

# **Evaluation of the state of multilingual education in Cambodia**

**Undertaken June 2015  
for CARE Cambodia**



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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>BB</b>	Bending Bamboo (Bilingual Schools)
<b>BE</b>	Bilingual Education, now MLE (see below)
<b>BICS</b>	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
<b>CALP</b>	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
<b>CSMC</b>	Community School Management Committee, now SSC (see below)
<b>CRC</b>	Conventions on the Rights of the Child
<b>ECE</b>	Early Childhood Education
<b>ESP</b>	Education Strategic Plan
<b>DHE</b>	Department of Higher Education
<b>DSR</b>	Department of Science Research
<b>HCEP</b>	Highland Children's Education Project
<b>ICC</b>	International Cooperation Cambodia
<b>MENAP</b>	MLE National Action Plan
<b>MLE</b>	Multilingual Education
<b>MoEYS</b>	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
<b>NSDP</b>	National Strategic Plan
<b>PED</b>	Primary Education Department
<b>PTTC</b>	Provincial Teacher Training College
<b>SSC</b>	School Support Committee (new Cambodia-wide system including MLE)
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>VWC</b>	Village Women's Committee

## Executive summary

L1-based multilingual education (MLE) has been a key strategy for reaching ethnolinguistic minority groups in Cambodia with educational services since the early 2000s. Initiated by CARE, made possible through a grant by AusAID, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS), and involving partners like International Cooperation Cambodia (ICC) and UNICEF, MLE was first implemented in Ratanakiri province. Over the past five years, MLE has been expanded through MoEYS and provincial education offices (POEs) in the other four northeastern provinces of Cambodia—Kratie, Mondulkiri, Preah Vihear and Steung Treng.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the state of MLE implementation in Cambodia, using as a point of reference the evaluation done four years ago by Benson (2011), following up on her recommendations and going beyond these to report on current issues. This study, done by a three-member research team from Teachers College, Columbia University, reports on document analysis as well as field visits to schools, communities and education offices in Phnom Penh and in Ratanakiri province. We make recommendations for strengthening the quality, improving the sustainability and further expanding the approach to MLE at the preschool and primary levels. By discussing both the successes and the challenges of MLE implementation and expansion in recent years, the team hopes to contribute to continued and productive educational planning at the national, provincial and local levels.

This study began with a ten-day preparatory phase where relevant MLE policy documents were reviewed. This was followed by a two-week period of in-country travel by team member Kevin Wong to Phnom Penh and to Ratanakiri province. Three schools and communities were visited in Ratanakiri, and provincial and national representatives from MoEYS were interviewed. Data collection methods included report reading/analysis, informational meetings, individual interviews, group discussions, classroom observations, and some photographic and video recordings. Kevin was able to interact with a range of Kreung speakers, including state and community teachers, local school staff, mothers' groups, school boards, village leaders and elders, and learners in grades 1 through 6. In the capital city and in the field, Kevin interviewed key stakeholders from CARE, MoEYS and UNICEF. Following this period of fieldwork, team members have consulted CARE staff regarding issues raised in the analysis. This report presents the entire analysis, discussion and recommendations of this “state of MLE” study as of July 2015.

It is important to note that all critiques and recommendations are made in the context of what we would consider to be a highly successful MLE implementation trajectory overall, and an internationally unprecedented model. What began as a community-based bilingual education

approach in Ratanakiri province is being integrated on an ongoing basis into official MoEYS policy and practice and expanded into four additional provinces. Significant progress has been made since the 2011 evaluation. This is an important accomplishment for CARE, the Ministry and UNICEF as well as other partners, and it provides a highly useful model for efforts in other multilingual countries.

The most recent and exciting development in MLE expansion is the finalization in July 2015 of the Multilingual Education National Action Plan (MENAP), which MoEYS and its partners have been developing collaboratively since 2014. This plan is meant to serve as a “roadmap” or set of guidelines for the implementation and expansion of MLE in the five targeted provinces of northeastern Cambodia during the period of 2015 to 2018. MENAP aims to improve the quality of education for all ethnic minority learners, build the capacity of MoEYS officials to manage and monitor MLE implementation, scale up MLE provision in all five provinces in terms of number and in terms of language groups, and promote MLE amongst School Support Committees, parents and local authorities. In addition, MENAP highlights the following needs, which were agreed upon by all five provincial representatives in July 2015:

- Capacity building for teachers and teacher training
- Materials for teaching and learning
- Coordination of data and information for monitoring and evaluation purposes
- Expansion of MLE to new schools and languages
- Sufficient infrastructure and resources
- Converting all community schools to state schools

While the English-language version of MENAP 2015-2018 says that “all” ethnolinguistic minority groups are targeted, the question remains of whether the Khmer version of the document refers only to Indigenous children or to all children who speak non-dominant languages. Further, although we are encouraged by the progress Cambodia continues to make in MLE development, we must note that the bilingual model promoted by MENAP is still weak according to the international literature on MLE practice. Fortunately, even though MENAP does not provide details, there are plans to develop a pilot MLE program that expands L1 use over six years of primary schooling. This pilot will be followed by the Education Research Committee established by the Minister of Education, and is likely to produce positive results that we hope will stimulate an adjustment of the current model.

Recommendations directed toward MoEYS involve flexibility regarding the school calendar and affirmative action for community teachers, both of which were issues raised in Benson’s 2011 evaluation. First, we urge MoEYS to clarify how schools may adopt the “decentralized” calendar more relevant to agricultural activities in an effort to address challenges of student (and teacher) attendance. We suggest compromises, and hope that national and provincial education officials

will pay close attention to UNICEF's pilot program in Steung Treng, which is currently researching the effectiveness of the decentralized calendar among other things. With regard to the issue of converting community teachers to government teachers, we note that significant progress has been made in MoEYS recognizing CARE-trained teachers as part of the conversion of community teachers to state teachers. The guidelines in MENAP explain how conversion works, but we recommend that care be taken in implementing these conversions and in accepting teachers with strong L1 and cultural proficiency rather than focusing on any perceived weaknesses in Khmer language or subject knowledge. We also recommend that more female community teachers be recruited and supported to undergo training and conversion, as they represent about one-third of the current bilingual teaching staff; a reasonable goal would be 50 percent.

To promote the sustainable development of additional non-dominant languages for educational use, we recommend that all partners who have the capacity find ways to support the linguistic groundwork laid by ICC, involving national and international linguists in connection with the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP). In addition, building on a process that has begun in Ratanakiri and Mondulkiri, we recommend that the POEs actively research and document the number of state teachers with local language skills, determining their interest in teaching bilingually and placing them appropriately. With collaboration between RUPP, ICC, POE staff and others, a *national linguistic agency* could be established. In addition to promoting the development of minority languages, this agency could work on orthographies, harmonize varieties, facilitate agreement among linguistic communities, document existing written materials in each language, train linguists from the linguistic communities being studied, and contribute to the development of educational materials in relevant languages. This type of agency would have an ongoing close relationship with MoEYS, facilitating the approval of non-dominant languages for use in education.

Along with the situation analysis and recommendations made, the latter portion of this study updates the MLE situation by following up on a selection of recommendations made in the 2011 report. In this portion some recommendations resurface, including the need for a decentralized calendar and the push for additional non-dominant languages to be developed and used in school. At the end, a number of new recommendations are made, such as the need for more research on gender parity among female students and teachers, as well as the need to extend Cambodian MLE exchange visits beyond the immediate ASEAN region, to take the next step toward sustainability and “south-south” cooperation.

## Introduction

Multilingual education, known as mother tongue-based multilingual education or MLE in the international literature, has been adopted by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) of Cambodia as a means to meet the educational needs of ethnolinguistic minority groups. Based on CARE's Highland Communities Education Project (HCEP), which has implemented a bilingual education community schools model (BE, now known as MLE) in Ratanakiri province since 2002, five provinces in northeastern Cambodia—Kratie, Mondulkiri, Preah Vihear, Ratanakiri and Steung Treng—have been called upon to implement MLE to meet the needs of their high proportions of ethnic minority learners in four languages so far—Tampuen, Kreung, Phnong and Kavet—while teaching Khmer, the national language. Overall, Cambodia's efforts to implement MLE in policy and practice make it a role model for countries in the Southeast Asia region and the broader international sphere. Meanwhile, there is more to be done, and this consultancy was designed to determine the state of implementation, make recommendations for future progress, and publish an article about the process in an appropriate academic journal.

In 2011, an in-depth evaluation of the state of MLE (then BE) in Cambodia was conducted for MoEYS by Dr. Carol Benson, a member of the current team, who was contracted by UNICEF and given logistical support by both CARE and UNICEF. Involving five weeks of fieldwork, this evaluation examined activities resulting from the important *Guidelines on Implementation of Education for Indigenous Children in Highland Provinces*, MoEYS document no. 2972, which was signed into effect by then-Minister of Education Mr Im Sethy on 26 August 2010. Recommendations were made with regard to structural, technical and policy-based support for MLE, linguistic support, bilingual (L1/Khmer) teacher supply and training, and bilingual (L1/Khmer) curriculum, methods and materials. The four L1s used at the time were Tampuen, Kreung, Phnong and Kavet, and there was the hope that more would be added. There were also targeted recommendations made for MoEYS partners as well as for each of the five provinces.

The current study as described in the terms of reference (see ToR in Appendix A) called for an update on the state of MLE in Cambodia since the 2011 evaluation. Because MoEYS has made significant progress in MLE implementation with the help of its partners, CARE wanted the consultancy team to document progress and supplement the comprehensive background laid in 2011. The consultants determined that it was important to revisit the 2011 recommendations and discuss successes and challenges in implementation, as well as to analyze gender and sustainability in the process. An additional component of this study was to collect and analyze longitudinal data on student achievement and publish an academic paper with the results, building on the earlier work of an Australian team in 2013 (see Lee, Watts & Frawley 2014).

The first part of the consultancy involved the review of a range of relevant documents and reports prior to Kevin Wong's arrival in Cambodia. This was followed by a two-week period of in-country travel and meetings. Due to time constraints, only Ratanakiri province was visited, where meetings were conducted with the provincial education office (POE) and visits paid to three schools serving Kreung communities, accompanied by CARE staff<sup>1</sup>. These three schools included one government state school, one MLE school from the 2002 Highland Children's Education Project (HCEP), and one MLE school from the 2009 Bending Bamboo (BB) Project, a spinoff of the HCEP. Data collection methods included report reading/analysis, informational meetings, individual interviews, group discussions, classroom observations, and some photographic and video recording. Kevin was able to talk with a wide range of Kreung<sup>2</sup> speakers, including state and community teachers, local staff, village women's committee members, school boards, village leaders and elders, and learners in primary school.

The objectives of the ToR called for an analysis of the state of MLE through:

- Analyzing existing quantitative data and collecting additional data as necessary to assess the functioning of MLE in Cambodia
- Examining existing monitoring and evaluation plans for strengths and weaknesses; proposing improvements
- Identifying trends, risks, and successful aspects of MLE in Cambodia, and contextualizing these with factors that facilitate or challenge MLE functioning
- Making recommendations to mitigate risks, address challenges and maximize successes in terms of MLE functioning and particularly learner achievement

This report describes the findings of the study, analyzes their implications and makes recommendations to improve the implementation of MLE programs. It includes a discussion of the 2015 *Multilingual Education National Action Plan* (MENAP) of Cambodia.

