the positive momentum of Stage 1, UNESCO provided a second grant to ONFEC to continue developing NPKOM through 2004. All involved agreed on the need to develop more classroom materials, and additional workshops for both teachers and advanced students were organized in February, April and June 2004. The corpus of learning materials during Stage 2 thus expanded to include the following:

- “Big Books” (12), accompanied by “word card sets”
- “small books” (33)
- A tape of traditional Northern Pwo Karen songs, as well as children’s songs translated from Thai
- A book of pre-writing and basic letter-writing drills (introducing all the consonants of Northern Pwo Karen)
- A book of basic reading drills (introducing all the consonants and vowels of Northern Pwo Karen)
- Cultural calendar poster

Environmental issues were highlighted in the April and June meetings, resulting in some teaching materials and activities geared toward conservation.

Strengthening Implementation (2005-06)

By the end of 2004, a good foundation had been laid in terms of community support, ministry-level support, materials production, etc. However, the programme faced several challenges. Due to health concerns, family situations, and other commitments, the external project consultants were unable to visit the project sites during 2004. In addition, two key teachers left the project to accept positions in the formal education system, which offers better pay, better benefits, and greater job security.



In January 2005, ONFEC staff with SIL multilingual education consultants visited Nong Ung Tai village. They found that, while the teachers and community were enthusiastic about the programme, the teachers did not yet fully understand the process of helping children to begin learning in their mother tongue and then adding the second language. Some teachers were teaching smaller children (whose Thai was very limited) to read and write Thai at the same time they were teaching the Pwo Karen alphabet.

Lessons learned during this visit prompted Stage 3 of the project, during which the ONFEC planned more regular classroom visits, developed more detailed teaching plans and conducted several in-service training workshops. In these workshops, Pwo Karen teachers finished developing their primer (to teach the letters of the alphabet) and received training to become trainers of future teachers. The Pwo Karen teachers were assigned to teach the younger children, and the Thai teachers the older ones. It was decided that the then-youngest group of children would represent the first cycle of the improved programme, which commenced during the second school term of 2005.



Teaching Plan: Bridging to the National Language



Guided by a clearer understanding of the process and additional materials, with the support of regular consultant visits and with an additional grant from UNESCO, the project went forward stronger than before. Inspired by materials from Papua New Guinea, ONFEC personnel began developing a total curriculum based on the learning standards stipulated in the Thai national curriculum, but geared to helping Pwo Karen (and other minority) children achieve required competencies in each grade, but in a bilingual setting. A cultural mathematics course was initiated, drawing upon mathematical concepts implicit in the village setting (patterns used in weaving, shapes of traditional tatoos, the angles of thatched roofs, the balancing

mechanism of traditional foot-operated rice mills, etc.). Detailed daily and hourly lesson plans were drawn up, much to the relief of teachers who had been stressed by having to create their own lesson plans. Existing materials were revised and new ones created, as needed. Work on materials for “bridging” to Thai commenced, including Total Physical Response (TPR) for developing Thai listening and speaking skills, a “Transitional Primer” (to systematically introduce students already literate in Northern Pwo Karen to Thai reading and writing), and diglot books with parallel Thai and Northern Pwo Karen sentences.

Table 1: Grade Level Progression Plan Envisioned Mid-2006

	K1	K2	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
100%	Build capacity in oral L1; L1 as Language of Instruction (LOI), all subjects	Build capacity in oral L1; Introduce L1 literacy; L1 as LOI all subjects	Build capacity in oral and written L1; L1 as LOI all subjects	Build capacity in oral and written L1; L1 as LOI all subjects	Build capacity in oral and written L1; L1 as LOI most subjects	Build capacity in oral and written L1; L1 as LOI most subjects	L1 some subjects	L1 some subjects
90%								
80%								
70%								
60%								
50%								
40%								
30%								
20%	Songs in L2	Songs, TPR in L2	L2 oral skills taught as second language	Build capacity in L2 oral skills. Introduce L2 literacy.	Develop oral and written L2; L2 for some subjects	Develop oral and written L2; L2 for most subjects	Develop oral and written L2; L2 for most subjects	
10%								
					Begin listening L3	Begin written L3	Develop L3	Develop L3

L1 = Northern Pwo Karen

L2 = Thai

L3 = English

Source: NPKOM Grade Level Progression⁶

6 It should be noted that content subjects, such as science and math, are taught in the L1 in the early grades. Teachers may utilize the “sandwich” method for content courses in upper primary grades. This involves introducing a concept in the L1, explaining key L2 vocabulary in the L1, teaching the bulk of the lesson in the L2, and providing a final summary in L1.

Positive Response

NPKOM continued to garner attention throughout Stage 3, including newspaper articles and a television documentary. Minister of Education Chaturon Chaisaneg, who as a university student had taught Thai to Hmong tribal children, visited the project on 5 January 2006. He proclaimed it a “miracle,” and encouraged ONFEC to establish bilingual programmes for other villages and language groups. Education officials from across Thailand made the arduous journey to Nong Ung Tai to learn more about the project. Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn visited the project in February 2006.