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<sup>1</sup> We are grateful for the technical and linguistic assistance provided to Kevin Wong by Voun Sovouen and Khien Chanda from CARE, and Aun Hemrin who helped with the interview of HE Ton Sa Im in Phnom Penh.

<sup>2</sup> Note that due to limited time, Kevin was not able to meet with members of other language groups; however, we will report on other groups using data available from MoEYS, CARE and other partners.

## 1. The state of MLE past and present

### 1.1 Summary of the 2011 evaluation

Benson's 2011 evaluation report of the state of MLE in Cambodia (hereafter called the 2011 evaluation) thoroughly assessed the state of MLE implementation in five provinces of northeastern Cambodia, namely Kratie, Mondulkiri, Preah Vihear, Ratanakiri and Steung Treng. Recommendations were then made to strengthen the quality and assist in the scaling-up of multilingual education in Cambodia at the preschool and primary levels.

The 2010 *Guidelines on Implementation of Education for Indigenous Children in Highland Provinces* (hereafter called the *BE Guidelines*, as the system was known as bilingual education at the time) were approved by the Minister of Education, giving policy support to MLE for the first time in Cambodia. Following the BE Guidelines, MoEYS and its partners began scaling up from piloting in three provinces to developing larger bilingual programs in all five provinces with significant ethnolinguistic minority populations.

As noted above, the MLE activities promoted by the *BE Guidelines* were rooted in a community schools model developed and piloted by CARE since 2002, the major components of which were: establishing community school management committees (CSMCs, now known across the country as School Support Committees or SSCs), shifting to a school calendar compatible with local farming activities, and training and employing speakers of local languages as teachers. The comprehensive set of recommendations made in the 2011 evaluation were based on Benson's findings and implications for policy and practice, including analyses of the CARE-promoted model and of the *BE Guidelines* themselves.

Among Benson's recommendations, the one calling for the most change involved extending the model of MLE represented in the *BE Guidelines*. That model was considered an early-exit transitional model based on a switch to Khmer over a 3-year period, which would not maximize learners' mother tongue/L1 resources nor promote the desired level of educational achievement among non-Khmer learners. Two other major recommendations were to develop an **MLE implementation manual** to elaborate the processes and models that could be adopted, and to establish a **Center for Cambodian Languages** to facilitate the coordination of linguistic processes such as the development of additional non-dominant languages, establish orthographies and harmonize language varieties.

The 2011 evaluation also made valuable recommendations to different stakeholders. Those specific to MoEYS were:

- **Clarifying the reporting dates** for schools operating on the decentralized school calendar
- **Streamlining the approval system** for languages and learning materials
- **Spearheading a media campaign** to raise awareness of MLE, particularly in the five targeted provinces
- **Strengthening the sub-group on Inclusive Education** within the Child Friendly Schools Steering Committee
- **Building an MLE Research and Development Unit** to promote research, monitoring and development of bilingual programs

Additionally, while there were individual recommendations for all five Provincial Offices of Education (POEs), three major suggestions common to all POEs were:

- **Taking a leadership role** in coordinating the work of stakeholders, especially NGOs
- **Promoting synergy** by creating mother tongue-based multilingual programs for early childhood, primary and adult NFE in the same communities
- Training and employing more **female** bilingual (L1/Khmer) community teachers

Recommendations were also offered to CARE, International Cooperation Cambodia (ICC), UNICEF and other NGOs and partners. The overall theme for these partners was to allow MLE to expand and mature in Cambodia by shifting their roles from implementers to capacity builders. Apart from that, there were specific recommendations directed towards bilingual (L1/Khmer) teacher supply and the situation of community teachers in particular, as well as MLE curriculum, methods and materials. These recommendations will be followed up in Part 6 of this report.

## **1.2 An update on community schools and classrooms**

Kevin was able to visit a total of three schools in Ratanakiri during the fieldwork component of this consultancy. These included one HCEP school, one Bending Bamboo (BB) school, and one non-MLE state school. HCEP schools were established as bilingual (L1/Khmer) community schools in 2002 to meet the educational needs of disadvantaged Indigenous children in six communities that had low enrolment rates and high dropout rates. Building on the success of HCEP, Bending Bamboo schools were created as a ten-year project beginning in 2005 with a focus on improving the educational and life situation of Indigenous girls; as part of the BB program the MLE model was applied to seven state (government) schools. As noted above, all of these schools have been included in a longitudinal project by CARE to measure the effectiveness of MLE in Cambodia (Lee et al 2014). It should be noted that BB schools tend to be closer than HCEP schools to Ban Lung, the administrative center of Ratanakiri, which could give learners relatively more exposure to Khmer, the national language. Still, BB schools are composed mainly of Tampuen and Kreung speakers, who can benefit significantly from MLE programs that build a strong literacy foundation. The non-MLE state school visited for this study, used as a

control school in the Lee et al (2014) study, was located at a comparable distance from Ban Lung and has not received any L1 instruction or support.

The classrooms visited in all three schools were filled with posters, student work and teacher-made decorations (see picture). In contrast to Benson's 2011 visit, we noted that the non-MLE state school had plenty of drawings and work on the walls, though this was completely done in Khmer. Both HCEP and BB schools had posters that were bilingual in Khmer and Kreung (see picture), the learners' home language. All classrooms visited from grades 1-6 were equally decorative with a print-rich environment for language learners. The early childhood education (ECE) classroom in the state school was also colorful.



Both the state school and the BB school were approximately 20 kilometers from the city center, Ban Lung. The HCEP school was about 35 kilometers from Ban Lung. All schools were fenced and had playground equipment such as swings, seesaws and roundabouts (see picture). Each school had a library; the HCEP and state schools each devoted an entire building to the library, with a dozen shelves of categorized books, while the BB school library was placed on one wall of the classroom.<sup>3</sup> The school libraries at both HCEP and BB

schools visited had books in Khmer and Kreung. These books were written specifically for the village communities and included relevant topics such as the farming calendar, superstitions and traditions. The majority of the literature in local languages has been developed by ICC and CARE. While at the HCEP school, we observed a handful of students reading local literature during their recess, and the book borrowing system there (made up of plastic bottles and wooden popsicle sticks) showed that plenty of students from each grade were borrowing books (see picture). We



<sup>3</sup> The BB school visited was small, consisting of one long building divided into two. They rotated 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade in the morning, and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in the afternoon.

understand that each book given to all students can be taken home, then brought back at the end of each month when they start a new book.

### **1.3 An update on community support, teachers and learners**

#### *Gender parity*

The CARE-supported model of community ownership in MLE schools continues to thrive since the 2011 evaluation. Community School Management Committees (CSMCs), now known as School Support Committees (SSCs), are given the responsibility of developing and protecting their local language and traditions. Since the 2011 evaluation, a stronger female presence has been established among the village leaders. In the BB school community, the Village Women's Committee (VWC) was present at the focus group discussion. According to members of the VWC, the committee collaborates with the SSC to solve problems, reach out to mothers in the community to explain the importance of education, raise awareness about MLE and ask the community to be present at school board meetings in Ban Lung. The three members of the VWCs were selected by the village elders and chief. In addition to supporting the SSC, the VWCs primarily serve the ECE classrooms, helping with curriculum development and creating toys and materials to decorate the ECE classrooms. While members of the VWC spoke confidently and positively of their contribution, they worried about the sustainability of material collection in this time of conversion from community schools to government schools. They also worried about transportation costs associated with their voluntary work as they would need to travel between the village and Ban Lung to collect materials and receive training from the POE.



Female representation has increased not only among the community leadership but also in the classroom. In the HCEP and BB schools, there were more female teachers than male teachers. One male teacher in HCEP commented on this phenomenon, stating that “*Before, only men travelled far distances from the village to attend school [and teacher training]. Now, we realized women can go, too.*”

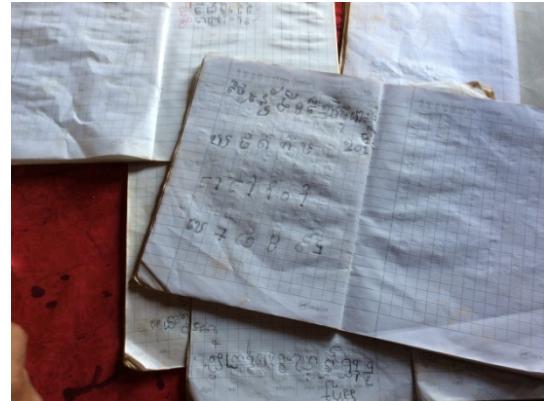
Appendix B illustrates the breakdown of gender, experience and language(s) spoken by the teachers in each school visited.

Interestingly, in the relatively remote HCEP school, there were significantly more girls enrolled in school than boys. Teachers commented on this pattern, saying that in grades 1 and 2, the distribution of males and females is approximately equal, but as children get older, especially in upper primary and lower secondary, more and more boys drop out of school. SSC members and teachers conjectured that this was due to the boys helping out more on the farms and also desiring to become successful farmers like their fathers when they grow up. Teachers also commented on how boys are less motivated than girls to work hard in school. According to the focal group discussion with SSC members at the HCEP village, girls want to pursue jobs outside of farming and realize they need an education to achieve this. Of the three female students interviewed in two of the schools, one wanted to be a teacher, one wanted to be a nurse, and one wanted to be an NGO worker when she grew up. Consistent with the SSC hypothesis, one male student interviewed at the HCEP school revealed that he wanted to be a rubber tree farmer when he grew up.



## *Language barriers*

From the three schools visited, all the teachers interviewed in the MLE schools were bilingual in Khmer and Kreung themselves. According to their self-reports, the teachers claimed they would switch between Khmer and Kreung in the classroom when children did not understand the content or their instructions. On the other hand, not all of the teachers in the non-bilingual state school were bilingual, which posed a challenge for the Khmer-only teachers. An interview with the ECE



teacher at the state school, a Khmer speaker, revealed that the greatest challenge she faces is the language gap between her and her students (who speak only Kreung). The ECE teacher was originally from Phnom Penh, the country's capital, and moved to this particular village to follow her parents who moved for farming opportunities. With the growing rubber, cashew, cassava and soybean industries, more and more Khmer-speaking entrepreneurs are moving their families to Kreung-, Tampuen- and other local language-speaking villages. As such, a number of Khmer-speaking teachers are entering village classrooms, and classrooms are also becoming increasingly multilingual. This may promote mutual language learning, but it may also create serious challenges for bilingual programs and teachers. As the agricultural industry continues to expand and mature, the issue of bilingual classrooms with a mix of languages must be addressed. We would recommend strategizing with MoEYS on human and material resource allocation.

## *Challenges*

Echoing the struggles of the ECE teacher, the greatest challenge discussed by teachers at the state school was the language barrier between students and themselves, since they conduct classes solely in Khmer. This demonstrates the great need for MLE. State teachers also discussed the low attendance and high dropout rates, which they feel are due, in large part, to the farming calendar. The HCEP and BB schools, which do not have a language barrier, have seen improved enrolment and attendance since the inception of MLE. Bilingual teachers and members of the SSCs speculated that this is due, at least in part, to the fact that students can learn in their own languages. Still, enrolment remains a challenge for all rural schools, and the farming schedule seems to be a big reason.

## *Decentralized calendar*

As part of the 2011 evaluation, Benson recommended that both the national and provincial level governments allow



schools to adopt a decentralized calendar, according to the farming schedules of each village. This calendar was accepted under the condition that schools were in session for 850-1000 hours per year. However, its implementation has not been widespread nor easy.