Networking with Other Organizations

NPKOM is the result of cooperation between the Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission of the Thai Ministry of Education, UNESCO-Bangkok, and SIL International. Nonetheless, the project has attracted the interest of other organizations, including UNICEF and various international non-governmental agencies. The project organizers are keen to share their experiences with all interested parties. Minister of Education Chaturon Chaisang suggested that developing sound bilingual programmes in Thailand could benefit Thailand’s neighbors, as many ethnic groups are spread across several South-East Asian countries.

Cost of the Project

In terms of project costs, a significant portion of the budget has been used for transportation for project facilitators and advisors coming from Bangkok and for travel/lodging for workshop participants.⁷ Reading materials developed in the community and at workshops have been produced by hand and on computers and photocopiers. Teachers and students often color illustrations by hand using colored pencils. Thus, the cost of materials to produce one Big Book is approximately 150 baht (US\$3.75), while each small book is approximately 50 baht (US\$1.25).

Teaching materials for the expanded programme have been produced in higher quantities and on higher quality paper. The cost is equal to the printing cost of a Thai language textbook. As project facilitators and teachers continue to learn more about the process of material development and as they continue to develop confidence in their abilities, especially as Northern Pwo Karen trainers are empowered to take more responsibilities previously done by outside consultants (teacher training, materials development, etc.), costs will drop further.

7 UNESCO grants were used for workshop-related expenses; the ONFEC funded implementation.

Impact of the Project



Impact on Education Policy

As mentioned earlier, NPKOM is the first true mother-tongue-first bilingual programme for ethnic minorities in Thailand. As such, many look to NPKOM as a model for programmes in other areas and languages. Lessons learned from NPKOM are impacting educational policy, as the Ministry of Education seeks to determine the best way to “grow” sound bilingual programmes that are linked to national educational requirements.

Impact on Learner Participation

Learning participation in NPKOM is higher than that normally found in Thai rural schools. This stems from two factors: first, the teaching methodology and, second, the use of the mother tongue.

The multi-strategy approach utilized at NPKOM is highly interactive. Classroom activities are designed to fully involve the children in the learning process. The children sing, participate in group reading and writing exercises, perform total physical response (TPR) routines, etc. This is quite different from the rote learning style seen in most rural Thai classrooms.

Interaction is also encouraged by the use of the mother tongue. Many have observed that minority children

in monolingual Thai schools seem very “shy” — hesitant to speak and reluctant to participate in class activities. Many students feel perpetually confused, many teachers perpetually frustrated. In some cases, well-intentioned officials have classified groups of ethnic minority children as “slow learners” and placed them in programmes for the mentally challenged. The problem does not lie with mental facilities, but with language abilities.

In NPKOM, the children begin their studies in their mother tongue. The knowledge that they bring with them to the classroom is appreciated, affirmed, and built upon. They gain confidence in the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing their first language first. Then, when they bridge to Thai, they already have had many positive school experiences; success breeds more success.

Both Thai and Northern Pwo Karen NPKOM teachers report much greater class participation and enjoyment as a direct result of allowing the children to use their mother tongue. Schools become much more “child friendly” when the children’s mother tongue is used in the classroom!

Capacity to Learn the National Language

“Studying Pwo Karen is beneficial. It has increased my ability to write in both Thai and Pwo Karen. If there was something I didn’t understand in Thai the teacher could explain it. I want this program to expand. I would like to be a teacher someday.”

Miss Taka, NPKOM student

Numerous studies have documented the effectiveness of well-planned bilingual programmes in improving the national language abilities of minority language speakers, including the fact that minority children in well-planned bilingual programmes often out-perform minority children in monolingual national language schools.

At this point, it is still too early to empirically demonstrate a link between participation in NPKOM and enhanced achievement in Thai. However, anecdotal evidence points to the benefits of the bilingual approach. Examples are the accounts of older Pwo Karen students, who began their schooling in Thai, but later were taught to read and write Pwo Karen. Several such students have commented that learning Pwo Karen gave them a better understanding of how Thai words were put together.⁸ These students’ self-confidence has also been boosted by their involvement in materials production, as well as their participation in national and international conferences.

Socio-Economic Impact

The project’s environmental concern is demonstrated in the choice of themes for some teaching materials. One teacher expressed sadness that the books talk about healthy forests, but the children have not had the opportunity to see such a forest due to environmental degradation from slash and burn agriculture and firewood collection. The teachers have begun teaching the Thai and Northern Pwo Karen names of various plants and trees in the area to develop appreciation for biological diversity and conservation. These and other activities are meant to help children achieve their educational goals and, in the process, develop the capability and confidence to participate actively in the social, political and economic (including environmental protection) affairs of the wider society if that is their desire, and also to affirm and protect their linguistic and cultural heritage.

Cost-Effectiveness

Has NPKOM been cost effective? As mentioned earlier, much of the “start up” costs of the project related to travel and lodging for project facilitators and consultants headquartered outside the project site area. Because there has been a constant focus on empowering and upgrading the skills of on-site staff, the “start up” costs have been seen as a valuable investment in the future. Materials production costs have

8 Similar results have been found in the Chong language revitalization project, coordinated by Mahidol University’s Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development. Chong children who already read Thai found their understanding of Thai spelling enhanced by their study of Chong, to the point that Chong children in the revitalization programme have achieved greatly improved scores on Thailand’s national examinations (administered in the third and sixth grades). Indeed, the pilot project school is the only school in the district where most students passed the national exam—a dramatic reversal of past trends (Suwilai, 2006 and Kosonen, 2003). These positive effects may also be due to the teaching techniques used in the multi-strategy approach, with the focus on meaning and creative expression, as opposed to the focus on accuracy and memorization found in the current mainstream Thai educational system.

been minimal, as books developed by teachers, students, and members of the community have been produced and duplicated at very low cost.

Although a detailed socio-economic impact study has not yet been completed, NPKOM teachers and outside observers have noticed that the NPKOM students are much more engaged in their schoolwork than minority students in nearby, national-language only programmes. Greater engagement translates into increased learning, better attendance, better retention — in short, greater cost effectiveness.

Project Sustainability

“I am glad that we have our own written language, because if we didn’t have this project, someday we Pwo Karen might lose our language, even though we may not have realized this until now.”

Ms. Ratikan Boonji, NPKOM Teacher, Nong Ung Tai

From the outset, ONFEC recognized that, without full community participation, NPKOM would be doomed to failure. The project has benefited tremendously from the moral support of village leaders. In addition, Pwo Karen villagers were actively involved in the development and testing of both the orthography and reading materials. Many of the older children are helping to write and illustrate new graded reading materials.

ONFEC feels that connecting NPKOM to other projects can contribute to sustainability. For example, ONFEC has recently translated the Asia-Pacific Cultural Center for UNESCO (ACCU) “Planet 3” materials on waste management and hygiene into Northern Pwo Karen. These attractive posters and comic books will be distributed throughout northern Thailand, thus promoting the use of Northern Pwo Karen as a written language and helping to convey important development information.

In addition, the NPKOM lesson plans are now being directly linked to the Thai Ministry of Education’s framework for outcomes and indicators. This will lend greater credibility to NPKOM and future projects in other languages, since it will help educational officials recognize that bilingual programme students are able to meet national educational objectives.

Although community support is crucial to a project of this type, supportive government policies, understanding local education officials, and on-going financial support are also essential to sustainability.

Challenges

As a groundbreaking project for Thailand, NPKOM has encountered challenges of various types. These include:

- *The challenge of introducing a new concept:* The bilingual approach is very new to Thailand, and contradicts the “common sense” view that minority students can only learn Thai by being submerged in it from the first day of preschool. Despite the early successes of NPKOM, some are still skeptical about the bilingual approach, particularly as to how the students will bridge from Pwo Karen to Thai. This has prompted ONFEC to redouble its efforts to build a strong, carefully documented programme.

- *The administrative challenge:* NPKOM involves ONFEC personnel from four geographically distant administrative offices, in addition to the village CLCs. The time, travel and costs involved has challenged attempts by the research team to hold regular meetings.
- *The personnel challenge:* It has been difficult to find qualified Pwo Karen teachers. ONFEC teachers have low salaries, few benefits, and little job security. Several key Pwo Karen teachers have left the project for jobs in the formal system.
- *The expansion challenge:* The success of the project has led to calls for expansion into other Northern Pwo Karen villages. However, very few Northern Pwo Karen people have formal teaching credentials. For this reason, in 2006, a programme was initiated to recruit and train people from 14 villages to serve as unpaid “volunteer teacher assistants.” These individuals, who must have at least a Grade 6 education, will undergo pre-service and in-service training, and be paired with a certified teacher (generally Thai). Continuing education opportunities will help these teachers upgrade their formal qualifications as they gain valuable teaching experience. Similar on-the-job teacher training schemes have been successful in other countries, most notably Papua New Guinea.

Recommendations

Supportive government policies are the key to the future success of NPKOM and all other potential bilingual programmes in Thailand. Interested scholars, government officials, and educators must be persistent in educating themselves, and other influential people, about the benefits of bilingual education. Because of its multilingual context and high level of economic and social development, Thailand could become a regional leader in mother-tongue-first bilingual education. If so, the benefits to Thailand, itself, as well as to its neighbors, would be truly significant.

Conclusion

The Thai poet-prince-educator Mom Luang Pin Malakul once wrote, “As an orchid takes a long time to blossom, so education requires time to flourish. But once in bloom, it is glorious and can be admired by all.” The experiences of NPKOM bear testimony to this insight. Many positive steps have been taken, and the stem of the flower is strong. The on-going dedication and cooperation of the Northern Pwo Karen community and the Thai Ministry of Education will insure that the orchid, indeed, blossoms in Om Koi and in other minority communities throughout Thailand.

Annexes



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