According to SSC members at the BB school, they implemented the decentralized calendar for a number of years and were advocates of the idea. However, for the past 3 years, the centralized government calendar has been readopted because of the challenge in completing the 850-1000 hour requirement. The village chief noted that there were many school holidays under the decentralized calendar, so the number of days in school were fewer; this probably happened because community bilingual teachers in state schools had to take government holidays as well as agricultural holidays. However, the enrolment rates during school days were much higher with very few absences, which accounted for more days of learning. This shows us that the MoEYS needs to be clearer and more flexible if possible. Adopting the official calendar only to have the right number of days on paper is not realistic.

### *Teaching and learning*



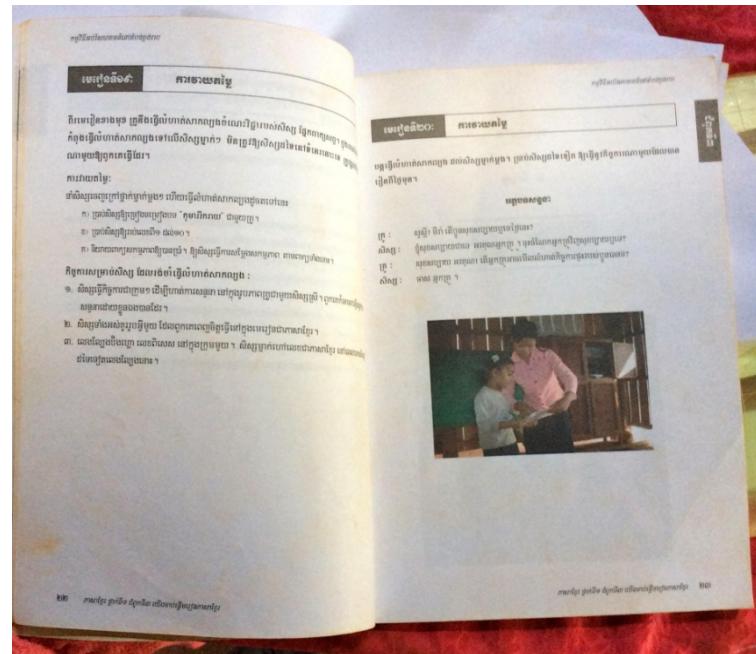
During the visits to each school, a number of classes were observed for short periods of time. At the state school, teachers used a lot of choral reading to recite through passages in textbooks. In the bilingual schools, however, teachers were using small group discussions (see picture on left), student presentations and songs as well as choral reading to engage students in learning. Students seemed to enjoy their lessons when they were singing songs in Kreung, their L1, about the hygiene content they were learning in grade 1. In the grade 4 BB bilingual classroom, where students were engaged in group discussions about Khmer verbs in a passage, the teacher walked from group to group to monitor the progress and discussions of students. As representatives from each

group came up to demonstrate their chosen verb, the teacher supplemented their presentation by adding actions and using props to help students understand the vocabulary words (see picture).

When the Bending Bamboo program began in 2005 with a preparatory year and two-year situation analysis, the research team from CARE along with education consultants put together teaching guides for community teachers from grades 1-3. Each grade and subject received 9 books taught in 9 teaching blocks per year (one book per month). These teaching guides included day-to-day activities, lessons, resources and pedagogical explanations. In addition, they were developed for four main subjects: Khmer language, mathematics, science & social studies, and “vernacular



language,” meaning learners’ L1 (see picture). First-graders received an additional subject called the School Readiness Program. It is important to note the commendable efforts of the CARE translation team as the guides had to be made available in Khmer and four non-dominant languages—Kreung, Tampuen, Kavet and Phnong—to allow teachers of ethnolinguistic minority languages to access high-quality materials for teaching. There are also materials and teachers who have been trained in Kuy; however, ICC has still not been successful in getting the language approved by MoEYS. CARE and UNICEF are working with MoEYS leaders so that Kuy can be approved, and the hope is that Jarai (written using the Khmer script, according to government requirements) will also be approved by the end of the calendar year. We appreciate the important work of ICC, and we congratulate CARE staff for their hard work in promoting linguistic development and approval. However, we also want to remind the partners that Benson’s 2011 evaluation recommended finding ways to support creation of a national linguistic institute, preferably in connection with the National University (RUPP) and possibly UNESCO, to take more responsibility for linguistic development in Cambodia. We recommend that the partners consider supporting some linguistic groundwork, still in collaboration with ICC, so that eventually a national linguistic agency could be established. This would more sustainably promote the development of additional non-dominant languages for educational use.



Overall, we saw an increase in female representation among teachers in the classroom, and continuous professional and friendly interaction between students and teachers that enhanced communication and learning by using learners’ own languages. However, according to MENAP, only 44 of 127 bilingual teachers are female, and we wonder about the proportion of females represented in the conversion of community to state teachers. This means there is still some progress to be made in equalizing opportunities for women and in having the bilingual teachers be representative of a 50:50 gender ratio.

## 2. Policy support for multilingual education

### 2.1 Existing official support for MLE

According to Article 31 of the Constitution of Cambodia, Khmer citizens have the same rights regardless of race, sex, language and social status (Kosonen 2013). Therefore, it could be argued that all citizens should equally receive a quality education. Meanwhile, the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (CRC)<sup>4</sup> also protect the rights of all the children in Cambodia, irrespective of ethnic and racial background.

Cambodian Education Law stipulates that Khmer is the official language as well as a subject of general education. However, there is built-in flexibility for ethnic minorities, since the language of learning and teaching of ethnolinguistic minority groups should be decided by a Prakas of the education ministry (MoEYS, 2013). A prakas is a ministerial or inter-ministerial proclamation or decision, signed by the relevant Minister(s), and must conform to the Constitution and law or sub-decree to which it refers.

As mentioned above, on 26 August 2010, the *Guidelines on Implementation of Education for Indigenous Children in Highland Provinces* were signed by the Minister of Education, giving policy support to the implementation of MLE in Cambodia in five targeted highland provinces according to the HCEP model. This included the establishment of Community School Management Committees (CSMCs), shifting to a school calendar compatible with local farming activities, and training and employing speakers of local languages as teachers. With the aim of ensuring equitable access to education for Indigenous children, the BE Guidelines have played a significant role in facilitating the scaling-up of MLE in Cambodia. However, as already critiqued, the BE Guidelines promote a three-year (early-exit) transitional model, which prescribes that the L1 should be used for teaching 80% of the time in grade 1, 60% in grade 2 and 30 % in grade 3, and that Khmer should be the sole medium of instruction starting from grade 4.

In order to fulfill its national vision and reach the goals of the National Strategic Plan (NSDP) 2014-2018, the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2014-2018 aims at consolidating the accomplishments made by the previous ESPs, assisting the “most disadvantaged,” and providing education that is of high quality and compatible with national development (ESP 2014 p12). The goal is for “all children have access to all types of ECE services, primary schools, secondary schools and opportunities to continue learning”, with special attention to educational equity for the “most disadvantaged” areas and groups of children (ESP 2014 p13). Unfortunately, the ESP

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<sup>4</sup> See e.g. [http://www.unicef.org/crc/index\\_73549.html](http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_73549.html) about how UNICEF is building on the CRC. While language is mentioned specifically only with regard to non-discrimination, the rights to freedom of expression, identity development and educational services should be interpreted as supporting L1-based MLE.

does not clarify here if “disadvantaged” includes non-dominant language groups, gender, children needing special mental/physical assistance and/or students with economic difficulties.

The ESP puts its emphasis on seven key sub-sectors: early childhood education, primary education, secondary and technical education, higher education, non-formal education, youth development, and physical education and sports. Regarding ECE, Benson’s 2011 evaluation suggested that stronger emphasis should be placed on learners’ own languages in early childhood. According to the ESP, strategies for improving early childhood education include teacher training, infrastructure development, and curriculum development. More importantly, MLE for ethnic minorities is explicitly mentioned; the ESP clearly states that there is a need to “strengthen and expand bilingual community pre-schools for ethnic minorities” (ESP 2014 p18).

In the primary education sector, increasing enrolment of marginalized groups in primary schools is considered a key strategy. “Marginalized groups” here means “children from disadvantaged areas, over aged children, poor families, ethnic minority children, immigrated children, etc” (ESP 2014 p23). This may represent a step forward in relation to the 2011 evaluation, since immigrant children are explicitly included and services are not limited to groups considered “Indigenous;” this could pave the way for attention to be paid to all non-dominant languages spoken in Cambodia, including Lao and other cross-border languages. However, according to a local interpretation, by “immigrated children” the document is referring to internal migration of Khmer speakers due to construction work. MLE services are mentioned in terms of schools, teacher training and transforming community schools into public schools (ESP 2014 p25). Unfortunately, bilingual services are discussed under the category of special education programs; while we understand that this relates to a departmental structure in MoEYS, it conflates speakers of non-dominant languages with disabled learners, poor learners etc. Strangely, the teaching of foreign languages from Grade 4 on falls under the quality improvement program, which would be the logical place for MLE to be discussed.

In the secondary and technical education sector of the ESP, the first strategy is to increase enrolment in secondary education especially for female students and “marginalized groups” (ESP 2014 p30). However, there is no mention of MLE, nor of languages other than Khmer. In the higher education sector, the research and publication program also focuses on the dominant language, where the ESP calls for famous authors’ publications in each field of study to be translated into Khmer and research papers to be published in Khmer. Further, the capacity development program requires the improvement of foreign language proficiency in the Department of Higher Education (DHE) and the Department of Science Research (DSR) staff, but fails to mention the use of any non-dominant languages. Likewise, the youth development and physical education and sports sectors emphasize Khmer and foreign languages without mentioning non-dominant languages.

Finally, in the non-formal education sector, none of the discussion of literacy programs or literacy rates specifies which language(s) they might be referring to, nor is MLE mentioned. We hope that the NFE department is doing some work in non-dominant languages even if it is not mentioned, since as Benson indicated in the 2011 evaluation, adult literacy as well as ECE programs in the L1 could create very positive synergy if they functioned in the same communities as the bilingual primary schools.

Overall, it is worth mentioning that gender equity in education is now considered a priority in the ESP. For instance, one of the cross-cutting issues that the ESP targets is “gender with a focus on all levels of education, especially through scholarships and capacity development for females” (ESP 2014 p15). This corresponds well to CARE’s commitment to girls’ education, as well as to Benson’s 2011 point that girls are especially supported by L1-based learning.

## **2.2 Prakas on identification of languages for Khmer national learners who are Indigenous people**

According to Article 1 of the 2013 Prakas on Identification of Languages for Khmer National Learners who are Indigenous People (MoEYS 2013), the purpose of the Prakas is to identify languages for “Khmer national learners who are Indigenous people.” Therefore, the whole Prakas targets Indigenous people in Cambodia, which unfortunately does not include immigrants. Chapter 2 of the Prakas delves into MLE implementation, stipulating that the location, curriculum, textbooks, and pedagogies of MLE should be under the guidance of MoEYS. It also prescribes an early-exit transitional bilingual model for primary education in Article 7, explaining that the mother tongue (learners’ L1) should be used for 80% of teaching in grade 1, 60% in grade 2 and 30% in grade 3, while Khmer should become the sole medium of instruction starting at grade 4.

Article 8 states that student language proficiency will be measured by a test each year. It does not, however, mention which language the test will be written in, so we assume that MoEYS is talking about the dominant language, Khmer. If it is true that assessment is solely in Khmer, this is likely to have a negative backwash effect (Skutnabb-Kangas & Heugh 2012) where even MLE classrooms could resort to teaching only in Khmer in order to “prepare students for the test,” which would be extremely detrimental to the outcome of bilingual programs. It would be highly recommended to include in Article 9 of the Prakas an assessment of learners’ L1, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of bilingual programs focusing on effectiveness and efficiency. However, the Prakas only claims that “relevant authorities at all levels and relevant communities” shall visit the site two times per year and hand in reports in a “timely manner,” so there is lack of clarity regarding both the respective duties of different stakeholders and the timeline.

## **2.3 The Multilingual Education National Action Plan (MENAP) 2015-2018**

On 15-16 June 2015, a workshop organized and funded by CARE was held to finalize the Multilingual Education National Action Plan (MENAP), which is intended to cover the period from 2015 to 2018. Eighteen participants from MoEYS, POEs, UNICEF and CARE attended the workshop. According to the UNICEF representative, all of the partners have been working on the document in a very collaborative way, revising and sending it back and forth, so it has undergone many revisions. During the workshop, the 11<sup>th</sup> version of MENAP was finalized, and now a further version has been made available to us, which is the basis for this section of the report (MENAP July 2015).

MENAP 2015–2018 will serve as a significant “roadmap,” or set of guidelines, for implementation of MLE in Cambodia in the near future. It aims at improving the quality of education and expanding MLE in all its aspects. The vision promoted by MENAP is that all ethnolinguistic minority children have the right to receive high-quality basic education, “including the use of their mother tongue (L1) in the initial stages of education” (MENAP 2015 p6). The policy appears strong in naming “all” ethnolinguistic minority children, but we wonder if the Khmer version of the document actually refers only to “Indigenous” or to all children who speak non-dominant languages. Further, with much respect for the long collaborative process and consensus-building efforts expended by MoEYS and the partners, we must note that the model promoted by MENAP is still weak in terms of MLE practice, since it refers only to “initial” stages of education. MENAP does make brief mention of a planned project to pilot a six-year L1-based model, though the details of this clearly need to be further agreed and developed.

Regarding the target population, we have raised the question of whether MoEYS is targeting all ethnic minority children, only Indigenous children, or in fact what we would hope would be the point: That all children from non-dominant language communities, that is, children who have not grown up speaking Khmer, should have access to L1-based MLE. This point needs to be made clearly to underline the pedagogical justifications for MLE and to include all children, even those of immigrant background. This is important for educational inclusiveness as well. Specific mention of immigrants may not be made for political reasons, but we would suggest that the wording of future documents use “non-dominant languages” to include all non-Khmer speakers.

Our other concern is with MENAP’s continued focus on improving Khmer rather than on doing a good job with L1-based MLE. According to MENAP, the purpose of providing MLE for children from ethnolinguistic minority groups is to enable them to “continue their studies in secondary education and higher education in the national language to become valued and productive citizens of Cambodia” (MENAP 2015, p6). This underlines the assumption that the

L1 is being used only as a vehicle to learning and improving Khmer language proficiency, which is still required for secondary and higher education instruction. According to CARE staff, and not really detailed in MENAP, a six-year pilot is being organized. This will be analyzed by a research committee organized by the new Minister of MoEYS, who is keen on research-based policy. Since this pilot is just being organized, it has not yet changed people's view of the MLE model currently being expanded, so MENAP reflects only the three-year model (with some modifications, as mentioned below).

The objectives of MENAP are:

- To ensure that ethnic minority boys and girls have inclusive access to quality and relevant education;
- To build the capacity of national and sub-national education officials to manage and monitor MLE implementation;
- To scale up MLE provision in relevant provinces; and
- To promote demand for quality MLE amongst School Support Committees, parents and local authorities (MENAP 2015 p6 ).

As mentioned above, the model of MLE (found in Annex 4 of MENAP) continues to be an early-exit transitional model, similar to the model described in the BE Guidelines. Preschool in the L1 is added, but there is still an early switch to Khmer as the sole medium of instruction starting at grade 4. There are a few modifications which are important to highlight: (1) the percentage of time spent teaching/learning the different subjects, such as language studies, maths, and social studies, is prescribed; (2) a model for preschool is included. In the preschool model, 3- and 4-year-olds will learn only in their home languages; Khmer will be introduced to 5-year-olds for 20 minutes per day during the second half of the school year (MENAP 2015, Annex 4). Though this is much more specific than the BE Guidelines, more information would be needed to implement the approach. We understand that CARE trainers working with MoEYS have made decisions about which units should be taught in which languages, which might account for the call for 30% being in “vernacular<sup>5</sup> language.” However, there may be more work to do in sequencing language skills so that Khmer and the L1 reinforce each other and reinforce learning. We recommend that a clearer explanation be offered to avoid misunderstandings of the model.

After introducing the cultural and educational contexts in the five highland provinces, the MENAP explains why MLE is necessary, as well as how to make MLE programs sustainable. In order to tackle challenges such as the long distances from home to school, communities living in poverty, and a lack of qualified teachers, representatives from the five provinces have agreed on the following strategies:

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that “vernacular” can have a negative connotation and could be replaced by “non-dominant language,” L1, “language of the learner” or even the names of specific languages. We understand that this may be a translation of the Khmer version, but in the English versions it is worthwhile using positive terms.

- Capacity building for teachers and teacher training
- Materials for teaching and learning
- Coordination, data and information, monitoring and evaluation
- Expansion of MLE to new schools and languages
- Sufficient infrastructure and resources
- Converting all community schools to state schools

Regarding the latter point, the conversion of community to state schools has already happened to a great extent. In the expansion schools, bilingual (L1-Khmer) teachers trained by CARE are working in grades 1 to 3, and state teachers from 4 to 6. MENAP shows the target numbers for schools and how many more teachers need to be trained to meet the needs for expansion in October 2015; they are listed by province and by language.

According to the agreed strategies, the priority is that the Provincial Teacher Training College (PTTC) should select more teacher trainees from ethnic minority communities, so that they can become state teachers. This is an alternative to the conversion of MLE community teachers to state teachers. According to MENAP, MoEYS has agreed to recognize teachers with the equivalent of grade 9 (based on an examination in Khmer) and 2 years of CARE training (with documentation provided by CARE). A list of 20 teachers with these qualifications are scheduled to be approved by the Prime Minister in August 2015.

The scale-up of MLE mainly focuses on two aspects: (1) requesting that MoEYS approve the orthography of “new” languages, such as Kuy (spoken in Preah Vihear) and Jarai (in Ratanakiri), so that MLE can be initiated in these languages; and (2) considering the development of a pilot program (possibly five schools in one province) which would employ a new MLE model using the L1 and Khmer from grades 1 to 6. Both of these aspects are conducive to the development of MLE in Cambodia, and both address recommendations made in 2011, especially Benson’s point that a stronger MLE model will offer better results in terms of learner achievement. Although details are not provided, according to MENAP, a pilot will be organized once the document is signed by the Minister of Education. We believe that the establishment of this pilot program would convince stakeholders of the importance of the L1 *for its own sake*, not simply as a bridge to Khmer, and that a six-year additive MLE approach will more clearly benefit ethnolinguistic minority students—including supporting strong Khmer language skills.

## **2.4 Discussion**

Compared with the BE Guidelines, the latest version of MENAP is more refined and comprehensive. It provides the cultural and educational contexts in the five provinces, and explains in detail the terms commonly used in MLE internationally. Also, based on Cummins’s (2008) theories of language acquisition and competence, MENAP (Annex 6) also elaborated the differences between the two kinds of language proficiency known as BICS (basic interpersonal

communication skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency needed for learning). MLE is well substantiated in MENAP, which may help convince stakeholders that MLE is necessary for ethnolinguistic minority learners and persuade them to collaborate to carry out the strategies proposed.

However, as mentioned above, there are still several issues that need to be addressed:

**MLE for whom?** MLE should be for all children who do not speak the dominant language. Lack of exposure to Khmer is not a disability, but it is an issue of inclusiveness. We suggest that the wording of future documents be in terms of “non-dominant languages” to include all non-Khmer speakers.

**MLE for what purpose?** MENAP states that MLE can help students from ethnolinguistic minority groups continue their studies in secondary education and higher education in Khmer, the national language, to become valued and productive citizens of Cambodia. It is true that speakers of non-dominant languages experience barriers to education that contribute to the necessity of MLE. However, ethnolinguistic minority people should already be considered valued and productive, and their languages and cultures should be considered resources that can not only improve students’ awareness of their own identity but also prompt cognitive development (Ruiz 1984). Use of the L1 is not just to give access to the dominant language; it is to improve the quality of education overall, and to promote bi/multilingualism and bi/multiliteracies as important skills in themselves. This is really why Cambodia needs MLE.

**Qualitative data.** MENAP mainly used quantitative indicators, such as enrolment rates and dropout rates, to measure the effectiveness of MLE programs. Even though numbers do matter, it is also important to find out “why” and “how” MLE works. Therefore, qualitative data should also be collected through interviews, surveys, focus group discussions, observations, etc. More qualitative indicators can be included in the indicator matrix for monitoring and evaluation. We plan to use both quantitative and qualitative analyses in our forthcoming academic article.

**Language(s) of assessment.** When all major examinations are written in Khmer, and when the assessment of literacy is done only in the dominant language, a negative backwash effect is likely to occur. According to Benson (2008), if assessments do not reflect what students learn, a backwash effect will gravely harm their learning process by wrongly convincing them that only the dominant language is important (see also Skutnabb-Kangas & Heugh 2012). The basis for effective MLE is building a strong foundation of language and literacy in the learner’s L1, then the transfer of skills between the L1 and additional languages (Cummins 2000). Even though there are MLE programs aiming at protecting the linguistic rights of non-dominant language groups, backwash may convince people that the L1 is not important, which could seriously undermine bilingual processes and learners’ attitudes.

**Conversion of community schools to state schools.** Regarding the MENAP strategy to convert community schools to state schools, we recognize that there are now clear guidelines regarding which teachers will become state teachers (grade 9 equivalency and two years of experience). However, it is important to remember that some effective bilingual teachers may lack these qualifications, and could lose their jobs, while so-called qualified teachers who lack proficiency in the languages of their students would stay in the state system. It is important to keep in mind the need to continue recruiting and supporting community teachers with strong L1 and cultural proficiency rather than focusing on any perceived weaknesses in Khmer language or subject knowledge. This may affect the recruiting of more female bilingual teachers, who have not necessarily had opportunities to gain formal education through Khmer, but who could function effectively as bilingual teachers. MoEYS should remember that all of these measures are relatively temporary, as more and more students pass through bilingual school programs and become bilingual teachers themselves.

Finally, according to the agreed strategies, the Provincial Teacher Training Colleges (PTTCs) should select more teacher trainees from ethnic minority communities, but we are lacking clear guidelines about how they will be selected, if there are alternative guidelines for their selection based on linguistic proficiency and potential rather than levels of Khmer language, and so on. This needs to be pursued as well, but it is encouraging that efforts are being made to involve the teacher trainers in MLE processes.

## 2.5 Recommendations

*ESP:*

- Justifying MLE as quality improvement and reaching all speakers of non-dominant languages with primary education, instead of as special education
- Putting more emphasis on non-dominant languages as providing access to literacy and learning, at primary, pre-primary and adult literacy levels

*Prakas:*

- Specifying the language(s), including mother tongues, that will be used in test to measure students' language proficiency

*MENAP:*

- Clarifying the MLE model and replacing "vernacular language" with "non-dominant language", "L1", "language of the learner" or even the names of specific languages
- Elaborating on the benefits and purposes of MLE, and recognizing the value of ethnolinguistic minority people as well as their languages and cultures

- Incorporating more qualitative data into the monitoring and evaluation of MLE programs
- Employing non-dominant languages as language(s) of assessment to prevent negative backwash effects
- Working with PTTC staff to find “affirmative action” strategies for accepting speakers of non-dominant languages, particularly women, into their teacher training programs

### 3. Ministry of Education (MoEYS) support

#### **3.1 Updates on MLE support**

MLE continues to fall under the responsibility of the Special Education Department within the Primary Education Department (PED). The work of PED with regard to MLE is guided by two overlapping aims—the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) and MENAP, as discussed above.

Since Benson’s 2011 evaluation, MoEYS has increased its efforts in expanding MLE. These efforts have rested on continued collaboration between MoEYS, CARE, UNICEF, ICC and other NGOs. One of the highest priorities on the agenda of CARE, UNICEF and MoEYS over the past five years has been to develop MENAP, which underwent eleven drafts before its recent completion. This collaborative effort, which included even the MoEYS Minister of Education himself, Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, has been an extremely positive process that is likely to promote both sustainability and longevity of MLE in Cambodia.

With the expansion of MLE, MoEYS has reportedly organized some exchange visits within the country, but not yet between neighboring countries, as recommended in Benson’s 2011 evaluation. Community school teachers have visited different provinces to collaborate on bilingual teaching and to share their understandings of how to implement MLE in their own local contexts. According to Chum Channra, Cambodia has also received visitors from Timor Leste, Bangladesh, Laos, Thailand, and in the near future, Vietnam (sponsored by UNICEF). It is encouraging to note that CARE has recently received a grant from MoEYS regarding MLE expansion, which includes an exchange visit for community school teachers to learn about MLE in a neighboring country.

One priority of MoEYS has been to integrate community schools into the state (government) school system. With the conversion of community schools to state schools, these schools will be eligible for government funding for teachers, materials and other important resources. With the help of CARE, MoEYS has developed a set of criteria for integrating community schools into the state system based on school environment, classroom environment and teacher qualifications. While a few schools have already become government schools under the Child-Friendly Framework, this will continue to unfold in the next one to two years.

While integrating schools is a priority of MoEYS, building the capacity for community teachers to pass qualifications and become state teachers is also a MoEYS priority that CARE is supporting. There are currently a number of community teachers who have devoted 8-10 years of their lives teaching in their villages. As such, MoEYS recognizes these community teachers as a resource for the education of ethnolinguistic minority children in remote villages. In fact, the UNICEF representative, Mr. Chum Channra, told Kevin that without the 127 community teachers, over 5000 students in the five provinces would be negatively affected. In fact, CARE contract teachers were paid according to the MoEYS pay scale for contract teachers, which unfortunately is only about USD 35 per month for 10 months per year. Good community teachers have been lost because of this, so CARE and UNICEF have been working with MoEYS to convert all to state contract teachers. This means they will earn 90% of the state teacher salary, about three times what they are earning now. CARE hopes this change will happen soon, as it represents great progress in the handover process.

In order to build community teachers' capacity to become state teachers, recognized by the government and placed on the government pay scale, they currently follow the CARE teacher training curriculum where teachers travel to Ban Lung for 5 days of training three times a year. In the training, two days are spent on teaching methodology, half a day is spent on academic home language, one and a half days are devoted to Khmer literacy and mathematics, half a day is devoted to a roundtable meeting, and the last half day is used for testing. Academic upgrading is a top priority, as community teachers who test at the grade 9 level are able to enter the Provincial Teacher Training Colleges for two years to become qualified as government teachers, who are paid on the government teacher salary scale.

Overall, the final version of MENAP delineates the strategies for continuous expansion of MLE, for integrating community schools into the government school network, and for building the capacity of community school teachers to gain teacher training qualifications. Thanks to the support of CARE and the collaborative efforts of multiple actors, MENAP serves as a roadmap for MoEYS, which is now committed to expanding MLE in Cambodia.

### **3.2 Discussion and implications**

According to the 2011 evaluation, one of the challenges faced by the Primary Education Department (PED) of MoEYS in implementing MLE was that both national and provincial (POE) staff were busy and had limited experience in MLE. According to this updated study, the challenges remain, as one interviewee told Kevin that less than half of education staff members have a deep understanding of MLE. As MLE enters a critical phase where community schools are being passed on to the government to become state schools, it is important for MoEYS officials at both national and provincial levels to have technical expertise in MLE, including the

capacity for bilingual teacher training, classroom supervision and curriculum development as well as implementation issues of all kinds.

The “decentralized calendar” is another issue that was raised in MoEYS meetings, referring to the observation of a school year that corresponds more appropriately to local agricultural practices. While current policy (according to Prakas 2013) states that communities are given the autonomy to adopt the decentralized calendar, many have continued to observe the centralized government calendar due to a number of challenges. MENAP does not mention the issue. During this fieldwork, both community members and POE officials spoke with some hesitancy about the decentralized calendar; they seemed unsure about whether or not the government would allow such a different schedule. On paper, Section 2.3 of the 2013 Prakas issued by MoEYS provides provincial governments the autonomy to approve use of the decentralized calendar as long as schools are in session for the allotted amount of time, as mentioned above.

On a positive note, according to Her Excellency Ton Sa Im, Under Secretary of State of Cambodia, MoEYS is aware of the challenges that communities face in implementing the decentralized calendar. One challenge mentioned is the difficulty of assessing educational outcomes under the decentralized calendar, since the end of the school year may vary, making it difficult to systematically allot resources to implement standardized assessments. A second challenge mentioned by HE Ton Sa Im is the interruption of school days when there are natural disasters such as flooding during the rainy season. With a decentralized calendar, it is possible for schools to be closed for up to six months depending on how the rain or flooding impact farmlands. In addition, with poor weather conditions, safety is often a concern as children travel back and forth between school, their homes and the farms. Despite these challenges, it is important to recognize that community schools benefit significantly from observing a decentralized calendar, which CMSC members confirmed as they shared information about the increase in enrolment and retention rates when the decentralized calendar was in effect. It is thus necessary to continue discussing how the calendar can be used, both to reflect the realistic agricultural needs of the community and to ensure that students receive an appropriate quantity of quality instruction. We would recommend that this discrepancy between national policy and local implementation be addressed, even if we understand that for the moment it seems to be creating an obstacle to MLE generalization. The following are some possible ways to address the issues:

1. Work with MoEYS to schedule two end-of-year reporting periods: one for schools following the state calendar and one for schools following the decentralized one. This would alleviate the pressure on the POEs and DOEs to conform to the state reporting schedule.
2. Where Khmer teachers in grades 4 through 6 refuse to participate in the decentralized calendar, there could be a compromise where at least grades 1 through 3 follow it.

Clarity of expectations from MoEYS to the POEs could convince Khmer teachers to conform with the decentralized calendar to improve attendance in affected areas.

We note that these measures are only needed where attendance remains a problem. Where agricultural practices have modernized this may not be a factor any longer. However, the fact that UNICEF is monitoring a pilot project in Steung Treng using a decentralized calendar shows that it is still considered an effective means to address attendance issues. Channra at UNICEF is researching its success, so there may be progress at a later date.

Lastly, one big question that remains in the current dialogue between the MoEYS, POEs, NGOs and community schools is how to promote community teachers to become either contract teachers or government teachers who are paid on the government teaching scale. The reality is that of almost 150 community teachers, only 20 teachers have been able to qualify at a grade 9 level. Given this reality, MoEYS should consider an affirmative action policy (as discussed in Benson's 2011 evaluation) for non-dominant community members who desire to undergo teacher training, and/or should support community teachers in becoming contract teachers based on whether they have completed the MLE training from CARE and taught for at least two years.

### **3.3 Recommendations**

- Continuing to improve technical expertise in MLE on the part of MoEYS officials at both national and provincial levels
- Pursuing options for allowing schools to use the decentralized calendar
- Promoting recruitment and training of more women bilingual teachers from the communities

## **4. Provincial Office of Education (POE) support**

### **4.1 Updates on MLE support**

The POEs are still the key to successful implementation of MLE, as they follow the strategies outlined in MENAP to implement bilingual programs in new communities in collaboration with NGOs and other partners.

Due to the short duration of this study, only the province of Ratanakiri was visited. As the original innovators in MLE, Ratanakiri stakeholders are often considered leaders of MLE implementation by the MoEYS. The Mondulkiri POE is also considered to have high capacity for the dissemination of effective MLE practices, partially because they have established strong structures to manage student and teacher absenteeism in village schools. Ratanakiri POE staff strongly reinforced the point that those involved in their MLE schools are very dedicated and responsible. In addition, they said that during national workshops of POE and national education

representatives, the Ratanakiri POE often plays a significant role in analyzing issues and challenges and offering solutions to other POEs.

As a testimony to their hard work, the POE in Ratanakiri has begun to integrate MLE into their state schools. In these schools, a number of community teachers from the villages were promoted to contract teacher status, which enables the government to pay for most of their salaries and alleviates development partners having to provide external funding. Alongside this effort is the expansion of MLE programs into state schools by supplying them with bilingual (L1/Khmer) teachers for grades 1 to 3. When Kevin visited the state school in Teung village where MLE was **not** implemented, he found that the teachers were very interested in MLE and saw it as a means to improving teaching and learning in their classrooms. They had clearly heard of MLE before and were wrestling with questions such as:

- Whether they should put two teachers, one who speaks Khmer and one who speaks the students' L1, in a classroom to help with student understanding
- Whether teachers in ECE, Grades 1 and 2 should be speakers of local languages
- Whether they could teach for two hours in Kreung and then two hours in Khmer
- Whether students from older grades could be mentors for students in younger grades.

By encouraging such progressive pedagogical thinking, and by raising awareness of the need and benefits of MLE, the Ratanakiri POE should be congratulated.

Since Benson's 2011 evaluation, the Ratanakiri POE has played an active role, in partnership with CARE, in advocating for community teachers to become state school teachers. Alongside the teacher training committee at CARE, the POE has submitted portfolios of community teachers to the national MoEYS, detailing their teaching experience and MLE methods training. We are encouraged that as MENAP 2015 becomes established, formalized and disseminated, this issue will be addressed as an important component of MLE expansion.

## **4.2 Discussion and implications**

It is important to note that the success of MLE development and expansion in Ratanakiri is the result of constant collaboration and communication between the POE and CARE. The relationship began in 2002 when CARE supported the piloting of MLE, working with the POE to build capacity and awareness so that handover could take place in 2007. As the program continued to expand, CARE worked with the POE, ICC and other partners to pioneer developments in teacher training, resource development, technical assistance and overall direction for sustainability. The Ratanakiri POE monitored progress, discussed challenges and collaboratively relayed findings to the national MoEYS headquarters. Since 2011, as the program has continued to mature, the POE staff recognize that the next step is to build a knowledge base on MLE for its staff, in order to raise capacity for teacher training and other requirements of MLE expansion. In our meeting, POE staff stated very realistically that the exact next steps of

MLE are unknown, as policy decisions are multifaceted and take time. Given this reality, the POE staff desire to be equipped with the necessary pedagogy and expertise to move forward in an independent and sustainable manner.

The Ratanakiri POE has slowly made efforts since 2011 to convert community teachers into contract teachers or state teachers. In the HCEP school visited, three of the teachers present (all of whom were female) had been students there themselves before becoming government teachers and returning back to educate children in their village bilingually. Village members mentioned that two more students had become government teachers and moved on to teach at other village schools. One of the HCEP teachers and Voun Sovoeun from CARE told Kevin that all five graduates had studied in the nearest (PTTC) in Steung Treng before returning to teach in Kreung/Khmer bilingual schools in Ratanakiri. One teacher in the HCEP village with whom Kevin spoke said that she had been a student in the HCEP pilot schools from grades 1 to 6. When asked why she wanted to be a teacher, she said, "*I wanted to be a teacher in this village because I always dreamed of helping develop this village and increase literacy. I also wanted to teach young students in this village to read and write in their own language.*" As MLE continues to expand, and community teachers are gradually being contracted as government teachers, the story of this noble young teacher may become more prevalent and widespread.

In discussing the future of MLE in Ratanakiri and the POE's role in its development, POE staff mentioned their desire to offer MLE to more ethnolinguistic minority groups. Currently, bilingual curricula are offered in the province only in Kreung and Tampuen. While expansion to other languages was a recommendation of Benson's 2011 evaluation, it appears that this has not happened due to time and resource constraints and prioritization of expansion in existing languages. However, there are speakers of other languages to consider, and there should be some attention paid to working with ICC and other national linguists to incorporate them. The POE staff should be commended for their attention to MLE in additional non-dominant languages, which shows once again how important their leadership role is among the five provinces. We would encourage CARE and other partners to support the POE in developing curriculum and teacher training in additional languages, which could be expected to impact positively on low enrolment and high dropout rates still experienced by the province.

### **4.3 Recommendations**

Regarding the issue of the decentralized calendar, we feel that the POE could take steps to support schools—whether they are state schools or the initially piloted HCEP schools—to use their decision-making power as delineated in the 2013 Prakas to tailor the school year to community needs and improve attendance rates. We recommend that the POE and CSMCs come together to discuss how a decentralized calendar can be effectively and sustainably executed, while satisfying the community needs and while encouraging conversion from HCEP to state schools. We realize that the issue of final examinations may need to be dealt with at the central

level, but the Ratanakiri POE may be able to provide some recommendations for resolution of this issue.

- Collaborative work between the POEs and CSMSs to provide support for schools to tailor the school year to community needs
- Developing curriculum and teacher training for additional non-dominant languages through collaboration between POEs, CARE and other stakeholders

## 5. Support needed from non-governmental organizations and other partners

Two primary external actors providing assistance to the development of MLE in formal education over the years have been CARE and UNICEF. Their respective roles since the 2011 evaluation will be discussed in the following section. We will also discuss ICC, which has played a crucial role in the development of appropriate languages for MLE.

### 5.1 CARE

Since the 2011 evaluation, CARE has continued to provide leadership and support to MLE in four areas: capacity building of government education staff, handing over components of the program to MoEYS, converting community teachers to state school teachers, and providing a foundation of evidence-based research. According to representatives at the MoEYS, the PED, the Ratanakiri POE, CARE and UNICEF, CARE has worked closely with MoEYS and POE staff as well as with UNICEF to continue generating a high level of government ownership, which CARE deems essential for the success and sustainability of MLE in Cambodia.

CARE's approach to community and structural development at the POE and MoEYS has been well thought out and due, in part, to the synergy between CARE, UNICEF and the MoEYS. According to Jan Noorlander, in the past five years an effective partnership between CARE and UNICEF has developed as they strategize how to approach and advise different stakeholders. While UNICEF has focused on its strengths in governmental policy and partnership, CARE has served as the main source of technical assistance in teacher training and support. This collaboration has helped to ensure both the quality and the longevity of MLE in the five highland provinces.

Since the 2011 evaluation, as recommended, CARE has slowly shifted its role from an implementing agency to a facilitating one. Over the past five years, CARE has worked intensively to build MoEYS capacity in MLE. Now, instead of implementing most of the programming, CARE provides technical advice to the ministry, holding workshops for

government officials, raising awareness of the theories behind MLE and helping to monitor schools. CARE also retains responsibility for MLE teacher training workshops.

In Kevin's meeting with CARE representatives in Phnom Penh, the 2005 Paris Aid Effectiveness Principles were mentioned to show the direction of CARE's strategic plan for state ownership of activities like MLE. At the same time, the discussion revealed a few challenges. One of the five guiding principles of aid effectiveness is the need for alignment between donors and the national development strategies of developing countries. Such alignment is meant to empower the country by relying on its own procedures for public financial management, accounting, auditing, procurement and monitoring. While CARE continues to assist the MoEYS and POEs in the monitoring of MLE programs, one challenge faced is the lack of consistent monitoring in rural schools. The basic problem seems to be lack of government compensation for the transportation costs incurred by MoEYS staff to monitor rural schools, along with the physical difficulty of reaching these schools, which can be very remote. Monitoring and evaluation is an area that needs to be further developed by MoEYS, and CARE along with UNICEF could play key roles in helping MoEYS build capacity and find effective and efficient strategies for monitoring that do not always require travel.

As mentioned earlier, teacher training has been an issue that CARE has been involved with, from the early stages of MLE development to its current state of handover to the government. Because there were very few if any trained teachers from the ethnolinguistic groups to be served by MLE, HCEP needed to train community members to be teachers. Despite their training by CARE, most have not gained the qualifications necessary to enter teacher training colleges. Yet their experience and their unique language and literacy skills make them important to the effectiveness of bilingual schools. The 2015 MENAP document addresses these issues, and upon approval by the Minister of Education will affect teacher training at both the national and provincial levels. It will allow community teachers, educators of the next generation, to have a route to contracts with salaries and to official certification. Provision of this route will offer incentive for ethnolinguistic community members to become teachers, as well as improving learners' opportunities to access quality education in their own languages.

Lastly, although CARE has always used evidence-based research to inform practice, in the last five years more resources have been invested in scholarly research on MLE as a strategy to facilitate policy change. CARE is currently supporting a large research project, a longitudinal study spanning six years (and ending in June 2015) that attempts to quantify the effectiveness of MLE. This is the study begun by MIDEC, continued by Lee et al (2014) to which our team will contribute, using data gathered by Kevin Wong during the fieldwork component of this consultancy. This comprehensive study seeks to measure student performance in mathematics, Khmer literacy and oral Khmer after six years of MLE, comparing achievement to ethnolinguistic minority students in non-bilingual schools. (Non-bilingual state schools were

selected by the POE in Ratanakiri as control schools, comparable to bilingual schools in most characteristics except use of the L1.) Findings from the study have thus far shown that students in bilingual schools perform the same as or better than their counterparts in state schools, especially in mathematics (Lee et al 2014). Results of the study are consistent with international findings (e.g. Benson 2004; Skutnabb-Kangas & Heugh 2012) that highlight the benefits of MLE. Implications of these findings are especially important as they draw interest from regional and international scholars alike to MLE policy and practice in Cambodia. According to Jan Noorlander, research has been a strategy for policy change, which has helped MoEYS to become more aware of the advantages of MLE for ethnolinguistic minority learners, which has also strengthened the trajectory of MLE development in Cambodia.

## **5.2 UNICEF**

UNICEF has played a long and important role in the development of MLE in Cambodia. Mr. Chum Channra, the MLE representative, stated that over the past five years, in particular, UNICEF has made significant contributions by maintaining a close relationship with the MoEYS, and by contributing to the drafting of the MENAP, as well as by collaborating with CARE as described below.

First, UNICEF has had a longstanding relationship with MoEYS. According to the 2011 evaluation, UNICEF acted as a bridge with CARE support from 2007-2011 to help MoEYS expand MLE to the other provinces based on the success of bilingual programs in three provinces. Up to present, UNICEF has consistently involved the government in the development of MLE programs. One of UNICEF's most significant contributions, in partnership with CARE, was to invite the new Minister of Education to visit community schools in Ratanakiri and Mondulkiri in July 2014 and January 2015. There, he interacted with community teachers and listened to them explain why they thought MLE was important. The Minister was especially moved by the teachers in a MLE community school who helped build the school themselves because they wanted their children to have the education the previous generation did not have an opportunity to receive. Since the Minister's visits, he has fully supported MLE and has responded well to UNICEF and CARE efforts to promote policies for MLE development and expansion. These efforts have, in turn, led to the collaborative development of MENAP 2015, which will serve as a roadmap for the next phase of MLE implementation and promote sustainability.

One of the challenges brought up by Chum Channra in his meeting with Kevin was the need to convert community teachers into contract or state teachers. He shared that for community teachers to get contracts, they will need to receive approval from the Minister of Education, who as mentioned above has been involved in the development of MENAP. Contract teachers will be community teachers who have not achieved the equivalence of a grade 9 education, but who have undergone MLE teacher training through CARE and are under a certain age. (We do not

understand the age requirement, but it appears to be one of many criteria that have been considered, and age is omitted in MENAP 2015.) This would affect more than 75% of the approximately 150 community teachers. For these community teachers to be state approved, they would need to receive approval from the Prime Minister of Cambodia, which seems to be too high a level of involvement—yet it could be strategic to involve the PM in decisions related to MLE. Unfortunately, only a small number (less than 25% of the total number of community teachers) have been able to achieve the equivalence of a grade 9 education. For strategic purposes, UNICEF recommends converting all community teachers into contract teachers in the first phase, before looking into longer term goals of converting community teachers into state teachers. We wonder if this would take away teachers' motivation to reach the grade 9 level, but according to CARE informants, MoEYS will approve the 20 eligible candidates quickly and will keep the others motivated by putting them on a list of contract teachers to receive higher salaries.

Lastly, UNICEF, in partnership with CARE, has identified the need for core trainers for MLE at the national and provincial levels. This is delineated in MENAP 2015, which targets PED staff at the national level who have gaps in their knowledge and understanding of MLE pedagogy. Training all twelve staff members of PED would strengthen the support national staff are able to provide to subnational staff and could increase collaboration. Investing in the training of national PED officials would also help ensure the implementation and sustainability of MENAP.

### **5.3 ICC**

International Cooperation Cambodia (ICC) is a non-governmental organization that has effectively partnered with MoEYS, CARE and UNICEF in the implementation of MLE. ICC has played a crucial role in the development of appropriate languages for MLE, and in the long and complex process of gaining MoEYS approval for each language to be used in the bilingual program. ICC has also contributed somewhat to the literacy training of bilingual teachers, for example during the first year of scale-up in Mondulkiri, and has elaborated L1 and bilingual teaching and learning materials in NFE contexts corresponding to the bilingual curriculum. Unfortunately, Kevin was unable to speak with representatives from ICC during the fieldwork period of our study. There was evidence in the bilingual HCEP and BB school libraries of children's literature written in students' home languages and reflecting real-life contexts of community life and culture, some by ICC but most by the CARE Resource Production Unit. ICC is still working on development of the Kuy language to comply with MoEYS processes; note that the Kuy language documentation was submitted to MoEYS at the time of Benson's evaluation in 2011, so the process seems to be dragging on. One of the 2011 recommendations was to work on streamlining the process, and the case of Kuy suggests this should be a priority for UNICEF and/or CARE in the near future. Jarai is another language that should have been approved long ago, and we hope it will be prioritized by MoEYS.

## **6. Updates from 2011 evaluation recommendations**

The 2011 evaluation of the state of MLE in Cambodia resulted in a number of recommendations made for all levels, actors and stakeholders involved in MLE. These included recommendations for: (1) structural, technical and policy-based support for MLE; (2) NGO and partner support for MLE; (3) Linguistic support for MLE; (4) Provincial-level support for MLE; (5) Bilingual teacher supply and training; and (6) Primary bilingual curriculum, methods and materials. In order to offer another perspective on how MLE has developed in Cambodia since 2011, a number of critical recommendations from the 2011 report will be analyzed and updated below.

### **6.1 Multilingual education implementation manual**

The 2011 evaluation called for a MLE implementation manual that would go into more detail regarding the processes and models that can be adopted. This would include a clear definition of MLE with some theoretical background; a statement of the goals of MLE and how they will be assessed; testimonies and justifications that can be used for advocacy; a description of acceptable L1-based bilingual interventions for early childhood programs and primary school; a description of an acceptable range of teacher recruitment and training processes; and which NGOs and partners can be relied upon for which types of technical and financial support (Benson 2011 p.19). To some extent, these objectives appear to be addressed in MENAP 2015. However, there still seems to be a need to document and organize existing MLE experiences and to suggest ways forward that would be more theoretically sound (for example, a six-year rather than a three-year model of MLE).

### **6.2 Multilingual education resource center**

At the time of the 2011 evaluation, there was a CARE-funded project underway to build a much-needed regional MLE resource center in Ban Lung. This center would be responsible for bilingual teacher training and resource development for all five provinces, and was proposed to be integrated with the future Provincial Teacher Training College of Ratanakiri, since one did not exist at the time, to bring bilingual teacher training under government control for future sustainability. Although funding had been secured, a MoEYS Task Force had been established, and an architect had designed the center, the Ministry decided to cancel the project and use existing MoEYS resources instead of adding human and infrastructural resources. It is possible that UNICEF may take up the issue again, now that the new Minister is receptive to the expansion of MLE.

### **6.3 Development of orthography and learning materials in additional languages**

The linguistic development work of ICC, combined with the efforts of CARE and the MoEYS to create an approval process for additional languages, resulted in the official recognition of Tampuen, Kreung, Brao, Phnong and Kavet in March 2003. Since then, only one language, Kuy,

has been submitted for approval along with a 4-month NFE literacy curriculum. This was in 2011, and the language has yet to be approved. In his interview in Ban Lung, Pa Satha told Kevin that the approval of additional languages is a priority for the future. We recommend that the approval process be revisited to relieve the backlog so that MLE in Kuy and other non-dominant languages can be implemented as soon as possible.

#### **6.4 Documenting the number of state teachers with local language skills**

In the 2011 report, it was noted that there were speakers of non-dominant languages who had graduated from PTTCs, meaning that they were already certified and out in the teaching force. It was recommended that the POEs locate these existing teachers and determine where they could be placed to maximize their usefulness, with consideration for individual teachers' own motivations and willingness to work in MLE, possibly in or near their home communities. As such, the identification of teachers' language skills is important and should be put into teachers' professional portfolios. Unfortunately, according to Pa Satha from the Ratanakiri POE, this has not yet been implemented due to constraints in time and resources. We hope that better monitoring systems will soon be a part of the POEs' procedures, and that non-dominant languages will become part of the teachers' biodata on file with the POEs.

#### **6.5 Empower MoEYS and POE staff with multilingual education methodology**

In 2011, POE officials in all five provinces discussed their own challenges and made recommendations. They arrived at the conclusion that they needed to be empowered to make decisions based on a well-developed understanding of MLE coupled with their already good understanding of conditions in each school. According to Jan Noorlander, this has been one of CARE's priorities as they move from the role of implementer of trainings and support to building capacity among government staff. Still, at this point in the implementation of MLE, MoEYS and the POEs continue to look to CARE for technical assistance and problem-solving, and there is widespread concern over what will happen as CARE steps back. CARE continues to provide support in the form of workshops, consultations and monitoring assistance. Moving forward, one of the strategies for MLE expansion presented in MENAP 2015 is for "further training and professional development for MLE national core trainers and provincial trainers in early childhood education, pre-schools and primary schools" in all five highland provinces. However, for the moment we understand that CARE will be responsible for current trainings; according to Jan Noorlander, manuals for CARE staff, for core trainers and for teachers are all in place. It will be interesting to see how these responsibilities can be gradually handed over to MoEYS.

#### **6.6 Expanding into state schools**

It was recommended in 2011 that the Ratanakiri POE expand its bilingual programs by creating new community schools, along with new bilingual programs in state schools based on the 2010

Guidelines. Although the only state school visited during this consultancy was a control school that did not include MLE, Kevin was told in his meeting with the POE that MLE had expanded into a number of state schools, and would continue to do so in the near future.

### **6.7 Raising public awareness about multilingual education**

Since the 2011 report, MoEYS has been involved in raising awareness of MLE at an international level. The Undersecretary of State, Her Excellency Ton Sa Im, attends at least two conferences annually to share Cambodia's practices of MLE and learn from other educational leaders. While this is certainly important, it is not exactly what was recommended; the 2011 report recommended a large-scale information campaign in Cambodia to raise awareness of MLE among Cambodians. We have been told that CARE staff represented MLE in a popular TV discussion program, so we hope these efforts continue and are taken up by MoEYS more systematically.

According to Chum Channra from UNICEF, national workshops have been held where all POEs and MoEYS officers are in attendance amongst themselves. These workshops and think-tanks have included the issue of MLE, and according to Mr. Chum, since the new Minister of Education visited the villages in Ratanakiri, MLE has always maintained a high priority on the agenda of the ministry. At the provincial level, community teachers, members of the CSMCs and the Village Women's Committees voluntarily travel to the city center for training about school management, which provides the POE a platform to raise awareness of MLE. However, there was no mention in our meetings about raising public awareness in communities that are not already involved with MLE. The recommendation would thus be to consider mounting a public awareness campaign, and UNICEF as an organization that is highly experienced such campaigns could be an excellent resource.

### **6.8 Recognize community teachers' skills and training officially**

As mentioned throughout this report, one of the key issues to address, and a topic of discussion in many of Kevin's meetings, is the need to convert community teachers into state teachers. This is a crucial step in the sustainability of MLE in Cambodia. This issue is addressed in MENAP 2015, which states that community teachers need to attend PTTCs to become state school teachers, where they will receive additional training in MLE as a long-term strategy. In addition, MENAP recommends that the government clarify the criteria for giving scholarships to primary and secondary students, which is important because speakers of non-dominant languages should be well represented. MENAP also recommends re-deploying teachers to remote schools according to their backgrounds and languages. Lastly, MENAP calls for more professional development for bilingual teachers, as well as MLE core trainers at the national and provincial levels to build capacity for sustainability.

## **6.9 Recruit and train female bilingual community teachers**

Gender parity and female representation among teachers in schools has been an important issue that is being addressed. One reason for its importance is that female teachers serve as role models among their students, in particular for young girls. Another reason is that the enrolment rate of girls is known to increase when there are female teachers present (Kelleher 2011). According to Benson's 2011 report, there were more male teachers than females in both community and state schools in the remote villages of Cambodia. Since then, there has been an increase in the number of female teachers (see Appendix B). According to a community teacher, this could be due to the fact that the MLE program in her village has been running since the early 2000s, and girls who have completed bilingual programs have become teachers and returned to their villages. Another reason, as one male community teacher said, could be that in the past girls were not allowed to go to school because of the long distances and unsafe travel, which has changed with the development of roads leading to some villages. These speculations reveal that the dynamics of gender parity may be shifting in some villages in Ratanakiri, calling for more research to better understand who is and is not getting access to education, and what barriers they may face.

## **6.10 Study visit groups**

Benson's 2011 evaluation recommended that MoEYS and the POEs conduct inter-provincial as well as international study visits to share information and help Cambodia see where it stands in terms of progress made in implementing MLE for ethnolinguistic minority learners. In fact, Cambodia's progress is noteworthy in the region, and has captured the attention of international scholars (Kosonen 2013). It is important for Cambodia to disseminate good practices, and to also learn and gain resources from other countries. While this has already begun to happen in the last five years, MENAP offers more structure on how study groups can be implemented. Nationally, MENAP calls for teachers and officials from "emerging" provinces to visit those with more established MLE programming. Internationally, MENAP recommends that key MoEYS staff at the national and provincial levels visit other ASEAN countries with well-established MLE, such as the Philippines. Still, with the maturing MLE system found in Cambodia, we would encourage these study groups to consider extending beyond the ASEAN region, to influence policymakers and education specialists across continents.

## **6.11 Involving the Minister and New Education Research Committee**

It seems that this is a very good time at MoEYS to involve the new Minister in MLE development and expansion. He has established an education research committee that would include MoEYS and University scholars, and is interested in collaborating with the team at Teachers College. We would welcome scholarly interaction and would suggest that this could include collaborative research on teacher profiles, training and placement as well as on student assessment and achievement.

## Summary of Current Recommendations

### Part 1

- Strategizing with MoEYS on human and material resource allocation to address the issue of bilingual classrooms with a mix of languages
- Establishing a national linguistic agency to organize linguistic development and approval for educational use
- Recruiting more female bilingual teachers (aiming for 50 percent) and supporting them throughout the process of qualifying to convert from community to state teachers

### Part 2

*ESP:*

- Categorizing MLE as quality improvement program, instead of special education program in primary education sector
- Putting more emphasis on MLE and non-dominant languages, especially in the non-formal education sector where literacy programs and literacy rates should specify language(s)

*Prakas:*

- Specifying which language(s) will be used in test to measure students' language proficiency

*MENAP:*

- Offering a clearer explanation of the MLE model and using the names of specific languages
- Elaborating on the benefits and purposes of MLE, and recognizing the value of ethnolinguistic minority people as well as their languages and cultures
- Incorporating more qualitative data in the monitoring and evaluation of MLE programs
- Employing more non-dominant languages as language(s) of assessment to prevent backwash effects
- Possibly slowing down the pace of converting community schools to state schools, since it would difficult to ensure teachers' proficiency in students' L1

### Part 3

*MoEYS:*

- Improving technical expertise in MLE on the part of MoEYS officials at both national and provincial levels
- Clarifying the calendar options and possibly identifying an alternate reporting date

- Stipulating an affirmative action policy to provide teacher training to non-dominant community members who aspire to be teachers, and supporting community teachers to become state teachers

#### **Part 4**

*POE:*

- Promoting collaboration with CSMSSs to support schools' adoption of a decentralized calendar where necessary
- Developing curriculum and teacher training in additional non-dominant languages

#### **Part 5**

*MoEYS:*

- Reconsidering the age limit for contract teachers
- Streamlining the process of approving new non-dominant languages to be used in education

*CARE:*

- Assisting MoEYS in capacity building for monitoring and evaluation by establishing a committee with representatives from CARE and MoEYS

*UNICEF:*

- Adjusting the recommendation that all community teachers could be made contract teachers in the first phase, and later be converted into state teachers.

#### **Part 6**

- Involving the Minister and his new research committee, along with the team at Teachers College, in collaborative research on teacher profiles, training and placement and student achievement

### **Conclusion**

This update of the state of MLE implementation in Cambodia has described the MLE situation as currently reported and observed in Ratanakiri province. We have also analyzed support to MLE in terms of policy, MoEYS and POE activities, NGO and other partner activities. Based on these descriptions and analyses, a number of recommendations have been made to improve the existing support and/or to create new structures. It is important to note that not all of these recommendations are new to the MoEYS, the Ratanakiri POE or development partners, and often were self-diagnosed. This reflective process is a testimony to how and why MLE has been such a success in Cambodia.

Overall, we are cautiously optimistic about the future of L1-based MLE in Cambodia, and pleased with the trajectory that the MENAP will provide for its continual development and maturation. We hope that this evaluation serves as another step forward in the process of MLE implementation, for the improvement of education for all speakers of non-dominant languages.

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# Appendix A

## **TERMS of REFERENCE (ToR) CARE Cambodia**

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### **OVERALL PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTANCY**

Assess functioning of L1-based MLE component at each level (MoEYS national and provincial, CARE, partners, school, teacher, student, family, language group) considering all relevant aspects (policy, teacher placement & training, curriculum development, classroom teaching & learning, participation by community/girls/ethno-linguistic group).

### **BACKGROUND**

CARE International in Cambodia has identified two long-term programs based on Impact Groups. These Impact Groups are Ethnic Minority Women and Socially Marginalized Women. The education projects currently undertaken by CARE Cambodia are part of the Ethnic Minority Women Program. This program works on three main education sectors: multilingual<sup>6</sup> early childhood development; multilingual primary education, including partnering with the Cambodian Consortium for Out of School Children;<sup>7</sup> improving school governance; in lower secondary schools with a high percentage of ethnic minority students. By focusing on these sections CARE supports the government's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals which includes lower secondary education.

Apart from the education projects, the Ethnic Minority Women Program is embarking on a significant Water, Sanitation and Hygiene project, linked to the education component, and funded by the Australian Government.

CARE has worked closely with UN agencies in Cambodia in recent years, in particular UNICEF. This cooperation focuses on advocacy, policy development, providing technical expertise for scale up by the government and institutionalization of the innovative work on ethnic minority education. CARE participates in a range of international and national networks with UN agencies and NGO partners; for example the Asia Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group at international level, and the NGO Education Partnership (NEP) at national level. CARE is a member of the MoEYS subcommittee on the Child Friendly Schools Steering Group.

### **1. Project Description**

Multilingual education (MLE) in pre-schools and primary schools in Cambodia has been developed over more than a decade. From modest beginnings with a pilot project in six community schools in

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<sup>6</sup>Prior to 2014, Multilingual Education (MLE) was referred to as Bilingual Education (BE)

<sup>7</sup> This 17 member consortium is led by Action et Aide and funded by Educate a Child Foundation in Qatar

Ratanakiri Province, the bilingual schools are now managed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and in collaboration with UNICEF, MLE is being progressively institutionalized by anchoring it in the Education Law with a Prakas (Proclamation) in January 2013, embedding it in the Education Strategic Plan and Annual Operation Plans bit at national and sub-national level. A four-year Multilingual Education National Action Plan (MENAP) is about the formalized.

CARE has started a longitudinal research to collect evidence of the effectiveness of bilingual education in 2009. CARE received permission from the Provincial Office of Education in Ratanakiri Province to incorporate state schools without a bilingual education program as a control group. The research is being conducted in three groups of schools:

1. CARE supported bilingual state schools with indigenous students.
2. CARE supported bilingual community schools in remote locations without state schools in the vicinity.
3. State schools with indigenous students, but with a Khmer-only education.

The research question is: *Do ethnic minority children who receive a bilingual education in their home language and the national language in the early grades, grades 1 to 3, learn the national language, Khmer – literacy and oracy, and mathematics, better than ethnic minority children whose education is in the national language only.*

The data on the academic achievements of oral Khmer, mathematics and mother tongue literacy has now been collected for four years in the three sets of schools. An initial analysis of the data by CARE, and a scientific review by Australian Catholic University, preliminary midterm findings show:

Finding 1: Statistically significant difference in math & oral Khmer test scores between bilingual state school students and the state monolingual programme (Bilingual students score better than non-bilingual students).

Finding 2: the scores of the bilingual students in very remote community schools are approximately the same as the scores of the students in the non-bilingual state schools near the capital town Ban Lung.

The trends in the analysis show that the scores of the remote community schools are closing in on the other scores as we progress over the years. This trend is in line with other international research on bilingual education.

This research is continuing for two more years, and is advised by the Advisory Group with representatives of University of Minnesota, the Royal University of Phnom Penh, CARE USA, and CARE Cambodia.

## **OBJECTIVE**

1. Analyze existing quantitative and qualitative data and collect additional data as necessary to assess the functioning of MLE in Cambodia
2. Examine existing monitoring and evaluation plans for strengths and weaknesses; propose improvements

3. Identify trends, risks, and successful aspects of MLE in Cambodia, contextualizing these with factors that facilitate or challenge MLE functioning
4. Make recommendations to mitigate risks, to address challenges and to maximize successes in terms of MLE functioning and particularly learner achievement

## **TASKS**

Pre-fieldwork:

- Assist main consultant in review of relevant documents
- Assist main consultant in collection of issues/questions from Benson's 2010 evaluation and Frawley et al report
- Preparation of methodology and data collection instruments

During fieldwork:

Data collection in field, reporting back periodically as internet allows; preliminary analysis and reporting to CARE

- Further analysis and reporting to CARE
- Drafting of an article and submission to CARE for corrections/comments

Revision of article and submission to appropriate journal for publication

## **Selection Criteria**

Candidate selected by main consultant, Dr Carol Benson, Associate Professor Teacher College, Columbia University	
Master level	
Interest in Multilingual Education	

## **METHODOLOGY**

Work in a participatory way with the national staff members in order to promote learning.

## **OUTPUTS**

The Consultant will produce:

Field trip report

## **SCHEDULE & DATES**

All outputs specified in the ToR will be completed for 20 days between 1 June 2015 and 30 June 2015.

Date	Key Activities	Location
1 June 2015	▪ Travel to Cambodia	
2 June 2015	▪ Travel to Ratanakiri	Field Office RTK
3 June 2015	▪ Meeting with Program Coordinator to make further arrangements for interviews, meetings etc.	Field Office RTK
4 – 10 June 2015	▪ Field work in Ratanakiri	Field Office RTK
10 – 12 June 2015	▪ Return to Phnom Penh and meet with MoEYS and UNICEF	CARE Phnom Penh Office
13 June 2015	▪ Return to USA	
14 – 30 June 2015	▪ Assist main consultant in preparing article.	Home base

## ARRANGEMENTS & RESOURCES

The Consultant is required to:

- Work from his/her home base. Accommodation and meal costs while at this base are the Consultant's responsibility
- Provide his/her own computer/printer, supplies.
- Conduct field trip to Cambodia. Be available to work from Phnom Penh if required. Costs associated with this will be covered by CARE Cambodia within the travel policy.

## REPORTING

The Consultant will report directly to Jan Noorlander, Program Coordinator, CARE's principal contact/s for this consultancy.

### Contact details

Name	Job Title	Telephone	Email
Jan Noorlander	Program Coordinator	--	--

## PAYMENT

The Consultant shall receive the following payment upon completion of the outputs as specified in the 'OUTPUTS' section above and as listed below. Final payment will be made after CARE is satisfied with deliverables.

Output & Date	Fee payable
Draft article approved. Any changes will be made without costs for CARE	TBD

Project Code: KHM040 / KH321

## **EXPENSES**

The Consultant shall be reimbursed reasonable expenses up to insert total sum of reimbursable expenses

No reimbursable expense in excess of fifty United States dollars (US \$50.00) shall be incurred without CARE's prior written approval. If the Consultant's travel reimbursement shall be made under this agreement, then the Consultant shall follow CARE's travel policies and be subject to CARE's per diem rates. A fully completed CARE Travel and Expense Report (TER) is required for all travel expense reimbursements permitted under this agreement. The Consultant must **submit original invoices and original receipts with the TER for each expense in excess of** twenty-five United States dollars (US \$25.00). The TER shall be approved and signed by the CARE officer responsible for supervising this Consultant. The Consultant ID/Purchase Order Number must be clearly indicated on the properly completed TER.

## Appendix B

### Distribution of participants interviewed in villages.

Village	Role	Gender	Grade Taught	Years Exp.	Language(s) Spoken
Teung Village (state school)	Teacher	M	5	3	Khmer
	Teacher (director)	M	6	10	Khmer + Kreung
	Teacher	F	1	2	Khmer + Kreung
	Teacher	F	ECE	3	Khmer
	Teacher	M	4	3	Khmer
	Teacher	M	3	34	Khmer + Kreung
	Teacher	F	2	2	Khmer + Kreung
Tus Village (BB)	Teacher	M			Kreung + a little English
	School Committee Member	F			Kreung
	School Committee Member	M			Kreung + Khmer
	Village chief	M			Kreung + Khmer
	School Committee Member	M			Kreung
	Village Woman Committee Member	F			Kreung
	Village Woman Committee Member	F			Kreung
	School Committee Member	F			Kreung
	Village Woman Committee Member	F			Kreung + Khmer + Laotian
	Teacher	F			Kreung
Krola Village (HCEP)	POE Teacher	F	5 + 6	1	Kreung + Khmer
	POE Teacher	F	4	2	Kreung + Khmer
	Community Teacher	M	3	9	Kreung + Khmer
	POE Teacher	F	3	2	Kreung + Khmer
	Community Teacher	F	2	11	Kreung + Khmer
	Community Teacher	M	1	10	Kreung + Khmer
	School Committee Member	M	-		Kreung
	School Committee Member	F	-		Kreung
	Village Chief	M	-		Kreung

## Appendix C

### Distribution of participants interviewed in study.

Date	Location	Meeting with	Role	Translator	Language of Interview
4 June 2015	Ratanakiri CARE office	Mr. Jan Noorlander, Mr. Ron Watt, Ms. Lotte Renault	Program Coordinator at CARE; Senior Technical Advisor for CARE; Regional education advisor at CARE USA (skype)	None	English
4 June 2015	Ratanakiri CARE office	Mr. Ron Watt and Ms. Khien Chanda	Bending Bamboo researchers	None	English
5 June 2015	Ratanakiri POE office	Mr. Pa Satha	POE Deputy Director	Khien Chanda	Khmer
5 June 2015	Ratanakiri CARE office	Mr. Ron Watt	Senior Technical Advisor for CARE	None	English
8 June 2015	Teun Village	See Appendix B		Voun Sovouen	Kreung
8 June 2015	Tus Village	See Appendix B		Voun Sovouen	Kreung
9 June 2015	Krola Village	See Appendix B		Voun Sovouen	Kreung
9 June 2015	Ratanakiri CARE office	CARE Teacher Training Unit		Khien Chanda	Khmer / English
11 June 2015	Phnom Penh	Mr. Jan Noorlander	Program Coordinator, CARE	None	English
11 June 2015	MoEYS, Phnom Penh	HE Ton Sa Im	Under Secretary of State of Cambodia	Aun Hemrin	Khmer
11 June 2015	MoEYS, Phnom Penh	Mr. Thong Rithy	Deputy Director of Primary Education and Special Education	Aun Hemrin	Khmer

12 June 2015	UNICEF office, Phnom Penh	Mr. Chum Channra	Education Specialist	None	English
12 June 2015	Royal University of Phnom Penh	Dr. Chhimh Sitha	Deputy Head of Faculty of Education	None	English